

A Systematic Review of Scientific Research on Iranian Handicrafts in 2022: Topics, Approaches, and Methodology

Hossein Norouzi Ghara Gheshlagh

Assistant Professor, Department of Handicrafts, Arak University, Arak, Iran (Corresponding Author)/
h-norouzi@araku.ac.ir

Somaye Salehi

Instructor, Department of Carpet, Arak University, Arak, Iran/ s-salehi@araku.ac.ir

Ehsan Moradi Senejani

Instructor, Department of Graphic Design, Arak University, Arak, Iran/ e-moradi@araku.ac.ir

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Introduction

Iranian handicrafts, due to their unparalleled diversity and richness, hold a prominent position among global cultural heritage and are recognized as symbols of Iranian civilization on the international stage. Consequently, this field occupies a special place in the country's scientific and research productions. However, the multifaceted and dynamic nature of this domain necessitates it to be studied from various perspectives ranging from a historical approach to aesthetic, economics, or technological ones. To achieve this end and to identify strengths and weaknesses of previous research in this field, they must be reviewed and analyzed. Accordingly, this study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the status of scientific articles on Iranian handicrafts by conducting a content analysis of 188 related articles from sixteen reputable scientific journals registered in the Journal System of the Ministry of Science in 2022. By focusing on the published articles, this study attempts to evaluate the topics, research approaches, and the methodologies of the studies in this field.

Research Method

This study is quantitative and conducted using a descriptive-analytical approach. The statistical population includes journals approved by the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology in the art subgroup. Purposeful sampling was used, with the following criteria for journal selection: 1) they must be specialized in the field of art (specialized journals related to architecture and urban planning were excluded from the review); 2) they must have been indexed in the journal system of the Ministry of Science for at least five years; 3) articles for the year 2022 must be fully published and accessible. Based on these criteria, sixteen journals were identified. Subsequently, to identify the articles related to the field of handicrafts, the titles, abstracts, introductions, and methodologies of each article were studied. Ultimately, 188 articles were selected for the analysis. Data were analyzed using a coding sheet designed based on the indicators of topic, research approach, and research method.

Research Findings

Out of 611 published articles, 188 (30.76%) were dedicated to handicrafts. The *Negareh* journal had the highest number of articles related to handicrafts, with 26 articles. However, considering the ratio of the total number of published articles to related articles, the journals of *Islamic Crafts* and *the Journal of Iranian Handicrafts Studies* had the highest share in this field, each with 70%.

In terms of topics, 12 research themes were identified: miniature painting with 59 articles (31.38%) and Carpets and textiles with 28 articles (14.89%) received the most attention, while just two articles (1.06%) dealt with glassware and lacquerwork, the lowest share. Historical topics (89%)

dominated contemporary topics, and *Journal of Iranian Handicrafts Studies* covered the widest variety of topics with 10 categories.

Regarding research approaches, fifteen approaches were identified. The analytical approach analyzing designs, patterns, structures, and content had the highest frequency with 55 articles, followed by historical and evolutionary analysis with 28 and meaning and semantic analyses with 25 articles. The *Journal of Iranian Handicrafts Studies* showed the greatest diversity in research approaches, covering 11 approaches.

The research methodologies were predominantly qualitative (95.74%), descriptive-analytical (71.28%), and based on library resources. Only one article employed a quantitative method, and four articles used field data. Overall, the findings provide a comprehensive yet multifaceted view of the current state of research in this field:

1. Imbalanced focus on research topics: miniature paintings and carpets and textiles versus glassware and lacquerwork.
2. Dominance of historical topics over contemporary ones: while this approach is valuable for preserving and recognizing cultural heritage, it overlooks the innovative and contemporary aspects of handicrafts.
3. Dominant approaches aligned with topics and methods: The publication of 55 articles with a focus on design, pattern, structure, and content analyses, 28 articles with a historical and evolutionary approach, and 25 with a meaning and semantic analyses is noteworthy, and the use of these approaches aligns with predominantly historical topics and descriptive-library methods.
4. Predominance of qualitative methods and reliance on library data: qualitative methods with 180 articles were the main approach deployed by the researchers in this field. Although an emphasis on qualitative methods is essential for cultural and artistic studies, other aspects are neglected.
5. Predominance of descriptive-analytical methods and limited diversity in approaches: the descriptive-analytical method with 134 articles is the most common for data analysis. Although this approach effectively describes and interprets texts and artworks, innovative and creative approaches were rarely used.

Conclusion

Research in the field of handicrafts reflects the cultural and artistic richness of this domain. However, to meet the growing needs, fundamental changes in topics, approaches, and research methodologies are required. In this regard, the following results are noteworthy: 1) strengthening under-researched topics; that is, allocating more studies to areas such as glassware, lacquerwork, and traditional textiles can enhance the thematic diversity of this field. Encouraging researchers to explore less-known areas such as the impact of handicrafts on sustainable development, the creative economy, modern technologies, and tourism development, is essential. 2) Expanding quantitative and mixed methods: utilizing quantitative and mixed methods, especially in economic or social research, can provide deeper and more practical insights. 3) Closer interaction with artisans and the community: conducting field and participatory research that focus on the direct interaction existing between artists and craftsmen can enhance indigenous knowledge. 4) Greater attention to contemporary topics: exploring the impact of new technologies, industrial design, and digital marketing on handicrafts can connect research to emerging areas.

Keywords: Handicrafts, Research analysis, Scientific journals, Topics, Research approach, Methodology.