

How Pottery Survived During Unprecedented Lockdown: A Short Term Study in Haryana

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Abstract

When 'COVID-19' was declared a pandemic on 12 March 2020 by World Health Organisation, a nation-wide lockdown for three weeks was proclaimed by India that halted the movement of people advising them to stay at home. It had immediate and direct fallout on economics activities in the country. As time passed, it was felt that the lockdown was severely affecting the endeavor of the people for earning a livelihood in which it became difficult to pull on life as many families were exhausted of cash reserves in buying household essentials. The lockdown was extended but the severe restrictions were eased. During the unprecedented circumstances forced by the pandemic, it became pertinent to examine as how and to what extent the lockdown might affect the economic activities that were chiefly connected to livelihood issues. Hence this study, to generate knowledge about the coping behavior as well as revealing the potential strength of the pottery sector to survive during this peculiar situation i.e. the lockdown. A questionnaire was specifically designed for collecting data and other related information in accordance with the prescribed method from five districts of Haryana viz. Jind, Rohtak, Bhiwani, Jhajjar and Kaithal. Seventy four valid responses were taken into account for the analysis and presentation. It was found that out of a total number of respondents, Majority of those living and working in rural area did not face major problems with regard to procurement of raw material, whereas in urban conglomerations, a quarter of potters admitted having encountered no problem during the lockdown period. As for order placement and sale, largely the potters from urban and nearly half from the rural settlements faced problems. The results of this research indicated that the impact of the lockdown was experienced more by those potters that lived in urban set up and produced on a large scale than those of this community, which lived in rural areas and had opportunity of providing services, locally within the village settlement or the neighborhood. In fact 83.8% potters, which resided and worked in a rural set up and had close community living, admitted that pottery as handicraft sustained them in a comparatively better form than other occupations in Covid-19 type crisis.

Keywords: Covid-19, Lockdown, Livelihood, Pottery Sector, Potter, Handicrafts, Rural and Urban set up

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Introduction

The novel Corona virus-19 (SARS-CoV-2) that later became highly contagious micro-organism, which appeared with symptoms manifesting into severe acute respiratory syndrome (*Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 2020 and ICMR -www.icmr.nic.in*) originated in Wuhan, China about which reports to the world was leaked in mid-December 2019. By early March 2020, a pan-continental trend of prevalence was noticed that prompted WHO to acknowledge that COVID-19 had rapidly spread outside Wuhan. WHO had officially declared that it was indeed pandemic (*Hui, et al., 2020*). In the wake WHO advisory, the Government of India, in the first instance, enforced a 21-day nation-wide lockdown (phase-1) from mid-night of March 25-26, which was extended until May 31, 2020 after a careful review. Reckoning the unfavorable impact, which would result from the nation-wide lockdown on sustenance of livelihood of artisan communities, a few short duration surveys were launched to assess the actual impact on potter community and initiation of short-term measures that would have ensured of retaining a sustainable level of activity to maintain family income and cash receipts. The creative and cultural industries in India were approached with recommendations to remodel activities and adapt to the transformation forced by the pandemic. All India Artisans and Craft Workers' Welfare Association (AIACA) conducted a study in April 2020 and came out with a representative sample of its 'Craft Mark' members that helped understood the problems and requirements at the ground level (*AIACA 2020*). But there is always a need to carry on more research studies because India is home of more than a million persons engaged in handicrafts manufacturing (*Gambhir*) producing variety of articles with various types of skills of hand. The present study is about the impact of prolonged lockdown on pottery sector to examine gains and losses in Haryana and revealing the inbuilt strength of the communities that could keep the potters on a sustainable level of mundane existence.

Potters usually worked in a well knit and closed community set up with traditional skills to provide various types of pots and containers and several other types of articles routinely used in homes as well as decorative objects such as vases and idols of gods and goddesses, which is both need based as well as ritualistic for occasions that are either social-specific at the times of festivals or observance of rituals. The creations are largely comprised of pitchers, articles for Pooja, Handis (earthen ware), vases for keeping indoor plants, jars, toys, terracotta wall-hangings, lanterns, miniature podium for placing *diyās* on the occasion of Deepawali and several types of utility and decorative items. Nowadays potters also make objects and articles with embossed or overlay designs that are capable of attracting to customers of various economic or social strata. Despite introduction of plastic (synthetic polymers) and metal ware, items made of clay are still in wide use everywhere in both the

urban as well as rural areas (*Adebowale, 2014*). Pottery products are in demand not only for their attractive forms but also for natural and aesthetic qualities. Pottery in Haryana also reflects regional variety in shape, form and decorative motifs that came to be noticed in Narduk (erstwhile Karnal district or the area fed by waters of the ancient Saraswati and Drishdwati rivers), semi-arid southwestern Tehsils in the districts of Bhiwani, Hisar and Sirsa touching the northern boundary of the Thar desert, the southern sector dotted with Aravali hillocks -sparsely located or continuous range, with several low lying areas fed by rainy streams besides the Bangar region comprising central Haryana (districts of Jind and western part of Rohtak), which is rich in alluvial soil. It was interesting to take note of the shapes, form and use of decorative motifs and line work on ancient pottery and sherds excavated at several pre-historic sites from several mounds in Haryana -chiefly Farmana, Kunal, Bhirdana and Rakhi Garhi of Harappan era, to modern decorative pottery revealing a continuity of skills and art work. For example, Surahi -a water container of a peculiar shape, produced by a potter family of Jhajjar, now settled at Bahadurgarh, resembled to some of the novel features of pots recovered from the above mentioned ancient sites in which case the potter might not have ever seen the ancient pots and copied the designs. This was a national award winning entry at a handicrafts competition event. Potters in Haryana have not only been manufacturing various types of pots and other articles of use but also endowed with skills in drawing animate and inanimate objects on the visible section of the article as existed in nature in immediate vicinity or the physical environment to fulfill a basic desire of human being that was culturally significant and relevant to observance of rituals and practices. Besides, some of the potters were chiefly artists or Chiteyras skilled in creating paintings on walls in tempera method in various type of buildings -dwellings, community homes such as a Chaupal, religious edifice, a temple, and a memorial Chhatri (a tomb like structure), that dotted the rural and urban landscape in Haryana (*Phogat 2002*). Apart from a few of the above mentioned objects the potters produced Hukka, Chillum, Gullak or coin storage pots and Handi (wide mouthed, fairly shallow and thickly rimmed vessel for cooking vegetables). Larger vessels continue to be decorated with embossed flowers and geometric patterns between wavy line-borders. Pottery is still one of the chief cottage industries on record in Haryana that keeps artisans self-employed (*Adebimpe 2015*) and self-sustaining for earning livelihood.

Research Objectives

1. To produce location-specific assessment of the impact of prolonged lockdown on pottery sector.
2. To identify response to the challenges faced or survival strategies during the prolonged lockdown.

Research Hypothesis

H0: Lockdown had no substantial impact on overall level of activity on pottery sector if viewed in accordance with the location, in general.

Scope

The study was designed to look into the impact of prolonged lockdown on pottery sector. The study model can be adopted and applied for other sectors of handicrafts in similar and peculiar.

Research Methodology

The study was purposely undertaken to record in a meaningful manner the impact of prolonged lockdown on pottery sector during pandemic caused by Covid-19. The study was designed and planned in such a manner as could fulfill the objectives highlighting some of its features indicated below:

Sampling: The area of study primarily focused on Haryana.

Universe/population: Target population (potters from a few districts of Haryana) is infinite.

Sampling Method: Random sampling method is used for collection of data from potters.

Sample size:

A sample size of 74 in numbers is taken from five districts of Haryana viz., Jind, Kaithal, Rohtak, Jhajjar, and, Bhiwani for the collection of data to accomplish the objectives.

Data Design: The research makes use of both primary and secondary data to analyze the impact of lockdown on pottery sector.

Primary Data:

The primary data, principally gathered through the questionnaire and completed on the spot after obtaining the details by method of oral interview of the respondents, was used in this study. Systematic random sampling method was employed to collect the primary data from 74 respondents.

Secondary Data:

Though the core of this study work rests on the primary data, yet the secondary data was also scooped to help build the study environment and necessity, namely the Covid-19 related literature, as well as work related to the history of growth and development of pottery for which Journal papers, articles, dissertations and books relevant to the study was consulted.

Tools for Data Analysis:

The data analysis and interpretation process supports the researcher's results of fetching a problem and reaching at a logical conclusion. The data collected from the primary sources was validated and analyzed using the suitable statistical tools such as percentage analysis and regression. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to perform data entry and analysis of the preliminary data. It provided descriptive analyses to calculate statistics such as mean, frequency, standard deviation and relationship between variables using Mann-Whitney U. test.

Analysis and Discussion:

This study was analyzed and examined by use of data gathered through the questionnaire. The major findings of the research are:

Demographic Profile of Respondents (Table 2.1):

The table gives a fair picture of demographic variables shown in this study, which among other indicators includes descriptive statistics in regard to gender, age and place of work from the respective residence. It can be inferred that 50 per cent of the urban and 50 per cent of the rural potters have participated in the study. Majority (37.5 per cent) of the respondents were in the age group 26-40 years, whereas 40.5 per cent were up to secondary level of education.

Occupational Profile of the Respondents (Table 2.2):

The table 2.2 above gives out a clear picture of occupational variables of the respondents in this study. Majority of it i.e., 52.5 per cent of the potters were in the household income segment from Rs. 30001.00 to Rs. 6000.00. It can be inferred that 33.8 per cent of the potters directly sold products to customers whereas 37.8 per cent transported by utilizing the service of the entrepreneur's vehicle.

Location specific assessment for finding the impact of prolonged lockdown on pottery sector:

H_0 : Lockdown had no substantial impact on overall level of activity on pottery sector in particular view of their location.

H_1 : Lockdown had substantial impact on overall level of activity on pottery sector in particular their location.

Tests of Normality

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, better known as Normality Test, was applied to the study for probing normal probability test that helped evaluate statistically significant values as worked out and shown in table 2.3. It could be inferred that the significant value was found to be less than 0.05, which meant that data did not have normal distribution properties.

To compare the 'mean' value of the two groups and also to verify whether it were different from each other, T-test was performed but the data did not have normal distribution properties, and therefore, non-parametric. Two-test with independent samples was performed.

Two-test with independent samples

Table: 2.4 and table 2.5

It was noticed that the significant value is .001, which is less than 0.05. The significant values revealed that the study rejected the 'null' hypothesis, which meant that the overall impact varied in accordance with the location.

Identification of the challenge faced by potters during prolonged lockdown

Table: 3 Challenge faced by potters during the prolonged lockdown.

Table-3 clearly indicates an explanation of the challenges the potters faced due to imposition lockdown and frequent extensions. 20.30 percent of the potters faced problems of procuring and transporting the raw materials to home based workshops. The majority i.e., 70.3%, among the potters experienced lack of buying orders or sudden drop in demand for their products. Out of the full sample size about which data was collected, 40.50 percent paid moderately high price.

Discussion

It came to be noticed that the potters, which were residing in an urban area faced negative impact on their livelihood during the preliminary phase of the sudden lockdown. In view of suspension of the public and private transport carriers, procuring raw materials became erratic and troublesome, and in addition to the former, dispatching consignments of the product could not remain smooth. Due to imposition of the rules for preventing further transmission of the infection in the population through human carriers and following the strict observance guidelines during the lockdown, the potters had to shut down furnaces in the National Capital Region (NCR). In a less acute but similar situation, a large number of potters residing and working in rural areas could not manage to fetch raw material in required quantity from quarries located at distant places or dispatch consignments to distantly located markets except in their own or neighboring villages and towns. The stipulated demand on local potters for the earthen products seemed to be fairly encouraging within a village settlement as peddlers and vendors from distant or neighboring locations had no to-and-fro mobility. Potters admitted that demand for pitchers (earthen vessels) surged in the beginning of the summer season (March-April of 2020), compared to the numbers sold in the previous years in the corresponding early in summer season only because the COVID-19 Guidelines issued for public observance had strongly suggested avoiding use of air conditioners and consumption of cooled or chilled water or beverages such as butter milk.

Most people were thus forced to prefer earthen pots to keep water cool at home. In view of the above, 83.8% of potters, which resided in rural area confirmed that select items of making pottery and its sale resurged as one of the major activities in handicrafts sector, rather more advantageous than others, as means of sustainable and secure livelihood in times of crises identified as global threat from highly contagious diseases when control measures were put in place.

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Table 2.1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Factors	Options	Frequency	Percentage
location	Urban	37	50.0
	Rural	37	50.0
Age	26 - 40	28	37.5
	41 -60	29	39.2
	61- 80	17	23.0
	81 & above	1	1.4
Education	Illiterate	7	9.5
	Up to Pre-primary Level	18	24.3
	Up to Primary Level	19	25.7
	Up to Secondary Level	30	40.5
Economic Status	BPL Card Holder	70	94.6
	APL Card Holder	4	4.4
TOTAL		74	100.0

Table 2.2: Occupational Profile of the Respondents

Factors	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Net Monthly household income from the craft activity	Up to Rs. 3,000	3	4.1
	Rs. 3,001 to Rs. 6,000	39	52.7
	Rs. 6,001 to Rs. 9,000	13	17.6
	Rs. 9,001 to Rs. 12,000	9	12.2
	Rs. 12,001 to Rs. 15,000	10	13.5
What is the Channel for Distributing the craft?	Artisans- Customer	25	33.8
	Artisans -Wholesaler - Customer	16	21.6
	Artisans- Wholesaler Retailer -Customer	17	23.0
	Artisans- Entrepreneur Wholesaler -Customer	4	5.4
	Artisans -Handicraft Institution -Customer	12	16.2
How will you transport the finished craft?	Own Vehicle	27	36.5
	Rented Vehicle	19	25.7
	Entrepreneur will Arrange	28	37.8
Total		74	100.0

Table: 2.3

Tests of Normality							
	Where do you live?	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
18	Urban	.235	37	.001	.843	37	.001
	Rural	.258	37	.001	.746	37	.001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table: 2.4

Ranks				
	Where do you live?	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
18	Urban	37	55.16	2041.00
	Rural	37	19.84	734.00
	Total	74		

Table 2.5

Test Statistics^a	
	overall impact
Mann-Whitney U	31.000
Wilcoxon W	734.000
Z	-7.110
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.001

a. Grouping Variable: where do you live?

Table: 3 challenges those are faced by potter during lockdown.

Factors	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Availability of raw materials during lockdown.	Very conveniently	2	2.7
	Conveniently	57	77.0
	Interrupted	15	20.3
Mark major problems faced by your unit due to lockdown?	Job Shifting	10	13.5
	Lack of Orders	52	70.3
	Unemployment	12	16.2
Price paid for each of the raw materials during lockdown.	Competitive	44	59.5
	Moderately high	30	40.5
	Total	74	100.0

