



"Fishermen's Socio-Economic Development in Saharsa District, Bihar: A Comparative Study"

Mirza Zishan Beig¹, Dr. Kiran Gupta^{2*}, Birendra Kumar Savita³

¹Research Scholar, Department of Zoology, Nehru Gram Bharati (Deemed to be University), Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, Email: mzishanbeig@gmail.com

^{2,3}Department of Zoology, Nehru Gram Bharati (Deemed to be University), Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh.

***Corresponding Author:** Dr. Kiran Gupta

^{*}Department of Zoology, Nehru Gram Bharati (Deemed to be University), Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, Email: kiranunizoo@gmail.com

Abstract

Fishery is one of the oldest and best options of livelihood for the people of Saharsa. As River koshi is in the vicinity of Saharsa, most of the people of village of Saharsa depend on fishery for their livelihood. Fishery is an economic source as it provides option for integrated farming, so along with fish villagers can also cultivate other crops. Fish is the main source of meal in these areas, whether there is an occasion or any festival they consider fish in their menu because it is fresh fish is easily available in near markets. Study shows that, the income from fish catching is a major source followed by land income, livestock income and other sources like salary, rent, and business of the fish workers. The study concludes that the entire fisherman's expenditure largely spent on education of their children. This study aimed to evaluate the diversity of fish species and Socio-Economic status of fisherman community in the Kosi River at Saharsa, Bihar, using field surveys and taxonomic analysis. Fisheries sector is one of the promising subdivisions in the Agricultural sector of Bihar. The fishing sector is recognized as a major income and employment generator to the rural poor of the state as well as it stimulates development of a number of subsidiary industries. It is also a source of cheap and nutritious food with high caloric value and also a source of foreign exchange of country. Fisheries sector contributes significantly to the Indian economy by providing livelihood to approximately 14.49 million people. India is the second largest fish producing nation in the world. But the socio-economic conditions of the fishermen in India are very low. They are lacking the culture of education, and live under improper housing conditions. They normally living in the narrow strip of land as crowded without proper sanitation facilities that lead to health issues among fishermen in Bihar.

Key words: Integrated farming, Fishermen expenditure, Socio-Economic Status

Introduction

Fisheries sector is one of the promising subdivisions in the Agricultural sector of India. The fishing sector is recognized as a major income and employment generator to the rural poor of the nation as well as it stimulates development of a number of subsidiary industries. It is also a source of cheap and nutritious food with high caloric value and also a source of foreign exchange of country. Fisheries sector contributes significantly to the Indian economy by providing livelihood to approximately 14.49 million people. India is the second largest fish producing nation in the world. India is also a major contributor of fish through aquaculture and has second rank in the production in the world after China. The total fish production in India during 2016-17 is 18.06 Million Tonnes (MT) including 7.071 MT from Inland sector and 4.59 MT from Marine sector. Inland fisheries sector has a share of about 62% in total fish production of the India. But the socio-economic conditions of the fishermen in India are very low. They are lacking the culture of education, and live under improper housing conditions. They normally living in the narrow strip of land as crowded without proper sanitation facilities that lead to health issues among fishermen in India. Due to the low income of the family, they does not have sufficient basic facilities in their houses, they need to support a large number of family members that compel the fishermen to borrow credits to fulfill their basic needs. Bihar which is located in eastern part of India is the 13th largest state by its area. The inland fishery resources of the state include; rivers (Ganga, Gandak, Kosi, Bagmati, Kamala, Budhi Gandak, Mahananda, Son, Punpun, Saryu etc.) and canals which cover a length of 3,200 km, reservoirs (7,200 ha), flood plain wetlands (5,000 ha), oxbow lakes (48,000 ha), and ponds (65,000 ha). So there is immense possibility for small-scale fisheries development by using these resources efficiently.

As reported by the Government of Bihar, fish production in Bihar has increased to 8.73 lakh MT in 2023-24 from 4.79 lakh MT in 2014-15 registering a decadal growth of 81.98% and ranks at fourth position among the inland fish producing states of the Country at present in comparison to 9th rank during 2014-15. Further, it is also reported that in the year 2023-24, Bihar exported 38.38 thousand MT of fish to neighboring and other states in the country. To promote fish production in Bihar, Prime Minister Special Package was sanctioned by the Government of India to Bihar with a total outlay of Rs. 279.55 crore involving central share of Rs. 102.49 crore and Rs. 56.35 crore was released to Bihar. The major fisheries activities approved under the said PM Package included Fish seed rearing, Construction of new ponds, Magur

hatchery, Prawn hatchery, Housing of Fishers, cage culture/pen culture, whole sale fish market, retail fish market, purchase of mobile retail fish outlets cum fish on wheels, live fish carrier etc.

Objectives of the study:

- 1) To observe the socio-economic status of fishermen in Saharsa district, Bihar.
- 2) To study how much fisherman has developed through fish farming.

Research Methodology:

Study Area:

Saharsa (Bihar) situated in the eastern region of India, is home to a diverse aquatic ecosystem that is home to a variety of fish species. Fishing plays an important role in the social and economic development of the state, as it provides food security, employment, income generation, and rural development to millions of people. Fisheries are a vital part of the social and economic growth of Saharsa Bihar, India. It has a significant impact on the livelihoods of the people, food security and economic development. The District has a wide range of aquatic resources such as rivers, reservoirs, ponds, tanks and more. Assessment of the benefits or demerits of an occupation that is being practiced by these men for so many years is also a concern of this study.

Sample Size:

To attain the insights of the socio economic conditions of fishermen in Saharsa, a representative sample of 50 fishermen have been randomly selected from Saharsa district of fishermen. As Saharsa district holds a strong position in the kosi division Bihar, so a reference of the population can be dawned on the basis of the sample drawn.

Data Collection:

The present study is based basically on primary and secondary data. The primary data is collected by conducting field study and interview with the fishermen of Saharsa district through well designed questionnaire. Secondary data is gathered from both internal and external sources; organizational websites/ papers/annual reports and documents constitute the main source of internal secondary data; for external secondary sources we had rely on published documents, books, magazines, journals, papers, blogs etc. The Bihar government is providing a bumper subsidy to those starting fish farming business under the Reservoir Fisheries Development Scheme. The government's Department of Animal Resources and Fisheries provides a subsidy of 70% of the unit price to beneficiaries of all classes. The remaining amount will be borne by the beneficiary through a bank loan or personal fund. The government has fixed the cost of fry harvesting unit at Rs 60,000 per hectare, Rs 3 lakh per cage and Rs 10.50 lakh per cage in the reservoir. A 70% subsidy will be paid to all beneficiaries towards these costs. Some of the major fish species found in Bihar include Rohu, Catla, Mrigal, Silver carp, Grass carp, Magur(catfish), and Pangasius.

Research Design:

Data analysis and interpretation Variables Keeping in mind the restricting time and cost factors, data collection process have been conducted through sample survey with the Fifty fishermen by the help of questionnaire (drafted mainly in Hindi for the convenience of the beneficiaries) prepared with the help of experts in this field; survey is conducted mainly on the grounds like family strength, education of fishermen and family, decision making abilities in family, society and panchayat or gram sabha, fishing income, cost of fishing, savings, services available, assessment of aids by government etc.; these data are compiled and analyzed for interpretation after collection; conclusion of the report with summarized findings followed by limitations of the study and scope for further research.

Data analysis and Interpretation: (n=50)

Variables	No. of respondents	Percentage
Age (Yrs)		
Below 30	11	22
31 - 40	22	44
41 - 50	08	16
51 & Above	09	18
Gender		
Male	44	88
Female	06	12
Marital Status		
Married	42	84
Unmarried	08	16
Educational Qualification		
Below High School	20	40
Higher Secondary	21	42
Graduate	07	14

Diploma	02	04
Monthly Income		
Below Rs. 5000	05	10
Rs. 5001 to 10000	14	28
Above Rs. 10000	31	62
Savings		
Bank	24	48
Insurance	08	16
Post office	07	14
Gold	03	06
Land	08	16
Purpose of Saving		
Home Construction / Modification	07	14
Children Education	11	22
Children Marriage	24	48
Business purpose	08	16
Type of Boat		
Large	03	06
Small	14	28
None	33	66

The above table reveals that 44 per cent of fishermen age group between 31 to 40yrs, 22 per cent were below 30yrs. vast majority (88 per cent) of the respondents were male and remaining 12 per cent of the respondents were female. Vast majority (84 per cent) of the respondents was married and remaining 16 per cent of the respondents were unmarried. Nearly half (42 per cent) of the respondents were higher secondary level, 28 per cent were Rs.5001 to 10000 of monthly income, approximately half (48 per cent) of the respondents were saved in Bank. More than one third (48 per cent) of the respondents were purpose of saving is children marriage. Vast majority (66 per cent) of the respondents are not used any type of boats.

Discussion & Conclusion:

Socio-economic profile of the respondents is important to establish and explain the possible relationships among different socio-economic variables. Characteristics representing the personal and socio-economic attributes like family size and age, caste, social participation, educational status, experience in fish farming, income-expenditure pattern etc. In fisheries sector, socio-economic status of fisher / Fish farmers plays a key role in productive activities. Socio-economic parameters such as family size, age structure, education, social participation, income, and experience in aquaculture, size and nature of ownership of pond influence fish production. International Forum should be established to protect the interest of the fishermen engaged in catching overseas; The regional organizations working on the welfare activities of the fishermen should come forward to offer joint support to the cause of bottom level workers in the industry; Like the other international association, regulating laws and legislations to safeguard the workers in different function similar units must be started and specific legislations should be passed to protect fishermen; and The officials of the embassies should take care of the ill-treated fishermen in perennial problems. The economic condition of the fishermen were too poor, even they were not fully engaged in a fishing business. Maximum numbers of fishermen were unable to fulfill their minimum requirements. Most of fishermen were less perceptive about modern capture fisheries techniques. Here capture fishery business was totally male dominant; it's also an important finding.

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