

**OCCUPATIONAL TRANSFORMATION AS A SURVIVAL STRATEGY AMIDST
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A CASE STUDY OF THE KUMARTULI ARTISANS,
KOLKATA, WEST BENGAL, INDIA**

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Abstract

Human existence and creativity are inextricable coexistence of civilization and development. This applies in untold ways to the Kumartuli karigars or artisans defining the coexistence of urbanization and the history of Kolkata over the years. These artisans are of three types: idol makers, decoration artisans and sculpturists. The sudden onset of Corona pandemic in March 2020 in India greatly affected the business of these artisans who belong to the category of unorganised sector. These artisans also belong to the creative economic sector.

According to the present study, the artisans who have opted for occupational transformation as a strategy and compulsive choice of survival were in a much more stable situation in terms of their average annual turnover compared to those who did not opt for occupational transformation. The SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat) analysis reflects the geographic potential of Kolkata which has facilitated the occupational transformation of the artisans. It is worth noting that a significant percentage of artisans belonging to the above three categories have opted for variegated occupations like vegetable selling, fish selling, cosmetics selling, groceries, tea shops and other miscellaneous jobs like mask and sanitiser selling, bakeries, sweet shops and so on. The female artisans have also opted for diverse occupations like home maid, cooking, vegetable selling, groceries, selling masks and sanitisers and so on. The present study also finds that despite the fact that the majority of the artisans of all three categories want to return to adopt their parental or heritage occupations, a significant percentage of artisans who have already adopted different occupations do not want to return to their parental occupation. Moreover, there is a lack of interest among the young generation to carry forward the heritage occupations owing to insignificant returns from business and apprehension from future shocks and pandemics.

The present study suggests that occupational transformation is not the permanent solution to the sufferings of the artisans amidst the Corona pandemic. It is worth noting that the Corona pandemic has aggravated the already existing problems of the artisans like price rise of raw materials, inadequate returns from business, low profits, lack of interest among the younger generation to carry forward the heritage occupations and so on. Therefore the current study demands more inclusive and sustainable planning by the government, planners and administrative bodies to ensure the long-term growth and development of these artisans, in the

long run, fulfilling the promises made by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the long run.

Keywords: Creativity, Karigars, Occupational Transformation, Annual Turnovers, Corona pandemic.

1. Introduction

Human existence with creativity is one of the most important facets of human civilization and its evolution with the immortal time defining human history and culture. Thinking differently or divergent thinking process is an important characteristic of creativity (Brown, 1989). Rhodes (1961) defined creativity as the process of conveying a novel idea or novel result. According to MacKinnon (1970) and Mooney (1963), the four key components of creativity that characterise human history are process, result, person, and setting. As per Kaufman (2016), creativity must be indicative of something novel, distinctive, or original as well as pertinent to the work at hand. All these distinctive creative characteristics are present among the magnificent artisans or karigars of Kumartuli, where feathers of creativity unfurl themselves to reflect the blossoming beauty of wonderful artefacts created by the karigars.

It is worth noting that there are three types of karigars primarily present at Kumartuli, which are the idol makers, the decoration artisans and the sculpturists. Idol makers comprise artisans who prepare picturesque idols of various Gods, Goddesses, deities, important, eminent persons and so on. Decoration artisans are involved in the making of decoration artefacts necessary for the decoration of idols. And Sculpturists are artisans who are involved in the making of statues of various Gods, Goddesses, figures of eminent personalities, monuments and so on, where statues made are of various types like bronze, cement, plaster of paris, etc. It is important to note that all these artisans belong to the unorganised sector. 93% of India's workforce is unorganised, making up roughly 290 million of the country's 317 million working population, according to the National Commission for Enterprises, making up a disproportionately large share of the workforce. According to their reports, the employees in these areas lack social security, employment security, and work security. The lack of legal rights to fair wages and a lack of employment stability are two ways that informalization frequently affects workers (RoyChowdhury, 2005). As per National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (2007), all unincorporated private businesses that are operated on a proprietary or partnership basis, are owned by individuals or households, engage in the sale and production of goods and services, and employ fewer than ten people overall make up the unorganised sector. Despite accounting for a sizable portion of India's economy, the unorganised sector is comparatively underrepresented in scholarly discourse and public policy support (Kabra, 2003). All these characteristics are omnipresent among the artisans of Kumartuli.

It is noteworthy that the occupations of all three categories of artisans of Kumartuli are largely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. A person's normal or primary work or business, particularly as a means of support, is referred to as their occupation. As per Cambridge Dictionary (2023), occupation can be defined as the type or nature of a person's employment. According to Collins Dictionary (2023), the terms "occupation," "business," "profession," and "trade" all relate to the activity that one routinely commits their time to, particularly their regular labour or means of subsisting. As per Oxford Dictionary (2023), occupation may be

defined as the work that someone performs, particularly to generate income. Occupational scientists contend that people choreograph their lives through their work, as well as the lives of their families, neighbourhoods, communities, and societies (Frank & Zemke, 2009). The term "occupation" is used here to refer to a person's individually created, one-time experience within a particular setting. A more general, culturally accepted concept regarding a type of action is called "activity" (Pierce, 2001). Occupation, according to Townsend (1997), is the active act of life and is not just a certain type of job. It is noteworthy that many artisans of Kumartuli transformed their occupations in 2020 amidst the Corona pandemic and have taken different occupations like vegetable selling, fish selling, cosmetics selling, groceries, tea shops and so on. What people alter in their daily lives as a result of a challenging circumstance is known as an occupational reconstruction. The following traits define occupational reconstructions: challenging situations; action with meaning and purpose, practices that are embodied, narrative, proper structure, transformations which are creative, voluntary participation and experimentation with hope (Frank & Muriithi, 2015). The present study defines occupational transformation as the shift or alteration in the job, work or activity of a worker or artisan or karigar or group of artisans owing to unavoidable challenging or difficult circumstances mainly to thrive and survive such onerous situation on one hand and to proceed or develop on the other hand to ensure a secure and sustainable future in the long run. When a group of individuals decides to take action on something, occupational reconstructions take place. The theory of occupational reconstruction provides a way to comprehend group efforts to solve societal issues (Frank & Santos, 2020).

It is noteworthy that there have been several works done in academic discourse regarding the different aspects of the unorganised sector. The issues faced by the terracotta or clay doll manufacturing business in Ghurni, Krishnanagar City, have been explored by Das (2018) and Jana (2015) in detail. Paul & Mondal (2018) explored the technology of idol-making activities in the Kumartuli neighbourhood of Kolkata, and Barua (2016) investigated the pandal makers' work in West Bengal. Banerjee (2017) investigated the working conditions of the artisans engaged in the idol-making activities of Kumartuli. Consequently, it is obvious that existing works of literature are scanty in the domain of the study of occupational transformation in the unorganised sector. The present study aims at foregrounding the phenomenon of occupational transformation among the Kumartuli artisans or karigars as a survival strategy amidst the onerous time of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is worth noting that the creative economic sector like that of the Kumartuli artisans encompassing the idol makers, decoration artisans and sculpturists has been greatly affected by the pandemic, especially since the lockdown period from March 2020. There was a total disruption in the business of all the three above-mentioned artisans of Kumartuli. Therefore, occupational transformation proved to be a helpless alternative for survival during the pandemic times. The present study finds that the occupational transformation proved helpful to the karigars even after easing out of the lockdown situations of the pandemic in 2021 and even in 2022 when the lockdown became almost non-existent. The present study finds that artisans or the karigars of all the above-mentioned three categories who transformed their parental occupations and adopted new occupations were in a much better situation compared with those who did not change from their heritage or parental occupations. The current study also throws some light into the different occupations adopted by the female artisans of Kumartuli to survive the pandemic

situation and supplement their family income. The present study also reflects upon the desire of the artisans of all three categories to return to their parental or heritage occupations. The present investigations' Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) analysis assists in identifying the factors that promote and obstruct the growth and development of Kumartuli artisans with respect to the urbanisation and geographic possibilities of Kolkata city. Therefore the present study demands more inclusive planning and policy measures by the planners, policymakers and administrators to ensure not only the long-term development of the karigars like that of Kumartuli artisans but also their survival during future pandemics and unforeseen shocks. The structure of the present investigation consists of an introduction, followed by aims and objectives, study area, methodology, analysis, discussion, and finally concluding with some policy implications.

2. Objectives

The following are the primary objectives of the current study:

- To analyze the role of occupational transformation in the survival and sustenance of the artisans of Kumartuli since the onset of the Corona pandemic.
- To study the different occupations adopted by the artisans during the pandemic times.
- To examine whether the artisans want to return or adopt their parental or heritage occupations after having transformed their occupations or not.

3. Study Area

The Kumartuli neighbourhood of Ward 9 of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) of the city of Kolkata serves as the research area for the current investigation. Historical accounts claim that Raja Krishnachandra of Krishnagar recruited craftspeople from Natore in modern-day Bangladesh to work in his region. These artisans eventually made their way to Krishnagar City's Ghurni neighbourhood in the Nadia district and began producing clay dolls and other artefacts there (Hazra, 1991). According to historical records, these skilled craftsmen moved to Kolkata later in quest of a better way of life and established the potters' colony of Kumartuli between the late 19th and the start of the 20th century (Sen, 2016). As mentioned above, there are three different types of craftsmen in the Kumartuli area: idol makers, decorators, and sculptors. According to information from the KMC office, there are about 500 of these artisans. Most of them are centred in Kumartuli, although some are dispersed across the Bagbazar and Kalighat areas of Kolkata. The aim of the current investigation is to study the survival of the artisans of the above-mentioned three categories through occupational transformations and adopting new activities by taking a sample size of 84 idol makers, 62 decoration artisans and 43 sculpturists. The sample size of craftsmen who did not transform their occupations includes 146 idol makers, 86 decoration artisans and 31 sculpturists. All these make up a total sample size of 452 craftsmen which includes the ones who transformed their occupations and the other ones who did not. In this light, it is important to note that the Kumartuli neighbourhood, which serves as the market for these craftsmen, is situated in the geographically advantageous centre of North Kolkata. This is because Kolkata is the state capital of West Bengal moreover, Kolkata is connected with the rest of the country by a good railway network including metro rail facilities and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose airport is also close to Kolkata facilitating international trade of the artisans of Kumartuli.

4. Methodology

The field information regarding the occupational transformation of the Kumartuli craftsmen as a consequence of the Corona pandemic has been collected through regular field visits and surveys by employing methods like questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation in-depth interviews and participatory rural appraisal. A SWOT analysis was first conducted to understand the geographical potential of the Kumartuli area and its craftsmen. A project, plan, organisation, or specific business activity may be studied and understood using the SWOT analysis (GURL, 2017). The SWOT analysis here enables us to see and analyse the advantages and disadvantages of Kumartuli as a whole, which has an impact on the business's activities in the market, as well as the supply and demand processes that govern the local artisans. Moreover, the survival of the craftsmen through occupational transformation is greatly determined by the strength aspect of the place of Kolkata as reflected in the SWOT analysis. The present study employs bar graph analysis to examine the diverse occupations adopted by the three above-mentioned artisans; bar graph is also used to analyze the diverse occupations adopted by the female artisans for survival during the pandemic; moreover, bar graph has also been used to examine the artisans who want to return to parental or heritage occupations after occupational transformations. Furthermore, line graph analysis for all the above-mentioned three craftsmen categories has been made to examine the scenario of average annual turnovers (in lakh rupees) of those artisans who opted for occupational transformation in comparison to those who didn't in response to the Corona pandemic.

5. Analysis

5.1. The SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis has been carried out to better understand the geographic potentials and locational characteristics of the Kumartuli region, as shown in Table 1. The analysis is important in this context of occupational transformation because annual turnovers of the karigars by the newly transformed occupations are largely dependent upon the geographic potentials of Kumartuli as a place located in the capital city of West Bengal, Kolkata.

SWOT Analysis for Kumartuli and its craftsmen with regard to occupational transformation	
Strength	In the centre of Kolkata, the Kumartuli region is located in a favourable geographic area. It is located close to Kolkata's airport. Additionally, Kolkata has good access to the trains of two significant divisions, Sealdah and Howrah. Additionally, the Kumartuli region has excellent rail connections via Kolkata Metro. It is close to the metro rail stop for the Sovabazar neighbourhood. Moreover, kumartuli has excellent connectivity with River Ganges which facilitates the transportation of raw materials and finished products. Additionally,

	<p>Kumartuli is close to the Burrabazar region. This is a crucial location where the craftspeople who make decorations artefacts buy their decoration items in bulk from the market. Additionally, the Kumartuli region serves as a market for the distribution of sculptures, ornamental items, and idols. It is also important to note that Kolkata city draws visitors from all over the world because it serves as the state capital of West Bengal. Foreign visitors can travel easily thanks to the airport's proximity to Kolkata.</p>
Weakness	<p>The area around Kumartuli is quite crowded, and the sculptors, decorators, and idol manufacturers lack adequate workspace and storage facilities. During the puja or holiday seasons, idols and statues of gods fill almost all of Kumartuli's winding alleyways. There is hardly any space left for walking. Additionally, the artisans labour in filthy surroundings. They spend all of their time in their hazardous working studios, where they also sleep and eat.</p>
Opportunity	<p>A market for the distribution of sculptures, artefacts for decorating, and idols can be found in Kumartuli. As the state of West Bengal's capital, Kolkata draws visitors from all over the world. The adjacent villages of Uluberia supply the raw materials used by the idol makers, such as mud, straws and bamboo, via road transportation using lorries and vans. The artists who create decoration artefacts have their sources of raw materials from Krishnanagar, a city in Nadia. It also originates in Surat, New Delhi, Mumbai's Kalyan, and other places. The Burra Bazar market in Kolkata is where you may get these items.</p>
Threat	<p>Over the years, the artisans have been severely impacted by traffic congestion and fire outbreaks caused by short circuits or accidents. Their jam-packed stores are</p>

	<p>demolished. Due to congestion, these stores burn readily during fire outbreaks. Rain and flood events have a significant impact on idol producers, especially the artists who create decoration artefacts, and who suffer from a lack of adequate storage facilities.</p> <p>The poor craftsmen's life have suffered significant loss and ruin due to the COVID-19 pandemic's quick spread.</p>
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Table 1: SWOT analysis of the place of Kumartuli and its craftsmen.

5.2. Statistical analysis reflecting the occupational transformation of the craftsmen of Kumartuli

This section reflects the occupational transformation of all the above-mentioned three artisan categories (figures 1,2 and 3) as well as that of the female artisans (figure 4). Analysis has been made to reflect upon the artisans who want to return to their heritage or parental occupations after the easing out of the pandemic (figure 5). Moreover, an examination has also been performed over the average annual turnovers (in lakhs rupees) over the years for both the craftsmen groups who transformed their occupations and who didn't of all the three above-mentioned categories (figures 6, 7 and 8) in the pre-COVID-19 stage (2017, 2018 and 2019) and in the post-COVID-19 stage (2020, 2021 and 2022). By using a sample size of 84 idol makers, 62 decorative craftsmen, and 43 sculptors, the current analysis aims to examine how the survival of the artisans of the aforementioned three categories is achieved through occupational modifications and the adoption of new activities. 146 artisans who manufacture idols, 86 artisans who make decoration artefacts, and 31 artisans who make sculptures make up the sample of artisans who did not change their line of work. These collectively make up a sample size of 452 artisans, including both those who changed their line of work and those who did not. This sample size of 452 artisans also includes 83 female artisans who changed their occupations in response to the Corona pandemic.

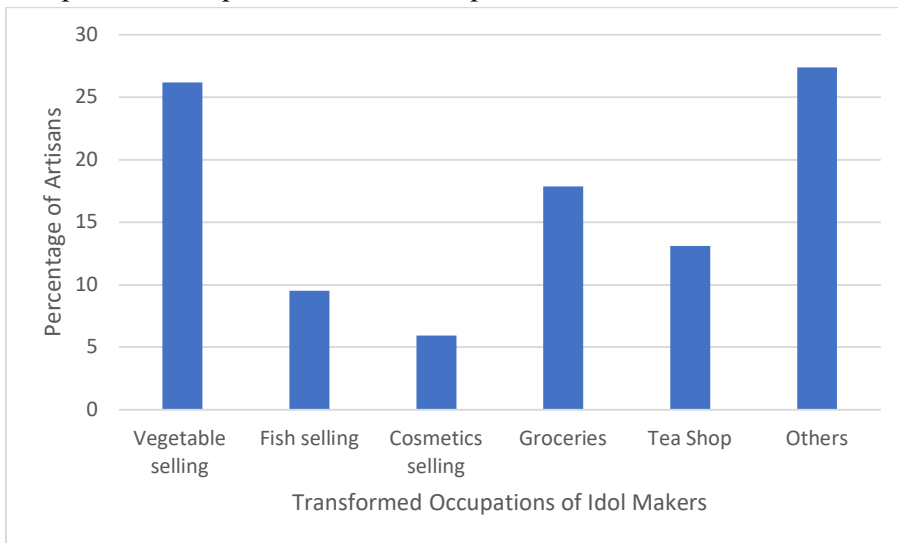


Figure 1: Occupational transformation by the idol makers.

Figure 1 shows the different occupations adopted by the idol makers since the onset of the pandemic in 2020 like vegetable selling, fish selling, cosmetics selling, groceries, and so on. The category of others includes diverse occupations in which the idol makers have involved themselves like sweet shops, flower shops and so on.

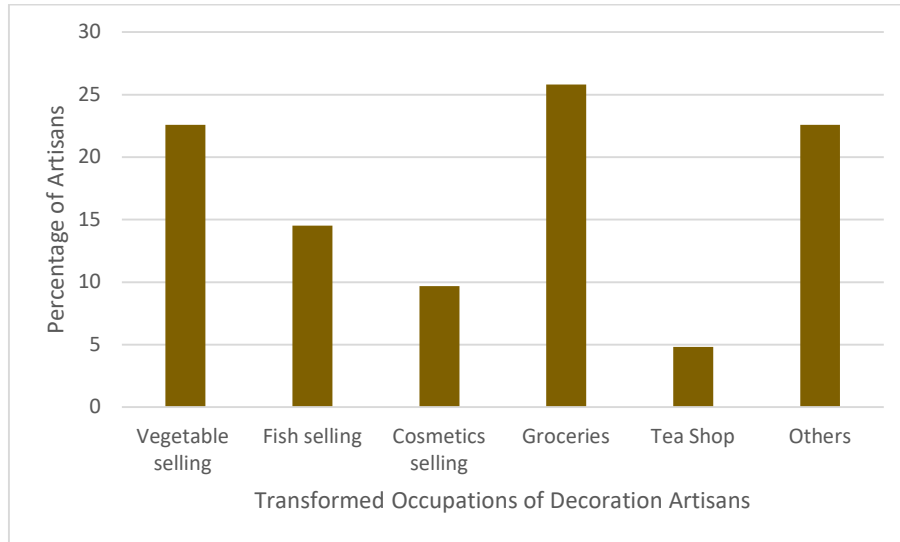


Figure 2: Occupational transformation by the decoration artisans.

Figure 2 depicts the various jobs that decoration artisans have taken on since the pandemic began in 2020, including those selling vegetables, fish, cosmetics, groceries, and so forth. The grouping "others" comprises a variety of jobs that decoration artisans have held, such as those in candy stores, flower shops, hospitals, saloons, restaurants and other establishments.

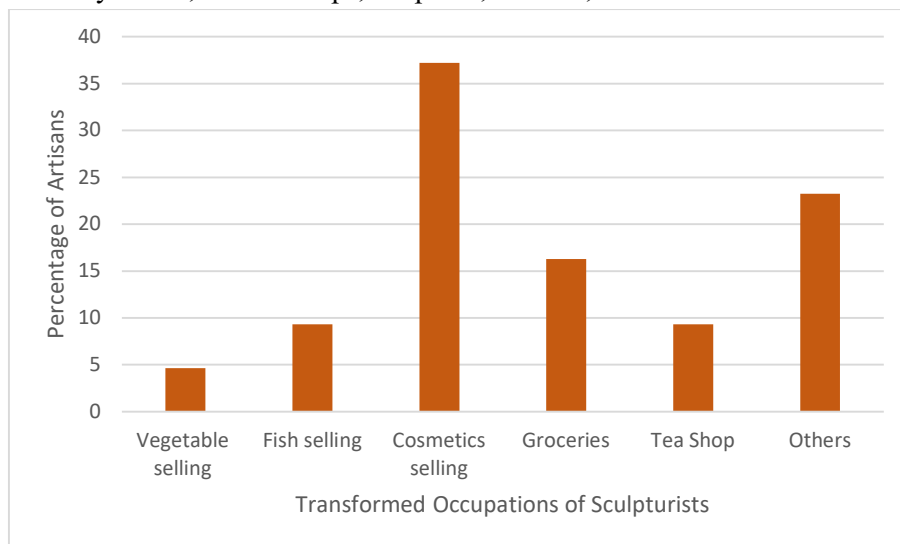


Figure 3: Occupational transformation by the sculpturists.

Figure 3 depicts the various jobs that sculpturists have taken on since the pandemic began in 2020, including those selling vegetables, fish, cosmetics, groceries, and so forth. The grouping "others" comprises a variety of jobs that sculpturists have held, such as those in candy stores, factories, offices, hotels, nursing homes, construction activities, hospitals, saloons, restaurants and other establishments.

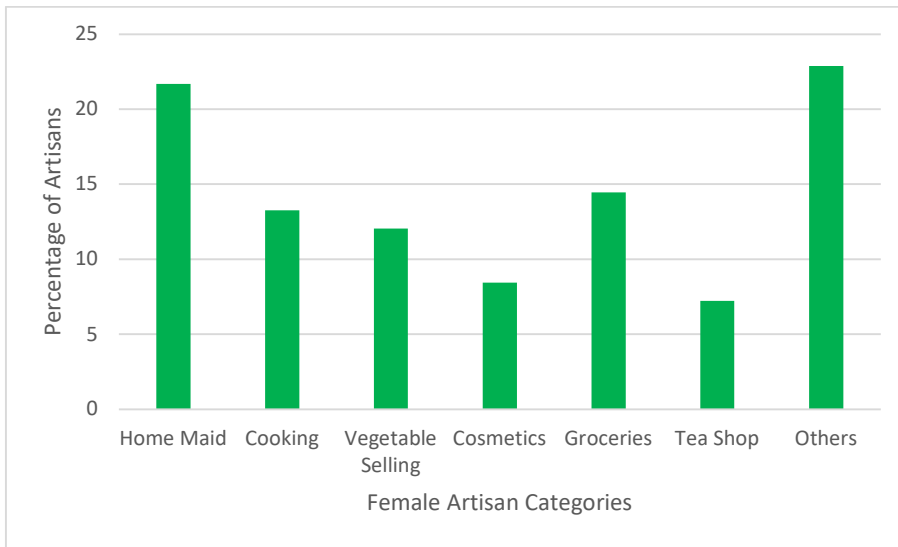


Figure 4: Occupational transformation by the female artisans.

Figure 4 depicts the various activities that the women artisans of Kumartuli have taken since the beginning of the pandemic and lockdown from March 2020 like home maid, cooking, vegetable selling, cosmetics, groceries, tea shop and so on. The category of others includes construction activities, selling of fish, flowers, bakeries, selling of, fruits, bread and Rotis and so on.

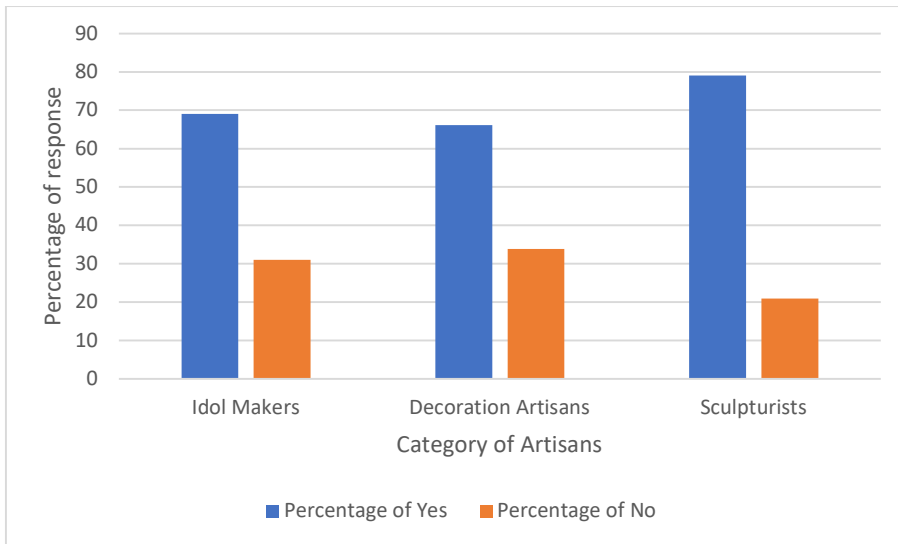


Figure 5: Percentage of craftsmen who want to return to their parental or heritage occupations.

Figure 5 reflects the desire of the artisans of all three categories to return to their parental or heritage occupations. Though it is found that the majority of the artisans of all three categories want to return to their heritage occupations, a significant percentage of artisans do not want to return to their parental occupations and carry that in the long run. The majority of the younger generation artisans lack the interest to carry forward the heritage occupations.

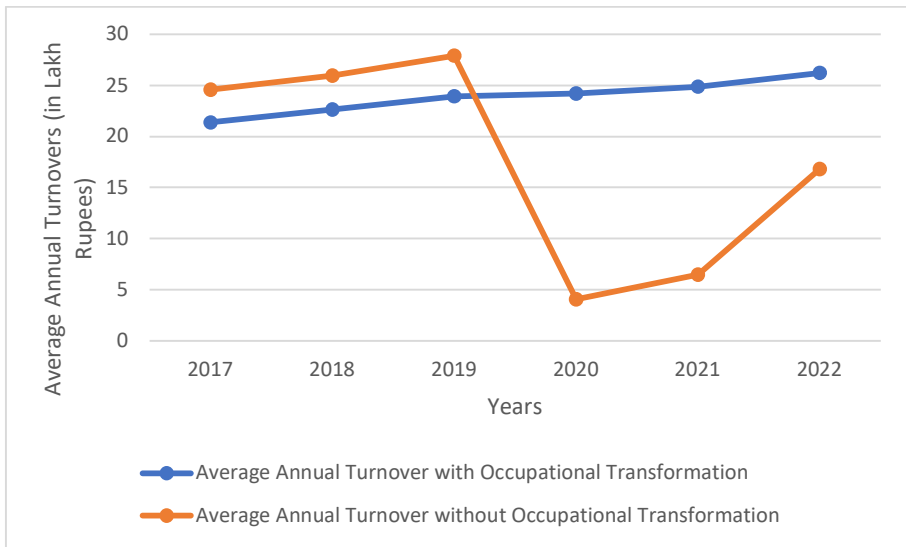


Figure 6: Average annual turnovers (in lakh rupees) of idol makers with occupational transformation and without occupational transformation.

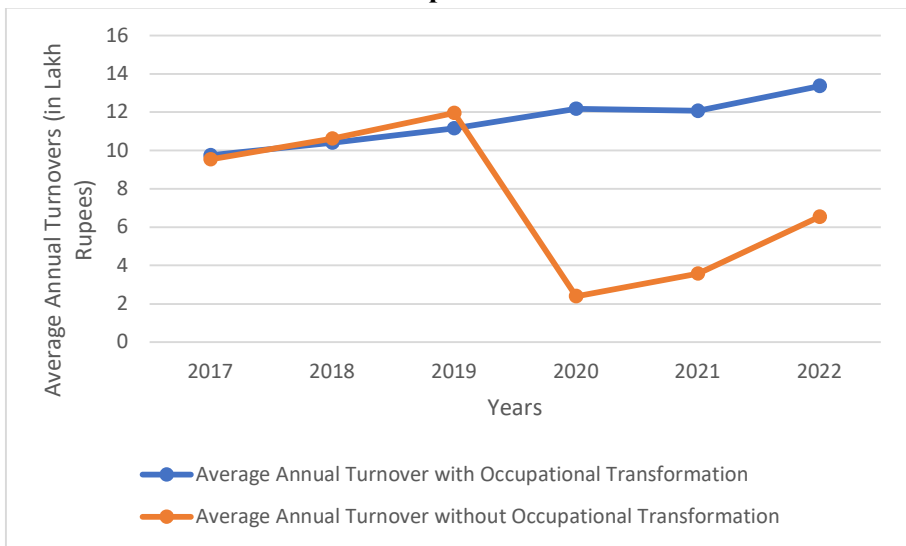


Figure 7: Average annual turnovers (in lakh rupees) of decoration artisans with occupational transformation and without occupational transformation.

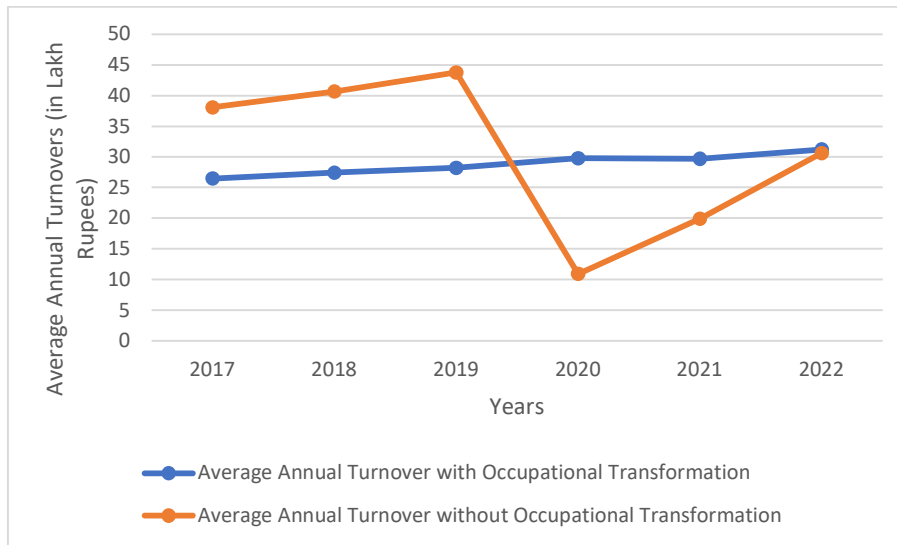


Figure 8: Average annual turnovers (in lakh rupees) of sculpturists with occupational transformation and without occupational transformation.

The above analysis clearly reflects that the average annual turnovers (in lakh rupees) of all three artisan categories who transformed their occupations remained more or less consistent during the post-COVID-19 stage (2020, 2021 and 2022) compared with the pre-COVID-19 stage (2017, 2018 and 2019); whereas there has been a drastic decrement of the average annual turnovers of all the artisan categories in the post-COVID-19 stage (2020, 2021 and 2022) compared with the pre-COVID-19 stage (2017, 2018 and 2019) who did not transform their occupations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (figures 6, 7 and 8).

6. Discussion

6.1. Occupational transformations among all the artisan categories of Kumartuli

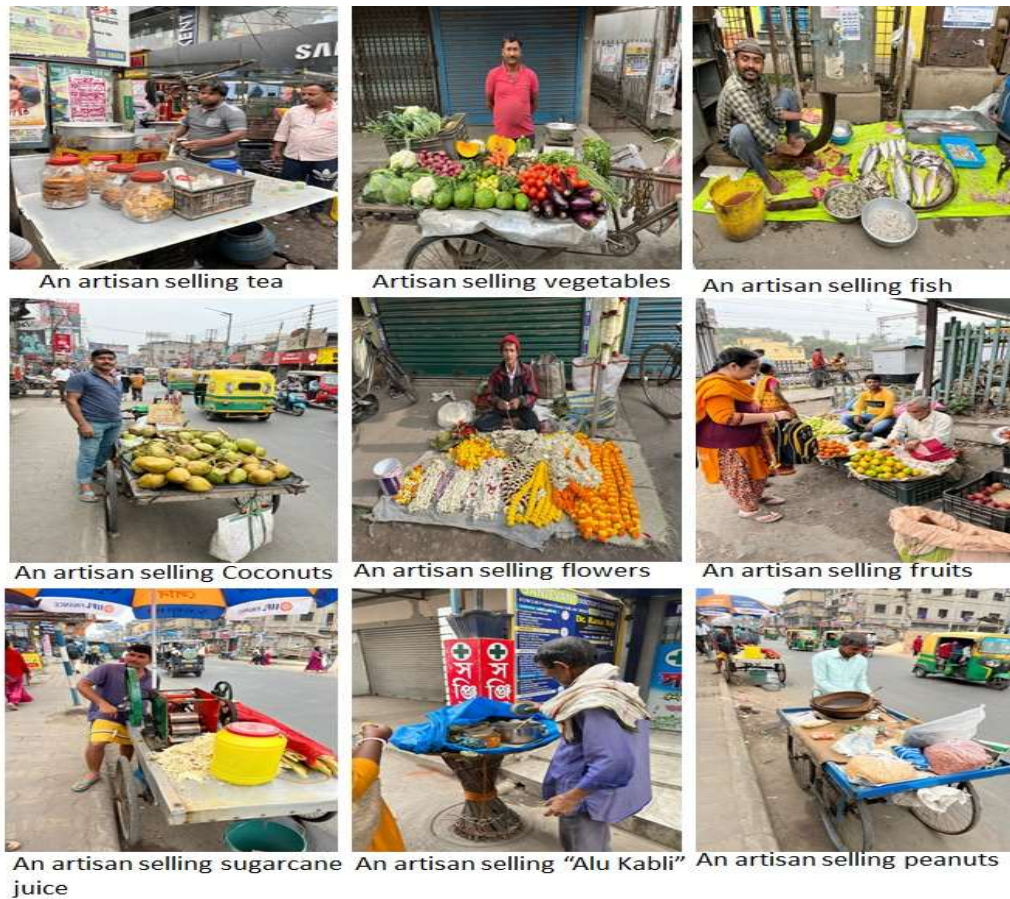


Figure 9: Different occupations adopted by the karigars of Kumartuli amidst the Corona pandemic.

In response to the Corona pandemic and its consequent lockdown, the idol makers have taken on several other occupations to supplement their income like vegetable selling, fish selling, cosmetics selling, groceries, tea shops and so on. A significant percentage of idol makers have opted for vegetable selling and groceries. And many idol makers have opted for different other occupations like sweet shops, flower shops, construction works, restaurants, hotels and so on (figure 1).

Owing to the onerous effect of the Corona pandemic, the decoration artisans have opted for other activities like vegetable selling, fish selling, cosmetics selling, groceries, tea shops and so on. The highest percentage of decoration artisans have opted for groceries, followed by vegetable selling, fish selling and so on. A sizeable percentage of decoration karigars are in the "others" category which includes multifarious activities like candy stores, flower shops, saree businesses, clothing businesses, hospitals, saloons, restaurants and so on (figure 2).

Due to the disastrous effect of the Corona pandemic, the sculpturists have also opted for other occupations like vegetable selling, fish selling, cosmetics selling, groceries, tea shops and so on. It is observed that the highest percentage of sculpturists have opted for cosmetics selling followed by groceries and so on. The "others" group includes a variety of activities that the sculpturists have opted for like working in sweet shops, factories, offices, hotels, nursing homes, construction activities, hospitals, saloons, restaurants and other establishments (figure 3).

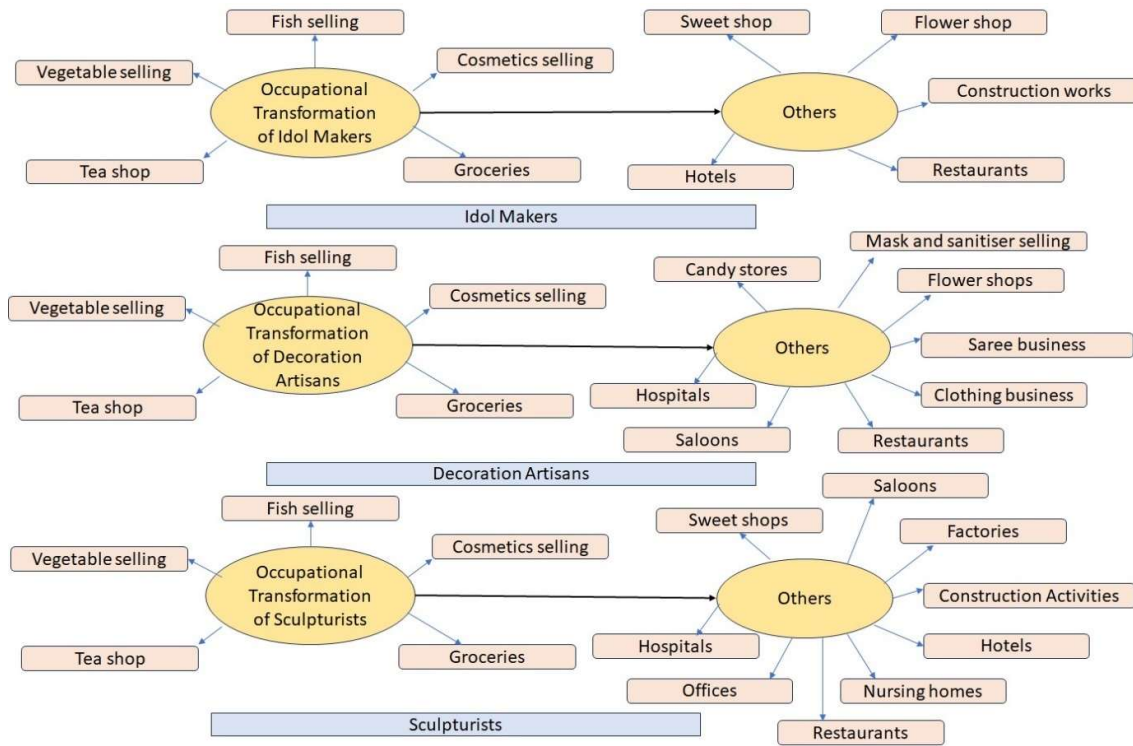


Figure 10: Chart showing Occupational transformation by the karigars of Kumartuli including the main occupations and the “others” or the miscellaneous type in response to the Corona pandemic.

6.2. Stability under unstable conditions imposed by the Corona pandemic

The analysis above shows that, compared to the pre-COVID-19 stage (2017, 2018 and 2019), the average annual turnovers (in lakh rupees) of all three artisan categories who changed their occupations remained more or less consistent during the post-COVID-19 stage (2020, 2021 and 2022); however, there has been a sharp decline in the average annual turnovers of all the artisan categories in the post-COVID-19 stage (2020, 2021 and 2022) who did not transform their occupations (figures 6, 7 and 8).

Therefore, it can be said that there has been some economic stability in terms of the annual turnovers in the business of all the above-mentioned three artisan categories compared with those who did not transform their occupations. The artisans who did not transform their occupations faced a collapse in their business, characterized by soaring rises in raw materials prices, rise in labour costs, lack of workers, and low demand including disastrous effects on the supply chain mechanisms of these artisans. Compared to these artisans, the ones who transformed their occupations had better incomes and annual turnovers and thus are in a much more stable situation. Moreover, idol making, decoration artefacts making and sculpture making are all items of pleasure; such items were rarely demanded during the Corona pandemic. Compared to this, most of the occupations of the artisans who transformed their occupations are necessary activities. And such necessary activities were allowed by the government even during the pandemic times partially for a limited time to stop the spread of Corona virus like vegetable selling, fish selling, offices, hospitals, mask selling, sanitiser selling and so on as these are emergency services. Therefore, these categories of artisans

somehow maintained a stable income and survived the pandemic times. Furthermore, these artisan categories were also benefitted by the geographic locational attributes of Kolkata which is also the state capital of West Bengal.

6.3. Female karigar or artisan's participation in other occupations

The present investigation analysed the occupational transformation among female artisans by taking a sample size of 83. Figure 4 shows the different jobs that the women artisans of Kumartuli have held from the start of the pandemic and lockdown beginning in March 2020, including those of a home maid, cook, vegetable seller, cosmetics salesperson, grocery store clerk, and tea shop, among others. Where the highest percentage of female artisans involved themselves in home maid services.

Other activities in this area include selling fish, flowers, bread, fruits, Rotis, bakeries and so on. One of the most important activities in which the female artisans involved themselves is the making of masks and sanitisers and selling them to the public and distributing them to the local suppliers and distributors. This proved to be a very important activity during the lockdown situations of the pandemic, where health was a major concern. Moreover, the female’s participation in the other activities assisted in the supplementation of family income helping in the maintenance of stability during the uncertain times of the Corona pandemic.

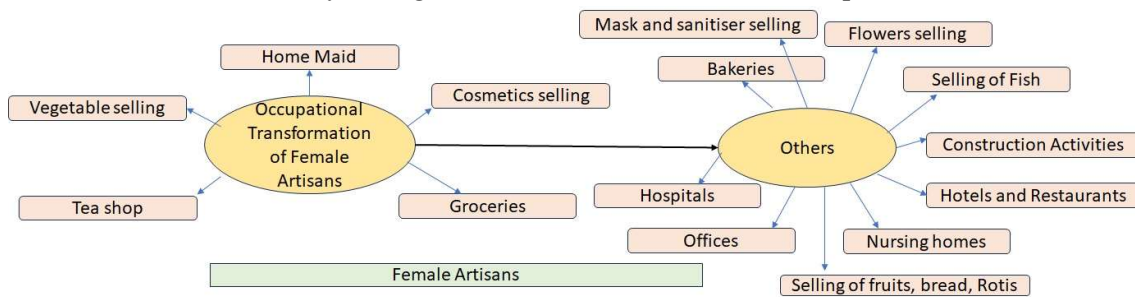


Figure 11: Chart showing Occupational transformation by the female artisans or karigars of Kumartuli including the main occupations and the “others” or the miscellaneous type in response to the Corona pandemic.



Figure 12: A sample female artisan of Kumartuli Ms. Bela Pal engaged in home maid services to assist her family during the Corona pandemic.

6.4. Interest of the Karigars to carry forward the heritage occupation

It is noteworthy that all three occupations of idol making, decoration artefacts making and sculpture making are the heritage activities of Kumartuli unfurling a mix of old tradition and modernization with the changes in time. These artisans have already been witnessing many burning issues in their businesses like, rise in the price of raw materials, shortage of labour supply, lack of support from government and NGOs, shortage of space for storing raw materials and finished products and most importantly the lack of interest among the young generation to carry forward the heritage occupation. These problems have been aggravated severely by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many artisans are losing interest in carrying forward the heritage occupation. Among them, the majority are young generation artisans. The young generation of artisans is mostly interested in taking different occupations like doctor, engineer, service, teaching and so on after receiving an education. One of the most prominent reasons behind this is the uncertainties looming over their creative economic businesses. The fear of losses and joblessness mostly grasps the minds of the younger generation of artisans.

The desire of the craftspeople in all three categories to go back to their parent's or heritage occupations is depicted in Figure 5. However, a sizeable portion of artisans do not wish to return to their parental occupations and continue over the long term, despite the fact that the majority of artisans in all three categories desire to return to their ancestral jobs. Most of the younger generation's artisans lack the passion to continue the traditional professions. Moreover, the younger generation is more apprehensive regarding future pandemics and shocks.



Figure 13: A young generation artisan, Mr. Babun Pal working in his workshop at Kumartuli.

6.5. An examination of policies and measures needed to be undertaken by the government for the welfare of the artisans of Kumartuli

The current study foregrounds the fact that strong inclusive planning by the government, policymakers, administrators and planners is a must for the long-term survival of the artisans of Kumartuli. This is very much relevant in the context of the occupational transformation by

the artisans and the onerous effect of the Corona pandemic. The present study proposes some measures that if taken can be of great help to the artisans. These measures are:

- The craftspeople may receive direct funding from the government.
- Additionally, it can offer craftsmen credit and loans at low-interest rates, similar to differential rates of interest (DRIs). This can help in the checking of poor, helpless artisans who fall prey in the hands of giant moneylenders and ultimately get exploited in the long run.
- As the craftsmen's creations are occasionally destroyed by fires, cyclones, monsoon rains, and other natural disasters, the government must make an effort to provide adequate storage facilities for them and must provide insurance facilities to the artisans against such damages.
- To preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture, the government may offer the artisans alternative jobs and pursuits during the pandemic, such as hiring them in the construction industry, bars, or hospitals. However, they must be returned to their traditional occupations. Such alternative jobs must be provided according to the type of parental occupation, the artisans are involved in. This is very important as the present study finds that the artisans who opted for occupational transformation are in a much more stable condition compared to those artisans who did not opt for occupational transformation in response to the Corona pandemic.
- Additionally, it is possible to incorporate the craftsmen of Kumartuli into art institutes, which would help them pass on knowledge and expertise.
- To maintain the rich heritage of our tradition and culture, the government must make an effort to persuade the younger generation to continue in their parents' original professions, such as idol-making, creating decorative items, and creating sculptures.
- The artisans who did not transform their occupations must be identified by the government and they must be given direct financial assistance which would help in the revival of their businesses. As per the current investigation, the idol makers and the decoration artisans are in desperate need of such assistance.
- The government must ensure flexibility and mobility of international trade of all the artisan categories of Kumartuli to ensure sustainable demand and supply chain mechanisms of these artisans in the long run.
- Additionally, it can be said that the provision of GI (Geographical Indication) tag to the creative economic activities of Kumartuli can be of great help to the artisans both in terms of domestic and international trade mechanisms.
- There must be adequate preparedness on the part of the government to protect these karigars belonging to the unorganised sector from future shocks and pandemics.
- Moreover, NGOs must be encouraged by the government to take active participation in the provision of assistance to these helpless artisans during unprecedented events like the Corona pandemic.

7. Conclusion

The present study concludes that occupational transformation has greatly assisted in the survival of the artisans of Kumartuli amidst the Corona pandemic. All three categories of artisans benefitted from it as well as it proved to be beneficial to the female artisans as well.

However, it must be borne in mind that occupational transformation was a helpless alternative choice by the artisans and is not a permanent solution to the problems faced by the artisans. The present study also found that there were many artisans whose conditions did not improve despite the occupational transformation process. This is because one must keep in mind that the Corona pandemic aggravated the already existing problems of the artisans as mentioned above who have been facing them over the years.

It's also important to note that the artisans of Kumartuli engage in informal heritage activities. Therefore, the government must adopt more thorough and inclusive planning in order to resuscitate the business of these craftspeople. In order to preserve the rich heritage of our tradition and culture, the government must strive to encourage the younger generation to continue in their parents' original activities, such as idol-making, creating decorative items, and creating sculptures. As our mother Earth may face numerous additional pandemics and shocks in the near future, the government must anticipate more inclusive planning for a more sustainable future for all the artisans of Kumartuli while keeping in mind the promise of the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals in the long run.

8. Conflict of interest statement

There are no declared conflicts of interest with any person, organisation, or stakeholder in the current study.

9. Acknowledgement

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