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# Psycho-Social Adjustments and Livelihood Challenges of Dislocated and Fragmented Fishermen Community: A Case Study Analysis on Alappuzha District, Kerala

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### Abstract

The fishermen community is substantially dependent on or engaged in the harvest or processing of fishery resources to meet social and economic needs. Psycho-social well-being and adjustment among people are very important factors for their healthy mental and social life. Psychosocial adjustment is a condition of a person who can adapt the changes in their physical, occupational, and social environment. The mental health and psychosocial well-being of a person depend on the environment where he is settled. The people of fishermen community completely depend on marine fishing and allied activities. The dislocation of a community ultimately leads to fragmentation and loneliness. Dislocated or resettled people of fishermen community face psycho-social challenges and struggle to cope and adjust to a new situation. Dislocation may happen due to various reasons such as environmental issues, government intervention, etc. These dislocated people were facing adjustment problems within the new environment. It adversely affects the mental well-being and livelihood of the community. Better social interaction and a good social environment is needed factor for both the social and psychological wellbeing of an individual. Lack of social interaction and forceful dislocation of a community can lead to culture transformation, depression, lack of interaction with others, loneliness, and livelihood challenges. All these can affect their mental and social wellbeing. In this phase, the problems and psycho-social adjustment of dislocated and fragmented peoples of fishermen community can be should addressed social work scenario. In this, the researcher adopted the qualitative method and was descriptive in nature. Through this case study analysis researcher aims to understand the important psycho-social adjustment problems and livelihood challenges and indicate the psycho-social intervention of social work and suggestions for dislocated and fragmented peoples of fishermen community Alappuzha district. The findings of the study will be convenient for the micro and macro-level study of social work.

**Keywords:** Fishermen community, psycho-social adjustment, dislocation, and fragmentation

### Introduction

Maritime Communities looks at how areas are settled, what people look for when they settle, and how their settlement fits into a network of communication and transportation. It compares life at sea and life on land and is related to fishing and allied activities. Fishermen community is sustainably dependent on or engaged in the harvest or processing of fishery resources to meet social and economic needs. They mainly depend on the coastal area for their livelihood. Kerala has a coastline of 589.5 kilometers, which forms 10 percent of India's total coastline. Out of the total 14 districts, 9 districts are having coastal lines. The districts without coastline are Wayanad, Palakkad, Kottayam, Idukki, and Pathanamthitta. So that fishermen community distributes in all 9 districts. This community completely depends on marine fishing and allied activities. Apart from fishing, the fisheries sector also included allied activities such as working on the beach, fish distribution on a small scale, fish curing, work in peeling sheds, and fish processing work in the plants.

According to the East African Community (2019), "Psychosocial well-being involves developing cognitive, emotional, and spiritual strengths among individuals, families, and communities which creates overall positive social relationships among them." This state of well-being motivates the development of life skills which enables individuals, families, or communities to understand and engage with their environment and make healthy. Psychosocial well-being is a multidimensional construct consisting of psychological, social, and subjective components which influence the overall functionality of individuals in achieving their true potential as members of society. Psychosocial well-being incorporates the physical, economic, social, mental, emotional, cultural, and spiritual determinants of health. The well-being of an individual includes coping with the various stresses of everyday living and realization of the full potential of an individual as a productive member of society. Psychosocial well-being and adjustment among people are very important factors for their healthy social and mental life. Psycho-social

adjustment is a condition of a person who can adopt the changes in their physical, occupational, and social environment. Psychosocial well-being is important in our life. The mental health and psychosocial well-being of a person depends on the environment where he is settled. Dislocation or resettlement will lead to destroying their mental health and well-being due to the change in environment. It is due to various reasons such as environmental issues, government interventions, etc... These dislocated people are facing several problems within the new environment and it affects their mental well-being and the livelihood of the community.

Dislocation and fragmentation are important social issues that arise in modern times. Several factors lead to the reason for dislocation and fragmentation of people. Dislocation and fragmentation of people, especially people from the backward community should have to need to address in the recent period. As a part of this dislocation or resettlement, fishermen community was fragmented into different places and this reflects on their social life. It can lead to cultural transformation, depression, lack of interaction with others, loneliness, and livelihood challenges. The people of fishermen community are entirely dependent on fishing and allied fishing activities for their livelihood. They lived and settled beside the bank of the sea. Marine fishing, fishnet work, and fish drying are important sources of income for this community. Rapid dislocation and resettlement lead to people fragmentation and scattering. The dislocation from a coastal area to an urban or town can lead to more psycho-social problems and livelihood challenges. The dislocation caused them to become unemployed and face a financial crisis. The challenges for adaptation and adjustment to the new environment will adversely affect their mental and social wellbeing too. Depression, anxiety, and psychological inner conflicts will occur and all these can affect their mental health too. Better mental health attention and care should be needed in this particular community. In this study, the researcher aims to portray the major psycho-social adjustments and livelihood challenges of fragmented and dislocated fishermen communities through case study analysis. Hence the present study understands the important issues faced by dislocated and fragmented fishermen community and what suitable suggestions and social work interventions need to improve the mental health and psycho-social wellbeing of life among fishermen community. The findings of the study will be useful for the micro and macro-level intervention of the social work profession and future research.

### Review of Literature

Sunil D Santha, (2015), conducted a case study for examines the coastal hazard adaptation strategies of a fishing community in a village in Kerala, India. It shows that formal adaptation strategies are highly techno-centric, and costly, and do not take into account the vulnerabilities of the fishing community. Instead, they have contributed to ecological, livelihood, and knowledge uncertainties. The adaptation strategies of the fishing community are a response to these uncertainties. However, they may not lead to the fishing community's recovery from its vulnerable contexts. This case study is primarily qualitative in nature. Data were collected through in-depth interviews. Insights reveal that when actors with diverse values, interests, knowledge, and power evolve or design their respective adaptation strategies, the resulting interface often aggravates existing uncertainties associated with hazards. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that local

discourses on coastal hazards are livelihood-centric and socially constructed within the struggle of the fishing community to access resources and acquire the right to development.

Furqan Asif, (2019), This study shows that small-scale fishing communities along Cambodia's coast have relied on marine resources as a mainstay of their livelihood for many decades. However, in the past 10 to 15 years, environmental change, increased fishing pressure, illegal, underreported, and unregulated fishing, and sand mining have contributed to a progressive decline in their catch. At the same time, economic opportunities outside the coastal village have acted as a draw and catalyzed migration to secondary cities and the capital. This study examines the out-migration of people from coastal communities to the city of Koh Kong. Using qualitative data collected from three fishing villages, I explore why people leave and why others stay in the village. In the context of city provisioning systems, the study also reveals a shift in climate-related vulnerability for coastal village migrants when they become urban residents. The study highlights the importance of looking not only at city planning, infrastructure challenges, and climate risks but also at the attendant social effects that phenomena such as migration have on people who are increasingly on the move. Such a perspective offers a more people-centered understanding of urban climate resilience in Cambodia, and potentially for other countries across Southeast Asia.

Nobin Chandra Das, (2020), conducted a quantitative study in the Kaivartta fishermen community, according to this study in the last few decades; the processes like globalization of marketing, liberalization of different policies, and privatization of education have changed the lifestyle of the Kaivarttas, not only in an urban area but village too. Now, they are engaged in different areas of occupations including government, private and entrepreneurial work. As the occupation is closely interrelated with socio-economic and cultural factors, therefore, it is important to make a study to understand their adoption of new occupation in response to the process of social change. The present study is undertaken in two Kaivartta populated villages in Majuli Island to understand the occupational mobility among them. The study shows that most of the villagers have taken up new occupations rather than fishing.

S Irudaya Rajan, (2020), using the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF), this study traces the livelihood conditions of a coastal community located in the Kanniyakumari district in south India. From a vulnerable, pre-modern phase, this fishing group, by adapting to technologically advanced craft and gears moved into a more dynamic phase of modernization with diverse livelihood opportunities. Unfortunately later, this fishing community began to suffer economically as the use of harmful gear in their boats resulted in the decimation of marine resources and subsequently a reduction in their income. In the absence of any institutional support mechanism to sustain them, fishing households have begun looking outside their home environs for economic opportunities to better their living conditions. One of the more significant ways through which the fishing community has been able to cope with its strained circumstances is to migrate to the Gulf countries.

Aprizon Putra, (2021), The main purpose of this study is to analyze the pattern of adaptation of fishermen communities to the impact of changes in the ecosystem in the coastal region of Padang City. To understand the adaptation patterns of fishermen to the impact of ecosystem changes, literature

reviews, in-depth interviews, observations, and focus group discussions were conducted with local fishermen communities in the coastal region of Padang City. The results show that the fishermen community of Padang City has felt the impact of ecosystem changes such as damage to mangroves and coral reefs due to exploitation of coastal resources and natural disasters. Therefore, the adaptation of fishermen communities to cope with the impacts of changing ecosystems follows a reactive adaptation pattern. They tend to use abilities from within the community. The adaptation pattern is carried out by developing job diversification, modifying the boat fleet, adjusting fishermen times with natural signs, and taking joint actions to rehabilitate damaged ecosystems.

## Methodology

### Objectives of the Study

- To know about the socio-demographic profile of the respondents.
- To understand the psycho-social problems and adjustments of dislocated and fragmented respondents of fishermen community.
- To know the livelihood challenges of dislocated respondents.
- To provide suitable suggestions and social work interventions for the wellbeing of the respondents.

### Materials and Methods

The researcher adopted the case study method for intensive qualitative analysis with a descriptive nature. The data was gathered from the dislocated and fragmented respondents in fishermen community, Thottappally, coastal region Alappuzha district. Three cases were selected by using a simple random sampling method. The case study format described by Budgell (2008), and Boeije (2010) was followed by this case study presentation.

### Tools of Data Collection

A depth interview is a tool used by the researcher for collecting data from the required samples.

### Research Design

The researcher used a Descriptive research design to achieve the research objective in the present investigation.

### Case Study 1

#### Introduction

Mrs. A is a 50-year-old woman and educated up to the 8th standard. She married at the age of 18 years and she has a son of age 25. She belongs to a lower middle-class family and lives along with his son in the nuclear family.

#### Case Presentation

The researcher recognized the factor that intensely affects the psycho-social well-being and livelihood of the respondent. The A is an elderly woman with a 25-year-old son who lost her husband when she was 40 years old. Her husband was also a fishermen and dead of a heart attack. After the death of her husband, she actively involved in livelihood activities such as fish curing and fish distribution on a small scale. This is the only way to meet her family expenses. As a part of the dislocation and policy of the government, they were forced to resettle into a new flat. The sudden dislocation adversely affected her psycho-social wellbeing and makes them intensively fragmented. The new environment mainly reflects on her social life and livelihood. The busy lifestyle and nature

of the urban area make her life more complicated and she faces lots of challenges to accommodate and adapt to the new environment. Because she did not get any chance to continue her job and which cause the challenge of livelihood. So she doesn't have any money to buy medicine and meet her daily expenses. The new flat life and its surroundings make her anxious and stressed. This psychological challenge and problem to adapt or assimilate new situations adversely affect her physical health and develops shortness of breath and other health problems. More stressful thoughts and anxiety among the livelihood intensely affects the well-being of women and their families.

### Outcome

The case study revealed how the dislocation or resettlement affects the psycho-social well-being and livelihood of the respondent. Dislocation and compelled resettlement lead to them adversely affecting their entire life. Lack of proper income for livelihood and money makes them more stressed and anxious. The excessive thoughts and anxiety lead to her development of somatoform disorders and adverse effects on proper mental well-being. She experiences symptoms of shortness of breath and health-related issues because of the adverse effect of dislocation and resettlement. It leads to a drop in their daily income because they do not know how to do other jobs. These things made her mentally depressed and it affect all family.

### Discussion

Psycho-social approaches and micro and macro-level interventions need in this fragmented and dislocated respondent. Due to the forceful dislocation of the respondent, they lost their livelihood and source of income. The excessive thoughts and anxiety already negatively and adversely affected the physical and mental well-being of the respondent. Psycho-social interventions such as medications, breathing exercises, and Jacobson's relaxation techniques such as have to practice and follow to overcome these psychological issues. NGOs can help and do something for the betterment of scattered peoples, especially for their livelihood and income. A better environment should need them for making a better life. This is the only method to strengthen their psycho-social well-being and livelihood.

### Case Study 2

#### Introduction

Mr. B is 40 years old man and educated up to the 10th standard. He married at the age of 27 and he has two daughters. He belongs to a lower middle-class family and lives with his extended family.

#### Case Presentation

The researcher recognized the factor that deeply affected the mental health and psycho-social well-being of the respondent due to the dislocation and resettlement. He has two daughters ages 14 and 16. He is the only person who provides financial support for the whole family. Due to the policy and regulations of the government, he was forced to resettle in an urban area. After the dislocation, he faces lots of problems and it adversely affects their entire family because of the challenges to adjust to new environmental changes. He often talks to friends in his free time. It helps to reduce his stress. But in the new environment, he does not get friends to share anything. Thus he feels loneliness. With the excessive thoughts developed by stress and anxiety, he may feel lonely



and lose interest in his surroundings. He faced lots of emotional struggles and challenges to find a new job and meet the expenses of his family especially the educational expenses of his children. These problems and events adversely affect his mental well-being in a great manner. He is becoming more stressed and face to difficulties to sleep also. Due to the development of insomnia, he faced severe headaches and begins to conflict with his family members. The challenges for adaptation and adjustment to the new environment will also adversely affect their mental and psychosocial well-being too.

### **Outcome**

This case study revealed how dislocation affects the mental health and family life of the respondent. The challenges and struggles to adjust to a new environment and the old memories are affecting the mental well-being of the respondent. Excessive thoughts of anxiety and struggles to overcome the family expenses make his mental health and social health equally worst. Due to excessive thoughts and emotions, he developed and experienced the symptoms of insomnia and extreme anger. The stress and challenges of adjustments to the new environment caused by dislocation and resettlement adversely affect his psycho-social well-being and family life also. Continues emotional conflict and family problems will make his mental well-being more pathetic. He could not get proper psychological attention or care to overcome his problem. It should have to address the social work profession

### **Discussion**

Psycho-social support and family intervention approaches in the social work profession have needed factors for a better life and future. Family counseling and the service of a family counselor will be very useful for the respondent to overcome these problems. Stress and anxiety lead to the development of insomnia and related health issues like headaches and physical weakness etc. mind relaxation techniques and meditations will be useful to overcome these psycho-social problems. Psychological approaches should need for better mental health and psycho-social well-being for this fishermen community.

### **Case Study 3**

#### **Introduction**

Mr. C is 35 years old man who completed his higher secondary education and belongs to a middle class family. He is married and living with his parents.

#### **Case Presentation**

The researcher recognized the factors that were reasonable for the depression and anxiety of the respondent. He is a marine fishermen and is also involved in other allied activities for fishing networks and mechanics for boats. He always spends time in the coastal area, which makes him happier and a part of his life. He enjoyed every moment there and seems too happy to living his birthplace. As a part of the coastal area modification and regulation act of the government he and his family were forced to dislocate into a new environment. It made a great psycho-social impact on him and badly affect his mental well-being and leads to depression and anxiety. As a young person, he seems too energetic and healthy. After the fragmentation caused by this dislocation, he faced lots of psycho-social challenges and issues to adjust and assimilate to a new living environment. These events adversely affected his

psycho-social health and wellbeing. He is become very sad and depressed, especially showing mood disorders and a bipolar personality. He did not get a chance to spend time with friends and others. So the new environment negatively affects and he is depressed. Due to this depression and anxiety, he falls into Insomnia and not likes eating food. Lack of proper sleep and food he lost his healthy body and his blood pressure went too low. He took the treatment and was admitted to the hospital for over one week. The major problem that he is facing here about the challenges of adjusting new environment and the excessive feelings of loneliness and emptiness. These psycho-social problems developed by the dislocation and forceful fragmentation already adversely reflected and affected his family life.

### **Outcome**

The case revealed the factors that were reasonably associated with the depression and anxiety of the respondent. The forceful dislocation adversely affected the psychological and social well-being of the respondent. He is stressed and driven to depression by unexpected and forceful dislocation. He is not emotionally able to accept the changes that happened around him. These things are underlining the poor resilience capacity and low level of self-efficacy among the youth in fishermen community. The development of symptoms he experiencing insomnia and lack of interest in food leads to his low blood pressure and other health-related issues. The low level of resilience and self-efficacy should address in the social work profession. The capacity to recover the environmental changes is a psychological ability. The lack of psychological care and social work intervention is the main issue of this fishermen community.

### **Discussion**

Resilience and self-efficacy are important psychological factors that are determined and associated with the mental and physical well-being of every individual. Psychological approach and social work interventions should provide for this community member to increase the level of resilience and self-efficacy from the grass root level. The respondent is facing challenges to adjust and cope with the new environment and also he is depressed anxious and experiencing insomnia. Proper sleep and energy he needs to maintain a level of psycho-social well-being. He should practice therapeutic interventions and techniques of CBT. Services and interventions of health social work practitioners also can help and motivate him to overcome these challenges. These interventions and supports are only the methods to strengthen the life of fishermen community and thereby build a better life.

### **Conclusion**

The fishermen of Kerala contribute a percentage of 3 to the economy. Moreover, they help the state in earning huge amounts of foreign exchange and goodwill. The protection of any community is deeply dependent on the policies and strategies which adopting the government and respected authorities in the state and nation. Fragmentation and dislocation lead to the life and psycho-social environment of the community make more pathetic and challenging. In any sense of dislocation and resettling, the respected authority has the responsibility for further follow-up and providing the services they need. The social work interventions and psycho-social approaches need the peoples who were challenged and stressed due to dislocation and fragmentation. It will help the

better mental health and psycho-social well-being of dislocated and fragmented people of fishermen community.

### Suggestions and Recommendations

- Socio-demographic characters and living environment is the major important factor that influences the psycho-social well-being of the respondents. Social workers should mobilize the attention of the government and authorities for the issues related to livelihood.
- Aware the community about the need and importance of mental health from grass root level. Provide counseling services and psycho-social interventions explained by the experts in the social work profession.
- Encourage the respondents to interact with new environment and people. Practice Jacobson's relaxation techniques.
- Medications and yoga for the relaxation of muscles and wellbeing. Assist NGOs and voluntary organizations working in the related sector.

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