



Research Article

Weaving Futures: A Qualitative Review of Jamdani at the Nexus of Tradition, Innovation, Sustainability, and Education

Ananna Mostafiz*

Department of Fashion Design & Technology, Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Abstract

Jamdani weaving, recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Bengal, represents a distinctive intersection of artistry, cultural identity, and socio-economic history. Despite its historical significance, this centuries-old craft faces increasing challenges due to mechanization, the expansion of fast fashion, and the gradual decline of intergenerational knowledge transmission. This study explores Jamdani through a qualitative literature review, focusing on its position at the intersection of tradition, design innovation, sustainable enterprise, and education. Drawing on Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis approach, relevant academic studies, heritage reports, and fashion-related research were examined. The findings indicate that these four dimensions are deeply interconnected: tradition sustains cultural continuity, innovation enables adaptation to changing markets, sustainable enterprise supports livelihoods, and education ensures long-term skill transmission. At the same time, the study identifies several gaps, particularly the limited availability of field-based research and the need for stronger integration between research, policy, and education. By proposing the concept of "weaving futures," this paper positions Jamdani not as a static heritage artifact, but as an evolving cultural system. The findings offer insights for researchers, designers, educators, and policymakers working toward sustainable cultural practices in a globalized context.

Keywords

Jamdani Weaving, Cultural Heritage, Design Innovation, Sustainable Enterprise, Qualitative Review, Education, Sustainable Fashion

1. Introduction

Handloom weaving in South Asia has long extended beyond textile production, functioning as a medium through which identity, memory, and cultural values are expressed. Within this broader tradition, Jamdani weaving occupies a particularly significant position. Known for its intricate motifs and labor-intensive techniques, it reflects both artistic excellence and deep-rooted cultural meaning.

Beyond Jamdani specifically, traditional craft practices have been examined through broader cultural and sociological perspectives, highlighting their role in shaping identity, taste, and social distinction [2, 3, 13]. These perspectives suggest that crafts such as Jamdani are not merely economic activities but complex cultural systems embedded within wider social structures.

Despite this recognition, Jamdani today faces an uncertain

*Correspondence: Ananna Mostafiz (csrsd1410@gmail.com)

Received: 3 March 2026; Accepted: 20 March 2026; Published: 2 April 2026



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2026. Published by Science Publishing Group. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

future. Mechanized production and the dominance of fast fashion have reduced the competitiveness of handmade textiles, while younger generations are increasingly reluctant to continue weaving due to economic instability. Studies focusing on artisan communities further highlight persistent structural challenges, including income instability and limited institutional support [9-11, 21]. As a result, traditional knowledge that was once transmitted informally across generations is gradually declining.

Much of the existing literature examines Jamdani from specific perspectives, such as historical documentation or livelihood analysis. While valuable, these approaches often remain fragmented. This study therefore adopts a broader perspective by examining how tradition, innovation, sustainability, and education interact with one another, presenting Jamdani as a continuously evolving practice rather than a static tradition.

The objectives of this study are:

- 1) To examine the major themes in the literature on Jamdani weaving, with particular attention to tradition, design innovation, sustainable enterprise, and education.
- 2) To analyze how these dimensions interact in shaping the present condition and future possibilities of Jamdani.
- 3) To identify key gaps in existing research and highlight implications for policy, education, and future study.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative literature review approach to examine the evolving discourse surrounding Jamdani weaving. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the topic, sources were collected from academic databases including Scopus, Google Scholar, and Web of Science.

Keywords such as Jamdani, handloom weaving, sustainable fashion, design innovation, and craft education guided the search process. Only peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and institutional reports were included to ensure academic rigor.

The collected literature was analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework [4]. This process involved coding the data, identifying recurring patterns, and organizing them into coherent thematic categories. Four major themes emerged: tradition and heritage, design innovation, sustainable enterprise, and education. These themes form the conceptual foundation of the "weaving futures" framework.

The review process was guided by the stated objectives, which informed the selection, categorization, and interpretation of the literature.

3. Thematic Literature Review and Findings

3.1. Tradition and Heritage

Jamdani weaving is often described as "woven air," reflecting its delicate structure and artistic precision. Rooted in the

historical muslim tradition of Bengal, it has long symbolized cultural identity and craftsmanship transmitted across generations [1]. UNESCO's recognition has enhanced its global visibility, yet this acknowledgment has not resolved the structural challenges faced by artisans [23].

Historical analyses indicate that colonial disruption, industrial competition, and modern mass production have significantly weakened traditional weaving systems [18]. Consequently, Jamdani represents both resilience and vulnerability as a form of intangible cultural heritage sustained by tradition yet challenged by economic pressures.

3.2. Design Innovation

Innovation plays a crucial role in ensuring the continued relevance of Jamdani in contemporary markets. Scholars emphasize the importance of integrating traditional motifs with modern design practices to appeal to global consumers [5]. The use of digital tools such as CAD and AI-assisted design has further expanded creative possibilities [16].

However, innovation must be approached cautiously. Excessive commercialization risks diluting the cultural authenticity of Jamdani [7]. Therefore, a balanced approach is required, one in which innovation enhances rather than replaces traditional craftsmanship. Related discussions in slow fashion literature further highlight the need to rethink production and consumption systems toward more sustainable and ethically grounded practices [6, 8].

3.3. Sustainable Enterprise

Jamdani has gained recognition within the global movement toward sustainable and ethical fashion. Its handmade production process aligns with environmentally responsible practices and supports fair labor conditions [14]. As a result, it is increasingly recognized as a viable model for sustainable enterprise.

Despite this potential, artisans continue to face challenges such as limited market access, inadequate policy support, and lack of entrepreneurial training [9, 20]. Sustainable development of Jamdani requires systems that empower artisans as active stakeholders in the value chain rather than passive producers. From a policy perspective, sustainable craft development has also been linked to broader cultural policy frameworks that seek to balance economic growth with heritage preservation [12].

3.4. Educational Dimension

Education is a critical yet underexplored aspect of Jamdani's sustainability. While existing research highlights its artistic value, fewer studies address how weaving knowledge is transmitted to future generations. Integrating Jamdani into vocational training, design education, and community programs can play a transformative role [19, 22].

Education not only preserves technical skills but also fos-

ters creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurial capacity. Without structured educational support, the long-term continuity of Jamdani remains uncertain.

3.5. Integrated Nexus: Weaving Futures

Bringing these four dimensions together reveals that Jamdani is better understood not as a fixed cultural artifact, but as a dynamic and evolving system. Each dimension—tradition, design innovation, sustainable enterprise, and education—plays a distinct role, yet none operates independently. Instead, they interact in ways that shape both the present condition and the future possibilities of the craft.

Tradition provides the cultural foundation of Jamdani, preserving its identity, symbolism, and techniques across generations. However, tradition alone cannot ensure continuity in a rapidly changing global context. Design innovation enables adaptation, allowing Jamdani to engage with contemporary aesthetics and market demands while retaining its cultural essence.

Sustainable enterprise introduces an essential economic dimension. Without stable livelihoods and fair market structures, even culturally significant practices struggle to survive. This highlights the importance of positioning artisans as active participants within a broader value chain.

Education acts as a connecting force across these dimensions. It supports skill transmission, encourages creative experimentation, and fosters entrepreneurial awareness. Through both formal and informal learning systems, education helps ensure that Jamdani remains relevant to future generations.

Theoretical perspectives from social and material culture studies further reinforce this understanding by emphasizing the interconnected roles of people, objects, and networks in shaping craft practices [15, 24, 25].

Taken together, these interrelated elements form the “weaving futures” framework, emphasizing that sustainability depends on continuously negotiating the relationship between heritage and change.

4. Discussion

Jamdani can be understood as a complex and interconnected system in which cultural, economic, and educational factors continuously interact. Tradition provides a foundation, but innovation becomes necessary—not as a replacement, but as a means of extending relevance. Without sustainable economic structures, even innovative practices may not endure.

Education emerges as particularly important. In many weaving communities in Bangladesh, artisans face irregular income and limited institutional support, discouraging younger generations. Educational initiatives can help bridge this gap by combining skill development with entrepreneurial awareness.

Global studies on textile circulation further demonstrate

how value and meaning are continuously redefined within changing economic systems [17]. Comparisons with other heritage crafts such as Indian handloom or Indonesian batik indicate that these challenges reflect broader global patterns.

5. Implications

5.1. Academic Contributions

This study contributes to cultural heritage and sustainability research by presenting Jamdani as a dynamic and evolving system.

5.2. Industry Applications

Jamdani demonstrates how heritage-based design can coexist with modern fashion while promoting ethical production.

5.3. Educational Opportunities

Educational institutions can play a key role in preserving and evolving traditional crafts.

5.4. Policy Directions

Policy support is essential to ensure artisan sustainability and improved market access.

6. Conclusion

Jamdani weaving is often viewed as a symbol of cultural heritage; however, it is more accurately understood as an evolving practice. Its sustainability depends not solely on tradition, nor entirely on innovation or market forces, but on how effectively tradition, innovation, sustainability, and education can be aligned.

This study shows that Jamdani represents both heritage and possibility. While deeply rooted in history, it also demonstrates the capacity to adapt to contemporary challenges. However, achieving this requires stronger connections between research, policy, and education, as well as more field-based investigations.

Ultimately, Jamdani illustrates that traditional crafts are not merely remnants of the past. Under appropriate conditions, they can continue to shape sustainable and culturally meaningful futures.

Abbreviations

CAD	Computer-Aided Design
AI	Artificial Intelligence
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Author Contributions

Ananna Mostafiz: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Ahmed, R. (2013). *Muslin and Jamdani: The story of Bengal's finest textile*. Dhaka: University Press Limited.
- [2] Bhattacharya, S. (2018). The handloom as heritage: Craft, community, and continuity in South Asia. *Journal of Heritage Studies*, 24(3), 311-327.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2017.1323122>
- [3] Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- [4] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- [5] Chowdhury, F. (2018). Reinventing tradition: The adaptation of Jamdani weaving in contemporary fashion. *Journal of Textile Design Research and Practice*, 6(2), 215-230.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/20511787.2018.1498632>
- [6] Clark, H. (2008). SLOW + FASHION—an oxymoron—or a promise for the future? *Fashion Theory*, 12(4), 427-446.
<https://doi.org/10.2752/175174108X346922>
- [7] Dasgupta, S. (2017). Heritage crafts and the challenge of commercialization: Lessons from South Asia. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 20(6), 657-673.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877916647194>
- [8] Fletcher, K. (2010). Slow fashion: An invitation for systems change. *Fashion Practice*, 2(2), 259-265.
<https://doi.org/10.2752/175693810X12774625387594>
- [9] Fletcher, K., & Tham, M. (2019). *Earth logic: Fashion action research plan*. London: The J J Charitable Trust.
- [10] Huq, N., & Jahan, I. (2015). Jamdani weaving of Bangladesh: Problems and prospects. *Bangladesh Journal of Political Economy*, 31(2), 197-212.
- [11] Islam, T., & Hossain, M. (2019). Prospects of Jamdani in the global fashion market: An analysis of consumer perception. *Asian Journal of Business and Management*, 7(1), 15-23.
- [12] Jenkins, C. (2018). Heritage crafts and sustainable development: Policy perspectives. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 24(4), 493-509.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2016.1153085>
- [13] Kawamura, Y. (2018). *Fashion-ology: An introduction to fashion studies* (2nd ed.). London: Bloomsbury.
<https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474280080>
- [14] Khan, M. H. (2019). Handloom weaving and sustainable fashion: An analysis of Jamdani in Bangladesh. *Fashion and Textiles*, 6(1), 12-27.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s40691-019-0175-8>
- [15] Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [16] Mitra, S., & Gupta, R. (2020). Digital heritage preservation: Exploring CAD and AI tools in traditional textile innovation. *Design Studies*, 41(3), 233-248.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.destud.2019.100907>
- [17] Norris, L. (2012). Trade and transformations of secondhand clothing: The global circulation of textile value. *Textile*, 10(2), 128-143.
<https://doi.org/10.2752/175183512X13315695424320>
- [18] Rahman, T., & Chowdhury, M. (2016). Colonial encounters and the decline of Jamdani: Historical perspectives on textile heritage. *South Asian Studies*, 32(1), 45-61.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02666030.2016.1192091>
- [19] Roy, A., & Haque, S. (2015). Craft education in South Asia: A case for integrating handloom weaving into design curricula. *Journal of Education and Work*, 28(4), 451-468.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2014.886676>
- [20] Saha, P. (2021). Sustainable livelihood challenges for Jamdani artisans: Policy gaps and opportunities. *Journal of Sustainable Development*, 14(2), 67-81.
<https://doi.org/10.5539/jsd.v14n2p67>
- [21] Sen, K. (2014). The socio-economic conditions of Jamdani weavers in Bangladesh. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 10(1), 23-30.
- [22] Sultana, N. (2019). Vocational education and the revival of handloom weaving: The case of Jamdani in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Vocational Education and Training Research*, 5(2), 39-48.
<https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijvetr.20190502.11>
- [23] UNESCO. (2013). *Traditional art of Jamdani weaving*. Retrieved from <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/traditional-art-of-jamdani-weaving-00879>
- [24] Venkatesan, S. (2009). Rethinking agency: Persons and things in the heterotopia of “traditional Indian craft.” *Journal of Material Culture*, 14(1), 5-29.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183508100017>
- [25] Wood, J. (2007). *Design for micro-utopias: Making the unthinkable possible*. Aldershot: Gower Publishing.