Weaving Through Challenges:
The Resilience of The Dewangan Community
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Abstract

This study examines the resilience of the Dewangan community, traditionally known for weaving in regions like Chhattisgarh, in the face of modern challenges such as changing economic conditions, declining interest among younger generations. The Dewangan community has been able to adapt to adversity, sustain their traditional livelihood, and preserve their cultural heritage. The study analyzes the major challenges faced by the Dewangan community and the adaptation strategies employed by the community. Data was collected from adult respondents in Kurda village of Champa Tehsil, Janjgir Champa district, Chhattisgarh, through field surveys and interviews. The study reveals that the Dewangan community faces social challenges like a decline in interest in weaving and lack of community collaboration. Economically, they face low wages and a lack of government support. Health challenges include ergonomic problems, stress, and eye strain. Market challenges include dependence on local markets and high competition. Technological challenges include a lack of modern equipment and digital awareness. In response to these challenges, the community has adopted strategies such as skill development workshops, community union formation, alternative income-generating activities, participation in government schemes, health and safety training, diversification to unique designs, and adoption of semi-automated looms. The study concludes that the Dewangan community has displayed remarkable resilience by blending tradition and innovation to ensure the continuity of their craft while meeting the evolving needs of society.

Keywords: Weaving, Challenges, Strategies, Community resilience, Dewangan community

1. Introduction:

The Dewangan community, traditionally known for its excellence in weaving, holds a significant place in the cultural and economic fabric of regions like Chhattisgarh. This artisan community is deeply rooted in the practice of creating intricate and beautiful textiles, embodying centuries of craftsmanship and cultural pride. However, in the face of modern challenges such as changing economic conditions, and declining interest among younger generations, the Dewangan community has displayed remarkable resilience.

Resilience, in this context, refers to the community's ability to adapt to adversity, sustain their traditional livelihood, and preserve their cultural heritage. The Dewangans have managed to navigate these challenges through various means, such as adopting modern tools, participating in cooperatives, and balancing traditional practices with contemporary market demands. Their efforts reflect a dynamic blend of tradition and innovation, ensuring the continuity of their craft while meeting the evolving needs of society.

2. Origin of Dewangan Community:

The Dewangan caste traces its origins to Hindu mythology, with Devala Maharshi, revered as their ancestor, credited with introducing cotton and silk weaving to humanity. According to legend, Lord Vishnu bestowed sacred threads upon Devala Maharshi, but on his journey back, he was attacked by demons. Seeking divine protection, he prayed to Devi Sakthi, who vanquished the demons, allowing him to weave garments from the blood-stained threads. Devi Sakthi, also worshipped as Chowdeswari or Sowdeswari, instructed Devala to offer her regular devotion. (Hattiholi& Sugandhi, 2024)

Today, the Dewangan community, primarily residing in Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh, upholds this rich weaving tradition. In Chhattisgarh, in particular, the Dewangan community holds a unique position in the region's socio-cultural fabric. Historical records indicate that they have been engaged in weaving for centuries, passing down their craftsmanship through generations. Their expertise in the intricate art of loom weaving has played a vital role in shaping the traditional attire and textile heritage of Chhattisgarh. (Hattiholi& Sugandhi, 2024)

3. Review of related literatures:

Arun et.al. (2023) conducted a study entitled "Community Resilience In The Face Of Natural Disasters: A Comparative Analysis Of Preparedness And Recovery Strategies". The study provided a comparative analysis of preparedness and recovery strategies for community resilience in the face of natural disasters. It introduced the concept of flexibility for assessing a local area's ability to withstand and recover from extreme events, using three Atlantic beachfront networks as examples. The research also presented a comprehensive survey of computational strategies for assessing local area strength and reviewed literature on community disaster resilience published in 2018. Furthermore, it discussed challenges and strategies relevant to the Indian context, including early warning systems and community engagement. The study employed field surveys and key informant interviews in two small communities. The discussion highlighted the measurement of resilience and the role of social capital, concluding with the importance of social connections and addressing equity gaps for effective disaster preparedness.

Chakraborty (2023) explored the role of information in achieving community resilience against cyclones in the Indian Sundarbans. Employing a mixed-methods approach, it surveyed 2073 residents and interviewed 100 locals in Gosaba and Basanti. The research investigated preferred information sources, the influence of social learning on source selection, and the impact of received information on protection motivation. A cognitive model was developed to depict human information processing during cyclones, from information acquisition to protective action execution. The findings highlighted the significance of social learning parameters and human sources in information seeking during cyclones. The study aimed to provide insights for policymakers in developing effective disaster communication strategies.

Raihan and Zaman (2023) conducted a study entitled "Community resilience to natural disasters: A systemic review of contemporary methods and theories". The study was a systematic review that examined the literature on community resilience to natural disasters from a social research perspective between 2010 and 2021. It utilized the PRISMA method to analyze 62 selected articles from Web of Science and Scopus. The review identified trends in research methods, including a preference for quantitative and explanatory/analytical designs, and primary data sources. Adaptive capacity and social

capital were found to be major theoretical dimensions, while areas like local politics, gender, and social justice received less attention. The study concluded by proposing a multi-phase research model to enhance future research in this interdisciplinary field.

Hattiholi and Sugandhi (2024) conducted a study entitled "The Rich Heritage Of Devanga Weavers Community In Ramdrug Taluk, Belagavi District, Karnataka". The objectives of the study were 1.To explore the historic and cultural significance of the Devanga weaving community.2.To study the challenges faced by the Devanga community in the modern world.

Mercado (2024) investigated community resilience strategies in disaster management in the Municipality of Sta. Teresita, Philippines. It employed a qualitative descriptive design through interviews with three key informant groups: community members, barangay officials, and MDRRMO personnel. The research aimed to determine resilience-enhancing strategies, perceived resilience and disaster management effectiveness, roles of local leaders, and encountered challenges. The study found that disaster awareness, capacity building, community engagement, psychological preparedness, coordination, and access to essential resources were key resilience strategies. It also explored varying perceptions of disaster management effectiveness and the roles of local leaders in fostering resilience through collaboration and preparedness efforts. The research identified challenges such as lack of funds, coordination, cooperation, and miscommunication.

4. Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the major challenges faced by the Dewangan community.
2. To examine the adaptation strategies employed by the Dewangan community.

5. Methodology:

This study is based on Kurda village of Champa Tehsil, Janjgir Champa district, Chhattisgarh. Dewangan population is quite prominent in this place and therefore they have been selected for the present study.

Adult population from Kurda village has been selected for the study. To conduct this study all the related primary data has been collected from the studied area through field survey by using interview method.

Total adult population of Dewangan community is 239 in the village. Total respondents 108 (45%) have been considered for study purpose.

6. Data analysis and findings:

Data has been tabulated and analyzed on different aspects and finally findings are drawn which are following:

Table-1:
Distribution of adult respondents according to male and female

	Adult(18 years & above)		Total
	M	F	
Respondents	53 (49.07%)	55(50.93%)	108(100%)

Table-1 shows the distribution of adult respondents according to male and female. It is found that out of total 108(100%) respondents, 53(49.07%) were male adult and 55(50.93%) were female adult.

Table-2:
Distribution of respondents according to age and sex

AgeGroup	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	**Percentage (%)**	**Number**	**Percentage (%)**	**Number**	**Percentage (%)**
18-30	10	9.26	16	14.81	26	24.07
31-45	26	24.07	26	24.07	52	48.15
46-60	10	9.26	8	7.41	18	16.67
Above 60	7	6.48	5	4.63	12	11.11
Total	53	49.07	55	50.93	108	100

Table-2 presents distribution ofrespondentsaccording toage and sex. So from this table it is cleared that the total number of female respondents was greater than the total number of male respondents and people of age 31-45 cover the major portion of the population.

Table-3:
Distribution of respondents according to social challenges faced

Age group	Declining Interest in Weaving		Lack of Community Collaboration		Low Income Levels		Others	
	M	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**
18-30	8 (7.41%)	11 (10.19%)	5 (4.63%)	5 (4.63%)	7 (6.48%)	14 (12.96%)	1 (0.93%)	2 (1.85%)
31-45	17 (15.74%)	18 (16.67%)	14 (12.96%)	13 (12.04%)	13 (12.04%)	11 (10.18%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)
46-60	5 (4.63%)	4 (3.70%)	3 (2.78%)	5 (4.63%)	3 (2.78%)	2 (1.85%)	0	0
Above 60	3 (2.78%)	2 (1.85%)	2 (1.85%)	2 (1.85%)	5 (4.63%)	2 (1.85%)	0	0
Total	33 (30.56%)	37 (34.26%)	24 (22.22%)	25 (23.15%)	28 (25.93%)	29 (26.85%)	2 (1.85%)	3 (2.78%)

Table-3 reveals that the Dewangan community faces several significant social challenges. A notable decline in interest in weaving is most prominent among individuals aged 31-45, with 15.74% of males and 16.67% of females reporting this issue. Additionally, this age group experiences concerns about a lack of community collaboration, affecting 12.96% of males and 12.04% of females. Low income levels are particularly problematic for the younger population aged 18-30, where 12.96% of females report experiencing financial difficulties. Other challenges were mentioned but are less significant compared to these primary issues.

Table-4:
Distribution of respondents according to social strategies adopted

Age group	Skill Development Workshops		Formation of Community Unions		Wage Reforms and Subsidies		Others	
	M	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**
18-30	2 (1.85%)	1 (0.93%)	8 (7.41%)	13 (12.04%)	2 (1.85%)	4 (3.70%)	0	0
31-45	3 (2.78%)	3 (2.78%)	21 (19.44%)	24 (22.22%)	5 (4.63%)	3 (2.78%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)
46-60	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)	7 (6.48%)	5 (4.63%)	1 (0.93%)	2 (1.85%)	0	0
Above 60	0	0	3 (2.78%)	2 (1.85%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)	0	0
Total	6 (5.56%)	4 (3.70%)	39 (36.11%)	44 (40.74%)	9 (8.33%)	10 (9.26%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)

Table-4 outlines the strategies employed by the Dewangan community to tackle social challenges. Participation in skill development workshops is low at 5.56%, mainly from the 31-45 age group. In contrast, community union formation is more popular, with 19.44% of males and 22.22% of females in the 31-45 age group engaged. Furthermore, 17.59% of respondents are involved in wage reforms and subsidies, highlighting a focus on enhancing income levels. Other strategies received limited participation.

Table-5:
Distribution of respondents according to economic challenges faced

Age group	Low Wages		Lack of Govt. Support		High Production Costs		Others	
	M	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**
18-30	8 (7.41%)	12 (11.11%)	5 (4.63%)	7 (6.48%)	2 (1.85%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)
31-45	21 (19.44%)	20 (18.52%)	15 (13.89%)	16 (14.81%)	6 (5.56%)	4 (3.70%)	1 (0.93%)	2 (1.85%)
46-60	7 (6.48%)	4 (3.70%)	2 (1.85%)	3 (2.78%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)	0	0
Above 60	5 (4.63%)	3 (2.78%)	1 (0.93%)	2 (1.85%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)	0	0
Total	41 (37.96%)	39 (36.11%)	23 (21.30%)	28 (25.93%)	10 (9.26%)	7 (6.48%)	2 (1.85%)	3 (2.78%)

Table-5 reveals the economic challenges faced by the Dewangan community, identifying low wages and lack of government support as the primary concerns, reported by 80 (74.07%) and 51 (47.23%) respondents, respectively. High production costs were also highlighted by 17(15.74%) respondents, while 5(4.63%) mentioned other economic issues. Overall, the findings underscore that low wages and insufficient government assistance significantly impact the community's economic well-being.

Table-6:
Distribution of respondents according to economic strategies adopted

Age group	Alternative Income		Govt. Scheme Participation		Product Diversification		Others	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
18-30	7 (6.48%)	10 (9.26%)	5 (4.63%)	7 (6.48%)	3 (2.78%)	4 (3.70%)	0	1 (0.93%)
31-45	19 (17.59%)	21 (19.44%)	13 (12.04%)	15 (13.89%)	7 (6.48%)	5 (4.63%)	1 (0.93%)	0
46-60	7 (6.48%)	5 (4.63%)	3 (2.78%)	3 (2.78%)	1 (0.93%)	2 (1.85%)	0	0
Above 60	3 (2.78%)	1 (0.93%)	2 (1.85%)	2 (1.85%)	3 (2.78%)	2 (1.85%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)
Total	36 (33.33%)	37 (34.26%)	23 (21.30%)	27 (25%)	14 (12.96%)	13 (12.04%)	2 (1.85%)	2 (1.85%)

Table-6 highlights the economic strategies adopted by the Dewangan community to address their challenges. A total of 73(67.59%) respondents engaged in alternative income-generating activities, and 51(46.3%) respondents participated in government schemes. Additionally, 27(25%) respondents focused on product diversification, while 4 (3.7%) mentioned various other strategies. Overall, the findings reflect the community's proactive approach in using diverse strategies to alleviate economic difficulties, underscoring the significance of external support and income diversification.

Table-7:
Distribution of respondents according to health challenges faced

Age group	Ergonomic Issues		Stress and Fatigue		Eye Strain & Vision Problems		Others	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
18-30	4 (3.70%)	5 (4.63%)	3 (2.78%)	7 (6.48%)	5 (4.63%)	3 (2.78%)	1 (0.93%)	0
31-45	13 (12.04%)	13 (12.04%)	10 (9.26%)	9 (8.33%)	5 (4.63%)	7 (6.48%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)
46-60	6 (5.56%)	4 (3.70%)	4 (3.70%)	3 (2.78%)	2 (1.85%)	1 (0.93%)	0	0
Above 60	2 (1.85%)	1 (0.93%)	2 (1.85%)	2 (1.85%)	3 (2.78%)	3 (2.78%)	1 (0.93%)	0
Total	25 (23.15%)	23 (21.30%)	19 (17.59%)	21 (19.44%)	13 (12.04%)	14 (12.96%)	3 (2.78%)	1 (0.93%)

Table-7 outlines the health challenges encountered by the Dewangan community, revealing significant issues: 48(44.45%) respondents reported ergonomic problems, 40 (37.03%) respondents experienced stress and fatigue, and 27 (25%) faced eye strain. These

findings underscore considerable health concerns, particularly regarding physical strain and mental health.

Table-8:

Distribution of respondents according to health strategies adopted

Age group	Health & Safety Training		Workload Management		Proper Lighting, Eye Care		Others	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
18-30	6 (5.56%)	6 (5.56%)	4 (3.70%)	3 (2.78%)	5 (4.63%)	3 (2.78%)	0	1 (0.93%)
31-45	12 (11.11%)	11 (10.19%)	8 (7.41%)	8 (7.41%)	7 (6.48%)	9 (8.33%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)
46-60	5 (4.63%)	3 (2.78%)	3 (2.78%)	4 (3.70%)	2 (1.85%)	1 (0.93%)	0	0
Above 60	3 (2.78%)	1 (0.93%)	4 (3.70%)	4 (3.70%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)	0	1 (0.93%)
Total	26 (24.07%)	21 (19.44%)	19 (17.59%)	19 (17.59%)	15 (13.89%)	14 (12.96%)	1 (0.93%)	3 (2.78%)

Table-8 highlights the health strategies of the Dewangan community, showing that 47 (43.51%) respondents engaged in health and safety training, 38 (35.18%) practiced workload management, and 29 (26.85%) implemented proper lighting and eye care measures. Additionally, 4(3.71%) respondents reported using other strategies. These findings reflect the community's dedication to enhancing health and safety practices in response to health challenges.

Table-9:

Distribution of respondents according to market challenges faced

Age group	Dependence on Local Markets		High Competition		Middlemen Exploitation		Others	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
18-30	9 (8.33%)	7 (6.48%)	5 (4.63%)	6 (5.56%)	3 (2.78%)	2 (1.85%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)
31-45	17 (15.74%)	17 (15.74%)	11 (10.19%)	10 (9.26%)	4 (3.70%)	4 (3.70%)	0	0
46-60	6 (5.56%)	4 (3.70%)	2 (1.85%)	3 (2.78%)	2 (1.85%)	2 (1.85%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)
Above 60	3 (2.78%)	2 (1.85%)	4 (3.70%)	3 (2.78%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)	0	0
Total	35 (32.41%)	30 (27.78%)	22 (20.37%)	22 (20.37%)	10 (9.26%)	9 (8.33%)	2 (1.85%)	2 (1.85%)

Table-9 outlines the market challenges facedby the Dewangan community, revealing that 65(60.19%) respondents were dependent on local markets, 44 (40.74%) and 19 (17.59%) respondents faced high competition and middlemen exploitation respectively. 4(3.70%) respondents faced other marketing issues.

Table-10:

Distribution of respondents according to market strategies adopted

Age group	Participation in Trade Fairs		Diversification to Unique Designs		Cooperative Society Participation		Others	
	M	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**
18-30	2 (1.85%)	3 (2.78%)	7 (6.48%)	7 (6.48%)	5 (4.63%)	6 (5.56%)	1 (0.93%)	2 (1.85%)
31-45	5 (4.63%)	4 (3.70%)	20 (18.52%)	22 (20.37%)	3 (2.78%)	4 (3.70%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)
46-60	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)	5 (4.63%)	6 (5.56%)	3 (2.78%)	2 (1.85%)	1 (0.93%)	0
Above 60	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)	4 (3.70%)	3 (2.78%)	2 (1.85%)	2 (1.85%)	0	0
Total	9 (8.33%)	9 (8.33%)	36 (33.33%)	38 (35.19%)	13 (12.04%)	14 (12.96%)	3 (2.78%)	3 (2.78%)

Table-10 highlights the market strategies of the Dewangan community, indicating that 18 respondents (16.66%) engaged in trade fairs, 74 (68.52%) diversified to unique designs, 27 (25%) participated in cooperative societies, and 6 (5.56%) utilized other strategies. These findings illustrate the community's commitment to enhancing their market presence through a variety of approaches.

Table-11:

Distribution of respondents according to technological challenges faced

Age group	Lack of Modern Equipment		Lack of Digital Awareness		Traditional Methods Limiting Production		Others	
	M	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**
18-30	4 (3.70%)	4 (3.70%)	5 (4.63%)	5 (4.63%)	7 (6.48%)	9 (8.33%)	0	0
31-45	8 (7.41%)	9 (8.33%)	11 (10.19%)	10 (9.26%)	7 (6.48%)	7 (6.48%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)
46-60	3 (2.78%)	3 (2.78%)	2 (1.85%)	4 (3.70%)	5 (4.63%)	3 (2.78%)	1 (0.93%)	0
Above 60	2 (1.85%)	2 (1.85%)	4 (3.70%)	1 (0.93%)	2 (1.85%)	3 (2.78%)	0	0
Total	17 (15.74%)	18 (16.67%)	22 (20.37%)	20 (18.52%)	21 (19.44%)	22 (20.37%)	2 (1.85%)	1 (0.93%)

Table-11 identifies the technological challenges of the Dewangan community, revealing that 35 respondents (32.41%) lack modern equipment, 42 (38.89%) lack digital awareness, and 43 (39.81%) find traditional methods limit production. Additionally, 3 (2.78%) reported other challenges. These findings highlight notable technological barriers impacting productivity within the community.

Table-12:

Distribution of respondents according to technological strategies adopted

Age group	Government Subsidies for Machinery		Digital Training Workshops		Adoption of Semi-Automated Looms		Others	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
18-30	3 (2.78%)	5 (4.63%)	2 (1.85%)	2 (1.85%)	5 (4.63%)	10 (9.26%)	1 (0.93%)	0
31-45	10 (9.26%)	11 (10.19%)	4 (3.70%)	3 (2.78%)	13 (12.04%)	14 (12.96%)	0	1 (0.93%)
46-60	4 (3.70%)	3 (2.78%)	2 (1.85%)	2 (1.85%)	6 (5.56%)	5 (4.63%)	0	0
Above 60	2 (1.85%)	1 (0.93%)	2 (1.85%)	1 (0.93%)	3 (2.78%)	3 (2.78%)	0	0
Total	19 (17.59%)	20 (18.52%)	10 (9.26%)	8 (7.41%)	27 (25%)	32 (29.63%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)

Table-12 showcases the technological strategies utilized by the Dewangan community, revealing that 39(36.11%) respondents benefitted from government subsidies for machinery, 18 (16.67%) participated in digital training workshops, 59 (54.63%) adopted semi-automated looms, and 2 (1.85%) implemented other strategies. These findings highlight the community's proactive efforts to tackle technological challenges through varied approaches.

7. Discussion:

The study highlights significant social challenges faced by the Dewangan community, particularly the declining interest in weaving and a lack of collaboration among community members, especially among those aged 31-45. Lower engagement levels among younger generations also indicate a potential crisis in sustaining traditional craftsmanship. To foster collaboration, community unions and skill development workshops have been initiated but their uptake has been limited.

Economically, low wages and a lack of government support are paramount concerns, with 74.07% and 47.23% of respondents respectively noting these issues. The community's proactive strategies, which include engaging in alternative income-generating activities and government schemes, underscore their resilience. However, the findings suggest that these measures may not be sufficient to substantially improve their economic standing.

Health concerns such as ergonomic problems, stress, and eye strain are prevalent among community members. The community's initiation of health training and workload management seminars is a positive step, yet there is a clear need for ongoing support. The high incidence of reported health issues may point to the need for ergonomic interventions and mental health support systems.

Market challenges predominantly arise from the community's reliance on local markets and high competition, alongside exploitation by middlemen. The diversification of product designs and participation in cooperative societies reflect the community's commitment to overcoming these barriers.

The study reveals technological setbacks including outdated equipment and limited digital literacy, which impede productivity. While the adoption of semi-automated looms and participation in digital training workshops are promising strategies, a significant portion of respondents still lacks access to modern technology.

8. Conclusion:

The study concludes that the Dewangan community has shown great resilience by combining their traditional weaving practices with new innovative approaches to keep their craft alive and relevant in today's world. Despite facing difficulties such as a decline in interest in weaving, lack of community collaboration, low wages, health issues, market competition, and limited access to modern technology, the Dewangan community has found ways to adapt. They have implemented strategies like skill development workshops, community organization, seeking alternative income, participating in government programs, prioritizing health and safety, creating unique designs, and using semi-automated looms.

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