



A study on welfare and awareness initiatives in maritime legislation, with a particular emphasis on the Trivandrum District Fisherman Community

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Abstract

This study aims to make an empirical analysis on the provisions of Maritime laws and policies of State Government and India in terms of the provisions of welfare and awareness benefits to the local fishermen of Kerala (Thiruvananthapuram). It is an endeavor to ensure and recommend policy updates wherever applicable to safe guard the socio-economic situation, capabilities, and awareness of fishing communities in. about changes and modifications in maritime economic policy in India. A critical analysis will be put forward to assess the Indian Government policies and legislation about maritime law to provide proper provisions for welfare and awareness in the areas mentioned. This study will apply a mixed-method approach, whereby qualitative data will be gathered through interviews both from fisherman and officials while the quantitative data will be collected through questionnaires. Interaction and involvement of the state government with the fisherfolk. The data will be investigated regarding participation in reform. This will clearly reveal the weaknesses of policy and the level of fisher engagement, which leads to actionable recommendations for upgrading maritime policies in support of sustainable fisheries as well as the welfare of the community of fishers at large. It is expected to enhance our understanding of socio-economic dynamics of fishermen within Thiruvananthapuram, thereby guiding policy-making for the future into a more sustainable maritime ecosystem.

Keywords: Fishermen, Trivandrum, welfare programs, policy, maritime laws.



Introduction

India has a varied maritime landscape, with a coastline measuring 7,517 kilometers, comprising nine coastal states that contain numerous ports handling approximately 1,400 million tonnes of cargo each year. Indeed, as a part of its primary economic activity, fishing serves as a sizeable source of revenue for the fishing communities located in Southern regions of India (Basu, 2021). Recent figures reveal that Tamil Nadu's fishing community consists of more than 700,000 inhabitants throughout 591 fishing villages along a coastline measuring 1,076 kilometers, from Pulicat, north of Chennai, to Kanyakumari (Jain, 2021). They commenced their career in around 60,000 vessels. This underscores the substantial dependence of the population on fisheries, hence accentuating the imperative to protect fishermen to alleviate their hardships.

The peninsular geography of India has traditionally enabled maritime linkages related to trade, religion, and culture; nevertheless, these early links were progressively severed over time. Especially after gaining independence, India's foreign regulations became tougher on continental issues. The liberalization reforms of the 1990s were a crucial turning point for India's priorities, highlighting port development and incorporating its maritime position into the national agenda. The identity of the South Indian populace has consistently been profoundly shaped by their maritime customs.

Kerala, situated in the southwestern region of India, consists of nine coastal districts. The Marine Fisheries Census 2010, undertaken by CMFRI (Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute), lists 222 marine fishing villages, with the highest concentration (42) being in Thiruvananthapuram district. There are a total of 187 fish landing centers, of which 51 are situated in Thiruvananthapuram. The state has approximately 118,937 fishing households, accommodating a population of 610,165, with the largest concentration of families located in Thiruvananthapuram (33,340), accounting for 24% of the total fishing population. In Kerala's fishing homes, 98% are traditional fishermen, and around 46% of the fisherfolk participate in active fishing (Benedict, 2024).

The need of protecting fishermen and mitigating their hardships is heightened by the level of reliance on fisheries culture. Kerala, for instance, although is classified among the top

three maritime states in the nation, there are illiterate or semiliterate poverty fishermen who lack knowledge of modern fishing technology and hold an insufficient perspective on fishery development. Despite possessing the highest literacy rate in the nation, it is ironic that the fishers of Kerala are notably disenfranchised, demonstrating a somewhat lower literacy rate and educational achievement, which limits their alternative work opportunities.

Shyam et al. (2014) found a low level of awareness about climate change among the fisher-folk of Kerala, attributing this to the intertwining of climate change issues with other developmental challenges, which obstructed the community's capacity to recognize climate change distinctly. Ridgway (2007a), Cai et al. (2005) and Cai (2006) report that the impacts of climate change are expected to emerge in southern India. Effective management policy requires the careful selection of inputs that substantially impact employment in the fishing sector, hence affecting the local economy.

Evidently, it is a matter of concern these days to align the technological and legal frameworks with the socioeconomic needs and conditions of the fishermen of Kerala, particularly, as per the study's choice, the fishermen communities of Thiruvananthapuram. Acting on this initiative, this research design as proposed in this article is an endeavor of locating and investigating the lacking or difficult areas of fishermen communities of the said regions where India's maritime laws can come as a support in terms of opening provisions for welfare and awareness programs for the fishermen communities (Salim, 2017).

Aim of the study as presented in this research proposal is to recommend the policy reforms or modifications to support for the socioeconomic benefits and upgrades of local fishermen of Thiruvananthapuram (capital city of Kerala). To substantiate the significance of this research, we provide a comprehensive review of the literature, delineate the study problem and motivation, outline the research objectives, formulate the hypothesis, and propose methods of analysis, all of which are anticipated to demonstrate the practical relevance of our selected study theme and facilitate our undertaking.

Review of Literature

According to **Salim (2022)**, the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution makes fisheries state concerns. The union list includes extraterritorial fishing where State and National governments generate and oversee maritime resources, according to this research. The state's sea boundary is 12 nautical miles, although the Union government oversees EEZ fishing from 12 to 200 nautical miles (370 km). Cooperative federalism is essential for responsible and sustainable administration of this common economic resource, according to the report.

Sahu (2022) analyzed Indian maritime laws and argued that multi-species, multi-gear, and open access fisheries and rising fish demand have caused excessive fishing pressure in inshore waters, vessel overcapacity, growth and recruitment overfishing, and other unsustainable fishing practices to cause many fish stocks to decline in population and yield and conflict between fisherman for resources. Fisheries must be monitored and maintained, the report said.

Reddy (2021), in his IJDML editorial note mentioned that the security threats provided by its extensive exclusive economic zone and 7,515 km of coastline, India's marine laws have become increasingly important in recent years due to the growing threat posed by non-state actors including terrorists, pirates, and illegal immigrants.

Fisheries 22 Policy report and Fishermen Welfare 2021- highlighted welfare and awareness programs to improve India's fisheries strategy on fishing communities' social and economic condition and production for welfare and infrastructure development. The paper discussed Tamil Nadu's traditional fishing rights and social programs.

Elayi (2023) stated applied to fishers to protect their well-being. The study have confirmed that self-governing communities at the local level are most important when facing socio-economic and environmental pressures for Kerala's fisher community.

This study of **Sheeja (2023)** analyzed the characteristics and objectives of state-sponsored social security programs in ensuring inclusivity of fisherfolk households in the Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. The study assessed many aspects of welfare programs, including their nature, level of awareness, and number of beneficiaries.

Dhanuraj D's (2004) study gave evidences that Kerala's traditional fishers suffer economically and environmentally without regulation. Higher living costs and pricing unpredictability make seafood trading unsustainable, diminishing fish stocks.

The study done by **FAO (2009)** aims to uncover features prevalent in effective fishermen's organizations in the state of Kerala, highlighting activities led by the fishermen, alongside the clarity of objectives and extensive member involvement in planning, implementation, and evaluation. The conclusion detailed the strategies implemented by the Kerala government to address fishermen's demands, aiming to improve fish resource management and elevate the socio-economic status of fishing communities.

Priya S & Sreeranganadhan (2012) stressed that fishermen are typically held with disdain and derision by other communities. The principal reason as cited by the researchers for the fishing community's underdevelopment is their inadequate education. This conceptual study primarily investigated the social and economic issues encountered by the fishing community in Kerala and clarifies how these obstacles hinder educational progress.

Darwin L (2020) examined on occupational culture that has disappeared or is under danger among the Trivandrum district fishing people (mukkuva). The study findings confirmed that although still more than 95% of the mukkuva (fishermen) population in the Trivandrum district relies on fishing as their main source of revenue generating. people depend on the contemporary fishing tools since their present condition is easily available and manageable.

This study of **Sumer & Sajesh (2023)** examined fisheries institutions' structure. It also examined Kerala's fish production and fisherman population. Secondary data for this study is used from many sources, including the internet. As observed, Kerala caught 4.75 lakh tonnes of sea fish in 1996–97 and 1.75 lakh tonnes in 2019–20, however it varied every year. Inland fish production increased by 0.026 lakh tonnes annually between 2001–02 and 2006–07.

NHRC's 2024 Open Discussion sessions examined Indian fishing communities' huge and complex difficulties, notably in southern coastal districts. The seminar covered topics such fishermen's risky working conditions and human rights breaches notwithstanding limits. Members expressed worry that international partnership requires sustainability and climate resilience capabilities to preserve their rights.

Research Gap:

An integrated analysis of the socio-economic challenges that such communities face calls for a lack of studies on the welfare implications of India's maritime laws for the fishing communities, especially in Kerala. Although studies do exist showing weaknesses in the legislative framework of such laws, as represented by the Indian Fisheries Act of 1897 and the Marine Fisheries Regulatory Act of 1978, as well as the effects these shortcomings have on overfishing and resource management, very few data sets are available for the empirical testing of how existing welfare programs and other efforts to create community awareness fare in this respect. In addition, although the literature is cognizant of the importance of sustainable practices and cooperative federalism for the management of fishery, it has focused mostly on policies at the implementation levels for real benefits for local fisherfolk amidst climatic changes and socio-economic pressures. This gap calls for targeted research effort into how regulatory frameworks intersect with community engagement and welfare outcomes, so that better-informed policies and practices can be designed to address the specifics of Kerala's fishing communities.

Objectives

The proposed research will aim to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate on the socioeconomic status, capacity and awareness of Kerala's (Thiruvananthapuram) fishermen communities in terms of the advancements and legal policy reforms done in India on Maritime economic activities
2. To evaluate India's Maritime law policies and provisions to encompass the needs and difficulties of Kerala's (Thiruvananthapuram) fishermen communities
3. To analyse the state governments and fishermen's interactions and participation in raising their voice of concern to make reforms and upgrades in India's Maritime Laws to get the desired benefits on welfare and awareness of fishermen

Methodology

A quantitative empirical methodology will be utilized in this study to achieve aims and validate the hypotheses. Primary and secondary data will be collected; the former through a systematic survey of relevant individuals, and the latter from credible publications and databases. Statistical analyses in SPSS, including correlation, regression, and ANOVA, will be

performed on the gathered data. Correlation analysis will be conducted to examine the link between variables, regression will evaluate the impact of independent variables on dependent ones, and ANOVA will compare group means to identify significant patterns. Within this framework, statistically valid insights will be generated, providing a solid foundation for interpreting data and supporting the study's assumptions.

Discussion

The impact of maritime laws on the welfare and awareness of fishermen communities in Thiruvananthapuram, India. Although there is a recognition of legislative inadequacies and socio-economic challenges of these communities, there is a lack of empirical analysis linking these laws to tangible welfare outcomes and awareness levels among fishermen. This analysis has been prompted by the critical imperative of assessing the efficiency of available welfare programs and policies aimed at sustainable fishing practices and resilient communities. The study attempts to fill the gap by making necessary contributions towards more effective maritime governance, considerably improving socio-economic conditions for fishermen while contributing to the sustainability of management in marine resources.

Conclusion

This rationale of the study is in relation to the influence of maritime laws and policies on the socio-economic conditions of the fishermen communities, mainly in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, whose livelihood mainly depends on fishing. This study aims to look into the current socio-economic status, capacity, and awareness of these communities regarding the changes and legal reforms that India's maritime policies face regarding the issues of overfishing and climate change. Identifying those regions in which current maritime laws do not meet the demands of fisher men is where the research would look at filling any gaps and providing recommendations for policy improvement. This analysis would also examine interactions with state governments as well as the relationships of the state government with the fishermen, looking particularly at how community engagement contributes toward such reform efforts, most likely to improve welfare and increase awareness. Positive outcomes: This should be wholesome for policymakers and stakeholders in opening avenues for more effective governance and increased socio-economic welfare of fishermen in Kerala.

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