

## Research Paper

## Analizing the Carpet Producers's Network of Access to Silk Thread in the Rural Areas of Zanjan County

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**ABSTRACT**

In this study, the supply, access and use of high-quality threads required for production of silk carpets is discussed as one of the crucial issues that rural carpet weavers or producers deal with. This is the process that affects their production, productivity and income. The purpose of this study is to understand the sources and methods that rural carpet weavers apply to get an access to various threads used in silk carpets. The data were collected using a case study methodology through techniques focusing on groups, semi-structured interviews, diagramming, document analysis and observation. The participants were 90 rural household silk carpet weavers in 23 villages of Zanjan county and the market actors in the cities of Zanjan, Qom, Esfahan, Tabriz and Kashan. According to the results, access of the rural weavers to threads for producing carpets is different in terms of production methods. Investigating the methods of supplying handmade silk carpet threads in Zanjan county showed they depend on the methods of carpet production. Rural carpet weavers produce carpets through a self-production method and an entrepreneurial wage-based production method. The silk threads required for carpet production are used in different types including, thick weft, wrap threads and knots. In the self-production method, all the production inputs including threads are provided by carpet weavers.

**Key words:**

Rural carpet weavers, Silk carpet, Thread, Supply chain, Women

**Extended Abstract****1. Introduction**

**H**andmade carpet is a product with a long history in Iran. This product has a high value added and can provide many job opportunities, particularly for rural families. Like production activities, handmade carpet production requires various resources.

Proper physical inputs are among the production resources required, whose proper quality leads to improved carpet quality. The supply, access and use of required threads with high quality to produce silk carpets is discussed as one of the crucial issues that rural carpet weavers or producers have to deal with. That issue affects the production, productivity and income of carpet weavers. The purpose of this study is to understand the sources and methods that rural carpet weavers apply to access various threads used in silk carpets.

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## 2. Methodology

The data were collected using a case study methodology through participatory techniques, such as focus groups, semi-structured interviews, diagramming, document analysis and observation. The participants of this research comprised two types of population. The first population was silk-carpet-producing rural families who lived in 23 villages of Zanjan county, in Zanjan province located in the north west of Iran. The second group of participants consisted of market actors who worked in the cities of Zanjan, Qom, Esfahan, Tabriz and Kashan in Iran. They served as input providers, carpet salesmen and entrepreneurs investing in carpet production.

## 3. Results

Silk threads are both produced inside Iran and imported from outside the country. Internal threads are mostly consumed as wrapped threads (called Cheleh), but, because of their high weight, carpet weavers are not much interested in using them. Moreover, the silk produced inside Iran has a lower quality in comparison to the silk produced in China. Access of rural carpet producers to the required threads is different in terms of production methods. Investigating the methods of supplying handmade silk threads in Zanjan county showed that they depend on the methods of carpet production. Rural carpet weavers produce carpets through the self-production method and the entrepreneurial wage-based production method.

## 4. Discussion

The silk threads required for carpet production are used in different types including thick weft, wrap threads and knots. In the self-production method, all the production inputs including threads are provided by carpet weavers themselves. These carpet producers pay less when they buy their dyed threads from wholesale markets in the cities of Qom and Kashan (located almost 450 km away from Zanjan City) rather than from the carpet markets or dealers of Zanjan. In this production method, most rural producers provide their required threads through several dealers either in Zanjan or in other cities. However, in the entrepreneurial wage-based production method, inputs including threads are provided by entrepreneurs. The relation of carpet producers with entrepreneurs takes place directly or through one or more dealers.

## 5. Conclusion

According to the findings of the study, most silk threads used by rural carpet weavers are produced outside Iran,

particularly in China, showing the high dependency of Iran's carpet industry on other silk-producing countries. This has increased carpet production costs and reduced carpet weavers' profits. In addition to the dependency on overseas countries for silk threads, rural carpet producers are dependent on input providers for threads and dyeing them in other cities rather than in Zanjan city. This occurs through several intermediate dealers, which increases thread prices for the producers. In the self-production method, producers do not have an access to good-quality threads due to insufficient finance and knowledge and poor social networks in input markets. On the other hand, in the entrepreneurial wage-based production method, because of high socio-economic capitals of entrepreneurs, threads have a better quality, though this quality makes threads so delicate that it is difficult for rural women to weave them. It is suggested to develop production and processing enterprises for silk threads in Iran and in Zanjan province in order to provide threads with a good quality and lower prices for rural families. Establishing mechanized dyeing enterprises in the province can support the producers of both Zanjan province and other Iran's areas and provide job opportunities inside the province. Improving rural carpet production organisations to have sufficient financial resources and proper knowledge can reduce the role of dealers and support rural carpet producers to access threads with a good quality and at a low price. Capacity building in these organisations can also help them act much more effectively in the silk market value chain to respond to final consumers' demands in terms of both carpet input markets and silk carpet markets.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest