

# Socio-Economic Status of the Fishermen Community: A Case Study of Jeerabad Village, Dhar District, Madhya Pradesh

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**Abstract:** *This study examines the economic and social status of the fishing communities dependent on the Maan Project in Jirabad village, located in Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh, India. The primary objective of this study is to assess the current economic and social status of these communities and to provide them with the necessary policies, technologies, and government programs for their development. Their daily routine and main occupation are to earn their livelihood by catching fish in the area around Maan Dam and selling them in the local market. However, there are many reasons why this community is standing at the first step of development. The main reasons among these are – traditional fishing techniques, non-availability of a good market, lack of education, ignorance about new fisheries techniques, and these communities not getting the benefit of government schemes, etc. This study combined descriptive and analytical elements. A questionnaire was developed based on established standards, and primary data were collected through interviews with fishermen. Sixty fishermen were selected from villages surrounding the Maan Dam to collect primary data. Secondary data were obtained from research papers published in previous years, academic journals, and government reports. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods and percentage analysis. We found that men participate more in fishing than women, while women participate more in household chores, processing, and marketing the fish they catch. During the survey, we found that men participated more in our questionnaires and interviews, indicating that men are more involved in fishing. The uncertainty of daily catches and sales prevents these fish from receiving fair prices, leading to poor economic conditions. Lack of basic amenities in their homes, lack of education among children, and lack of awareness about their health are also significant factors contributing to their plight. Lack of modern fishing technology and machinery, indifference from committees and departments, and limited access to various government schemes are also important factors contributing to their plight. The study found that to develop fisheries in Maan Dam in a sustainable manner, specific measures like capacity building programmes, technological advancement, strengthening of fishermen's cooperatives and effective policy support are required. The results of this research can help policymakers, fisheries departments, and rural development organisations better understand how to improve the living standards of these fishing communities.*

**Keywords:** Fishermen community, Socio-economic status, Fisheries, Maan Dam

## 1. Introduction

India is an agricultural country, where a large part of the rural economy comes from agricultural products. Besides farming, fisheries have also emerged as a major occupation in villages, especially in those with access to small and large natural ponds, rivers, or dams. These natural water sources meet the needs of these rural people, whether for drinking water, irrigation, or fish farming. Furthermore, these natural resources are also linked to their community, culture, economy, and social status.

Dhar tehsil of Madhya Pradesh is unique in its geographical structure and water resources throughout India. Many villages in Dhar district depend directly or indirectly on fisheries for their livelihoods. Similarly, the Maan Project in Jirabad, Manawar tehsil of Dhar district, holds a special place.

The fishing community in the Maan Project area relies on their limited resources and traditional knowledge. However, their social and economic development faces several major obstacles, including changing economic conditions, lack of access to modern technology, low- and poor-quality education, and market conditions.

The objective of this research is to examine the social and economic status of the fishing communities living around the Maan Project located in Jirabad village of Dhar district. The

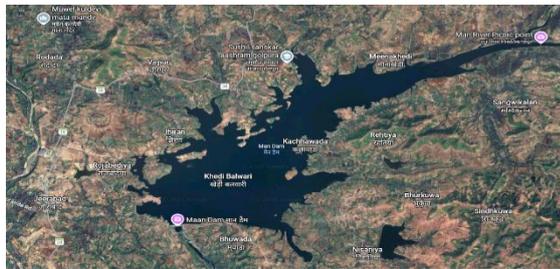
objective of this research is to know the real reasons why, despite having such a huge water source in this area, they are responsible for their economic insecurity and social backwardness.

## 2. Research Methodology

The current research study is both descriptive and analytical. The primary objective is to examine the factors affecting the livelihood, economic, and social well-being of the fishing community and to provide a realistic assessment of the current social and economic conditions facing the community.

### Study Area:

The study site was the Maan Project in Jirabad, located in the Manawar tehsil of Dhar district in Madhya Pradesh. It is of critical importance for groundwater recharge, agricultural water availability, and fisheries in the surrounding area. Village communities located around the Maan Project are directly or indirectly dependent on the Maan Project for agriculture, as well as for fisheries.



(Satellite image of Maan Dam)

**Selection of sample:**

Using a simple random sampling technique, a number of people from villages around the Maan project were contacted, and data from a total of 60 people were used.

**Collecting data:**

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data included a structured questionnaire and in-person interviews to gather information about the social and economic status of fish farmers. Secondary data included books, articles, research papers, scholarly journals, government reports, department records, and internet sources related to fisheries.

**3. Tools and Techniques**

For the data. To conduct the analysis, information was collected using questionnaires to assess the economic, social, educational, and technical status of fishing communities. Qualitative data was collected using interviews to gain a detailed understanding of the various circumstances and challenges faced by fishermen. The distribution of variables such as age, income, experience, technical knowledge, and education among the study participants was examined using percentage analysis. The socio-economic conditions of the fishing communities were interpreted and explained using descriptive analysis. The use of these tools and techniques allowed us to understand the realities of the social and economic status of the fishing communities living near the Maan Project in Dhar district. It could be understood well.

**Table 1:** Socio-economic profile of the fishing community (n = 60)

Factor	Social class	Social class	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 30 years	17	28
	31–40 years	31	52
	41–50 years	7	12
	51 years and above	5	8
Gender	Male	56	94
	Woman	4	6
Marital Status	married	53	88
	Unmarried	7	12
Educational Level	below high school	10	16
	Higher Secondary	29	48
	Graduate	14	24
	Diploma	7	12
Monthly Income	Less than ₹5,000	7	11
	₹5,001–₹10,000	28	46
	Above ₹10,000	14	23
	Other/Not Specified	11	20
Livelihood Resources	Small non-mechanized boat	55	92
	other resources	5	8

Source: Primary survey conducted in the Maan Dam area of Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh.

**4. Results****1) Age structure**

According to this survey conducted among the fishing community located in various villages around Maan Dam, the maximum number of people who participated in this survey (about 52%) were fishermen between the ages of 31 and 40. Next came those under 30 (28%) and those between 41 and 50 (12%). Only 8% of those surveyed were over 51. These results indicate that the majority of fishermen in the study area are in the age group that is most economically active and physically productive.

**2) Gender composition**

Research shows that most fishing in the study area is done by men. The majority of survey participants were men, representing approximately 94% of the survey participants, while only 6% were women. These data indicate that men performed most of the fieldwork. Most women's work was domestic, such as cleaning and drying fish, and taking them to market for sale. Their participation in direct fishing activities was minimal.

**3) Marital status**

In terms of marital status, only 12% of fish farmers were unmarried, while the majority (88%) were married. The study also revealed that these individuals marry at a young age, placing them under significant responsibility at a young age. This directly impacts their educational and economic status.

**4) Academic Status**

According to data from fish farmers surveyed, approximately 48% of them had completed higher secondary education. Approximately 24% had completed high school, 12% had a diploma, and 16% had only primary education.

Poor standards of higher education, coupled with the struggle to make a living, little knowledge of technology, and limited access to and knowledge of government schemes, reduce opportunities.

**5) Monthly Income**

According to survey data, most fish farmers fall into the lower-income group. Approximately 23% reported monthly incomes exceeding ₹10,000 per month, while 46% reported monthly incomes between ₹5,001 and ₹10,000. 11% reported monthly incomes below ₹5,000. This income is insufficient to meet daily needs, leaving these individuals often in poor financial health.

**6) Resources for livelihood**

Approximately 92% of fish farmers use canoes, tubes, or small, non-mechanised boats for fishing, depending on the available resources they use for their livelihoods. The absence of cold storage facilities, processing infrastructure, and modern fishing gear in the region severely limits their productivity and income potential.

**5. Discussion**

According to research conducted by the Maan Project on the social and economic status of the fishing community of Jirabad village in Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh, India,

fishermen face structural constraints, lack of employment and essential resources. While traditional fishing methods may be convenient, traditional, and common for these people, they cannot guarantee long-term employment due to limited resources and uncertain income. In terms of age, young and middle-aged people are more active in fishing activities, but their participation is limited due to a lack of proper knowledge and technology.

Gender gap was a key aspect of the research. Women actively participate in post-harvest activities such as cleaning, processing, and marketing, but their participation in key decision-making and direct earnings remains low. A statistically significant relationship exists between the fisheries profession, or rather, the conservatism, social norms, gender inequality, and unequal access to opportunities prevalent in Indian society. Lack of technical and vocational training significantly hinders the acquisition and adoption of advanced and better fisheries techniques, even if fishermen have a decent level of general education. According to correlation-based interpretation, educational achievement is positively associated with institutional support, assimilation of contemporary technology and access to various government schemes.

However, due to a lack of focused skill development programs, market share and productivity have been limited. Economic conditions reveal that most fish farmers earn very low incomes, preventing them from meeting their daily basic needs. Furthermore, they often have minimal or no savings. Statistical interpretations show a strong correlation between livelihoods and income levels. High household expenses, limited access to healthcare, and rising education costs force fish farmers to borrow money, perpetuating a vicious cycle of debt and unstable finances.

Another important aspect is that despite the availability of adequate resources, the full potential of the Maan project is not being realised. Results show that development of marketing and processing infrastructure, strengthening of fisheries cooperatives, better implementation of government welfare programs, and access to modern fishing equipment can all significantly increase productivity and income levels. It is believed that improved social and economic outcomes are positively associated with institutional support and access to technology.

According to the study's summary, fishermen dependent on the Maan Project continue to practice old and traditional methods of fishing, which in turn impacts their economic situation, impacting their social and educational status. Lack of opportunities, lack of education and technology, among other factors, impose various social restrictions on them. To promote fisheries in this region, technological advancement, technology dissemination, financial support, educational improvements, social initiatives, and the widespread dissemination of government schemes are crucial.

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