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## 1. Migration And Gender Injustice Among The Fisherfolk Communities: A Specific Focus On Kendrapara District Of Odisha

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### **Abstract**

Migration has increasingly become a global phenomenon. However, it has gender-based effects, where the fisherwomen are suffering a lot from the impact of migration. They are no longer practicing fishing. A complete livelihood transformation has occurred. Fishermen have migrated to nearby cities because of low fishing production and have been changing occupations. Whereas, fisherwomen who are very hard-working may not be able to find any work due to the drastic change in their livelihood. They are no longer being able to provide financial support to the family. The study area has covered three villages in the Kendrapara district alongside the coastline. This is an exploratory study. Information was collected through primary sources through discussion with the village people as well as followed by some secondary methods from various works of literature, study, articles, and news, etc. for comparison. The study will provide us with broad ideas about how their traditional occupation suffered due to migration on account of low catch and changing occupations. The women folk of the migrated families suffer a lot, their role is changed from monotonous to multifarious and diversified. It has influenced women's health, food security and status in society, directly or indirectly. In the paper, the issue is discussed. Women's loss due to the migration of counterparts and how proper policy can be made for other women is discussed. Moreover, in the paper, the question is also posed what sort of policy measures should be made.

**Keywords:** Fishing, Gender, Livelihood, Migration, Exploratory, Occupation

### **Introduction**

Generally, migration means moving from one place to another to secure a livelihood or to live permanently. The scarcity of fish is one of the most significant reasons for the migration of the fishing

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community in this study. Social mobility is also connected with the migration problem. Different economic circumstances, vocational mobility, governmental factors, and various elements impact human mobility to and from coastal places.

Political components, human health, well-being, freshwater, biodiversity, agriculture, fisheries, and cultural and natural heritage are all impacted due to migration. It is observed from the previous studies conducted by VIEWS organization and other organizations in coastal regions of Odisha, particularly in the Ganjam district of Odisha, that the fish catch has reduced considerably which has led to decreased income of different livelihood groups dependent on the marine fisheries sector. This has led to distressed migration among many traditional fishermen communities to various states of India. But, on-field interactions with fisherman communities reveal that though they migrate to different states in search of better livelihood but they often struggle to get a decent livelihood and working conditions. Generally, they are subjected to harsh working hours coupled with poor living conditions. It is in this context that a study was required to understand their migration nuances, networks, and skills for a safe and secured migration.

Research shows that up to 1 in 3 girls in low and middle-income developing countries become teenage mothers. These girls will likely never attend school or acquire a certificate. Except a few highly skilled ones, they will not have the opportunity for further education in their lifetime. Feminist theories conclude that the concept of social stratification based on sex plays a vital role in the status of women in society. The theories argue that the male society hides the actual roles of females—education, child-rearing, and caring for the spouse—and, instead, dominates in communication and decision-making, leaving a purely passive status to women. A gendered analysis describes the political implications of gender. It examines how gender impacts the availability of resources in terms of tensions and struggles for power. Gender norms may cause women to lose access to the labour market. This forces women into unremunerated labour - also as an unavoidable consequence - the family takes on a greater financial burden for the support of its members and, with that in turn, worsens all aspects of social life.

The present paper highlights the impact of migration which is gender-based. Migration does not come alone. It always affects the total lifestyle of a particular family, caste, and community. Fishermen increasingly migrate to nearby cities in search of better livelihood.

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This situation arises because of a decrease in the production of their traditional occupation. Whereas, fisherwomen who are very hard-working are not able to find any work due to the drastic change in their livelihood. The women not only help their counterparts in postharvest activities but also run petty shops in the village to support their families. They were no longer able to provide financial support to the family. Traditional occupations suffered due to low catch and the effects of changing occupations forced them to migrate. Some of their families started adopting agriculture as their occupation and left their traditional occupation which again created a kind of disappointment among the fisherfolk. Besides that, it also increased the social resilience among fisherwomen. Mostly the fisherwomen endured because of either seasonal migration or occupational migration. Though the fisher folk are considered to be the hardest workers still it creates a lot of frustration among the family members after the migration of the particular family. Currently, this paper not only highlights the migration problems but also the insecurity, restlessness, and mental instability of the female fisherfolk after migration. The empowered women become disempowered because of the migration and negative effects changing socio-economic life.

### Review of Literature

The current locations of female international migrants have a strong connection with their regional and specific nations of origin, based on latest information from the United Nations and the International Labour Organization. Through their job participation, international migrant women are also helping the commercial sectors of their locations. They are an important contributor of domestic workers, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in the Arab, South East, and East Asian countries (Boyd,2021).

Women's life may be benefited by male migration if it provides them greater financial independence, greater control on actions, and an ability to leave the house whenever they desire. However, this can also have a negative effect on women, allowing them to handle difficult situations independently and getting less support with home and agricultural duties (Choithani,2020; Radel et al 2012 cited by Cagliani et al,2024). (Cagliani, et. Al 2024)

The possibility of affecting human migration patterns is one of the numerous possible impacts of environmental change on human cultures, as noted by MC Leman and Smith in 2006. Migration and [www.theresearchers.asia](http://www.theresearchers.asia)

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other forms of adaptation change how humans communicate with the natural world. Fishermen in Chilika Lagoon are under stress to leave their houses and businesses that rely on fishing because of social and environmental degradation of the fisheries (Khan, et. Al 2018).

The fishermen have migrated to different areas which indirectly affects the social life of fisherwomen. That will lead to insecurity among fisherwomen communities. Human mobility is still essential today, as one-third of the population no longer lives in the city that they were born in (Black, citation 2004, referred to by Failler, 2021). The growth of coastal fishing towns is usually a product of both land and sea migration, and the seafood sector is no exception (Chauveau, citation 1986; Quensi re, citation 1994 mentioned by Failler, 2021). Fishermen have migrated across national borders and internally inside an individual country. Both domestic and foreign migration can be periodic or sporadic, seasonal or long-term (Failler,2021).

Njock and Westlund observed that wives of migrant male fishermen often invest the money they send home in relatively small operations (Nunan,2021). Additionally, the definitions for internal movement can differ depending on whether the migration is for financial, schooling, or married explanations or if it is a short-term circular, or everlasting (Anjali Fleury, 2016).

Bhatia (1992) has emphasized that younger age groups and higher occupational categories are more prone to migrate to distant places in comparison with those in the middle and older age groups and in lower occupational categories. People who are engaged in manual work are less likely to migrate over a long distance (Repon and Akter, 2018).

The decision-making unit in free migration, as distinct from forced migration, is often the individual, seeking personal upward economic and social mobility (Nage, 1979). Hence, vertical social mobility is low among the fishing community in the study area (Repon, 2007) and for other reasons, they have tried to engage themselves in different occupations besides their traditional occupation which ends in migrations (Repon, 2016). (Repon and Akter, 2018)

Prateep Kumar Nayak, in his 2017 study on fisher communities in transition in Chilika Lagoon reported that the average fisher household now travels further distances.

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### Research Methodology

The study was conducted in the Kendrapara district of Odisha. The data used for the study was comprised of both primary and secondary sources. The study is completely a qualitative one to realizing the emotions and feelings of women exclusively. Primary data are those which were collected from the samples of the selected households of the fishermen in the study area. The sampling frame was all the fishers' families located in the study area. Due to the unavailability of data, some of the strangers who were not fishermen were informed to provide the requested information. The area of study covered only one District but two (Mahakalpada and Rajnagar) blocks of this district. These two blocks are showing an alarming rate of migration of fisherfolk. Samples were selected through random sampling from two villages of Mahakalpada and one village of Rajnagar alongside the coastline. Fifty samples were collected from three villages that are Bagapatia of Rajanagar block and Kajalapatia & Kandarapatia in Jambudweep, Marine of Mahakalpada block. A schedule and structured questionnaire were prepared after a pilot study. Primary data was collected by direct interview method. Most of the respondents were approached personally and interviewed in their houses. Data were collected from the wives of the migrated fishermen who are living in the study area. Different journals, Google Sites, concerned GP, and block office reports were referred to for secondary data.

### Study Area

The district of Kendrapara has to its east the Bay of Bengal, Cuttack district in the west, Jagatsinghapur district in the south, and Jajpur and Bhadrak districts in the North. The district has 2.88 lakh of households and the average household size is 5 persons. Permanent houses constitute only 14.3 percent, 81.5 percent of the houses are temporary ones and 4.2 percent are semi-permanent. The district consists of a total of 1540 villages, out of which only 1407 are populated. Mahakalpada and Rajnagar, two blocks of Kendrapara are located on the eastern side of it and along the coastline of the Bay of Bengal. In Kandarapatia village (Mahakalpada G.P.) total population is approximately 292 out of which males are 141 and the female population is 151. Whereas in Kajalapatia (Mahakalpada G.P.) village, the total population is 450 out of which 223 are females and 227 are males. The Bagapatia village (Rajnagar G.P.) has a total of 571 families out of which 288 are male and 283 are female. The locational disadvantage, and frequent occurrence of floods and cyclones requires the majority of marginalised people to migrate to other cities of India and abroad for better employment and wages. People in general and fisherfolks in particular migrate because of low catch and a ban on fishing for

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seven months on-account of the Bhitarkanika sanctuary. Because of this, three villages have been particularly chosen.

### Discussion

Fishing for the people in the coastal district is not only a major livelihood activity but it is a way of life. Nearly 28 million individuals in India rely upon the fishing sector for their source of income. They are mainly those who live in vulnerable and underprivileged regions. Women play a major role, though invisible, in the fisher households' economy. While fishermen are engaged in catching the rest of the backhouse jobs like, mending a net, grading of fish and marketing are being done by the fisherwomen.

Over the years due to population pressure in coastal villages, adverse climatic effects, ban on fishing the poor fisherman along the coast who depend mostly on traditional fishing are fighting for their livelihood and migrating to other places for a better alternative source of income or livelihood.

Due to decreased marine resources and commercialization of fish culture, the responsibility rests on the government's shoulders for setting up new colonies with better infrastructure for these fisherfolk who migrate to other places. This migration significantly affects their physical and emotional well-being. These fisherfolks undergo a rapid metamorphosis due to this. Seasonal migration for a better catch or other better livelihood, impacts the family both economically and socially. With the exception of the head of the family, the women take up the bulk of family management. Even if money is sent home by the men, the women still have to manage the family which is a bit of a burden, thus, they take up new avenues to satisfy the needs of their families.

In Rajnagar at Bagapatia village, a total of 571 families were rehabilitated and it is thus called a rehabilitated village. Every family in Satabhaya has lost their farmlands to the sea. The village was submerged. They lost everything and left their traditional occupation. Hence, they are migrating to other states to earn better to meet their expenses. Sarojini Mandal narrated her story of how she had lost everything. She and her family struggled a lot in the village. During the time of COVID, she lost her son. She tried to save him but could not succeed. Her husband did not come to see his son. While narrating this story, her eyes were full of tears. She said that the vagaries of climate play truant for

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fishing and agriculture and they lost everything which forced her husband to shift to Kerala for better income.

While interacting with the village worker, a key informant named Nrusingha Parida shared some heartbreaking stories and it opened up a chance for more interaction with the said families.

### Case Study - 1

Village-Kandrapatia GP- Jambudweep Block-Mahakalpada

Informant- Prahalad Sarkar, Age-63, Sex-Male

In the village of Kandrapatia, Prahlad and Kanchan Sarkar lived a life centered around fishing. With 80% of the male population migrating, the couple relied on their fishing and dry fish business during the rainy season. They raised their two sons, who later moved to Tamil Nadu for better opportunities.

As time passed, Prahlad grew frail and could no longer fish due to old age and restrictive Forest Department policies. Kanchan, despite her age, took on the responsibility of caring for him and managing their household. Their sons sent money monthly, which helped but could not replace their presence.

Kanchan's strength and dedication became the backbone of their lives, ensuring Prahlad received the care he needed. The villagers admired her resilience. Though their once-bustling home had grown quiet, their love and commitment to each other endured, and they still shared an unwavering bond.

### Case Study - 2

Village -Kajalapatia GP- Batighar, Block-Mahakalpada

Informant- Shashikala Mandal, Age-45, Sex-female

In the coastal village of Kajalapatia, with a population of 4,50,400 villagers relied on fishing while 50 were boat makers and repairers. This village is surrounded by water. The only means of survival is fishing. They do not have any agricultural land for irrigation and sustain their life. Biswanath Mandal and his family ran a dry fish business, but relentless rain forced them to use chemicals to dry the fish. This led to widespread illness among the villagers, and Biswanath faced severe backlash, ultimately

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leaving the village to find work elsewhere. His wife and her ailing mother were left to fend for themselves. With no means of communication except boats and often delayed remittances from Biswanath, his wife struggled. She began drying fish and selling them to local traders at low prices.

Shashikala's hard work and honesty gradually restored the family's reputation. The community's solidarity helped them navigate their challenges. Her perseverance ensured her family's survival, highlighting the strength and resilience of Kajalpatia's people.

### **Impact on Food Security**

Fishing villages in Jambudweep Gram Panchayat are experiencing more food insecurity based on numerous findings. Food insecurity peaks during the rains, thus, fishers nickname the months as 'Hunger Months' since a significant number of households tie the knot with one meal or fewer meals of the day. The women had a hard time surviving because of the scanty food available to the village.

### **Psychological Effects**

Due to seasonal migration, the man gets practically cut off from the family for the time which psychologically affect the women. Pressure for normal household maintenance and marketing of fish increases. No doubt economically the family gets well up but psychologically marooned.

### **Sufferings of Women**

Fisheries are the places where transactional sex has been predominantly recorded, and it has been associated with the movement of fishermen. Extenuating circumstances should be weighed in when explaining the seemingly higher level of the perception of transactional sex in fisheries: '(1) transactional sexual relationships may be under-reported or subject to observer bias in settings where HIV prevalence is high, (2) transactional sex may be an overstatement of ordinary relationships or (3) fishing economies may uniquely motivate transactional sex'.

### **Impact on Incomes**

It has been reported that some migrants have been able to make it big in their new jobs, earn enough money and return to their home country where they re-establish their lives with new houses, vehicles, the education of their children, etc., and lead a better life.



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### Impacts on Social Behaviour

The social behaviour of the family changes with a better income. Behaviour change is reflected in the reduction in alcoholism, arguments due to petty issues, dressing sense, and education of their children. In some families, they have sent their sons and daughters to Bhubaneswar for higher studies. An informant, Kabita Parida said whatever amount was sent by her husband was spent on the education of her children. There are no good facilities in the village, so she can take any tenacious steps for the future of her kids.

### Impact on Health

The widespread incidence of HIV/AIDS in fishing towns is one of the main problems affecting nomadic fishing communities. Basanti Dei (disguise name) narrated, how her husband went to Srikakulam and returned with this dreaded disease. She was under severe mental pressure. The villagers isolated them and she struggled a lot for a loaf of bread.

### Impact on education

BAIF Institute of Sustainable Livelihoods & Development reports that 5% of the total migration is with family. Children who migrate with their parents are critical to household livelihoods and are often sent to work. Those who live in the village are faced with the challenge of accessibility, and children often miss school. The inability to provide education perpetuates poverty from the present to the next generation. Mothers are so burdened that they are unable to provide the necessities.

### Conclusion

This article mainly discussed about the wives who remain in their place and face the impact of migration of their family's male members. The women suffered after migration miserably. Being unable to decide on household expenses, their physical mobility, and their children's health, the education of their children becomes the most affected. The research also points out that one of the advantages of women is their enhancement of their social flexibility by their husbands' migration.

The women from better-off families have got more decision-making liberty because of the migration of their husbands, whereas those from the poorer families are no different in their decision-making power or have even seen a decline in their physical mobility as they are faced with the requirements to satisfy all family members and do all duties instead of their husband.

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Good relationships with other family members help decrease the work burden of women. It is the total responsibility of women to deal with other relatives and village members and to manage different stressful environments and higher workloads. However, sometimes this may develop intimacy with the nearer ones because of the absence of their husbands. The women are then criticized by the villagers.

Internal transfer processes could be applied to include excluded groups, given that moving is a complicated procedure with power imbalances and unreliable results can be used as a means of inclusion of marginalized groups, here of fishers. First, the migrants always remained workers of the 'fishers' profession, and their struggle was not about a new profession. They just devoted themselves to getting their skills to be duly acknowledged rather than join the workforce of 'unskilled labour' as is usual for most commuting workers to do. Furthermore, as carrying out a conscious mobility plan, they worked on developing solid social connections and a family unit that was dependably loyal, able to support others over times of difficulty (Rao and Sophia,2023).

There must be endeavours to enable migrant households to adopt sustainable livelihood avenues. Capacity building through self-help groups can help them to overcome impediments. The laws and policies must give more attention to gender-related issues but the process is dawdling.

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