

OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS, GENDER ROLES, AND LIVELIHOOD CHALLENGES OF FISHERS IN DAL LAKE, JAMMU AND KASHMIR, INDIA

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Dal Lake is a crucial fisheries hub in Jammu and Kashmir, supporting the livelihoods of many fishers, particularly the *Hanji* community. This study assessed occupational hazards, gender roles, time-use patterns, and gender-specific needs and constraints faced by fishers. Data were collected through interviews and observations from fisher households. A sample size of 60 fishermen and fisherwomen was taken. Findings showed that many fishers were semi-literate, with 20% of fishermen and 3.33% of fisherwomen having primary education, and only 3.33% of fishermen being graduates, from nuclear families, and had extensive fishing experience (20-50 years). Fishing was the primary occupation, with boat tourism as a secondary income source (33.33%). The average monthly income from fishing was ₹12,320. Gender roles were distinct; fisherwomen primarily managed reproductive tasks, while productive roles were dominated by fishermen, although 21.66% of fisherwomen assisted in fishing activities. Occupational hazards were categorized into cold weather, physical, biological, ergonomic, and psychosocial risks. About 85% of fishermen reported reduced sensation in feet and fever due to cold, while 90% suffered burns from *Kangri* use. Fish bites, cuts (87.5%), and ergonomic injuries due to heavy labor were common. Psychosocial stress from political instability also disrupted livelihoods. No structured safety measures were reported. The study revealed that 90% of fisherwomen experienced frostbite, 96.6% suffered cuts from fish handling, and 86.6% faced biological hazards. Ergonomic issues like back pain and psychosocial stress (96.6%) due to instability and the COVID-19 pandemic were prevalent. Gender-specific needs varied, with women prioritizing security, childcare, and education, while men sought alternative livelihoods and financial aid. Fisherwomen had more access to household resources, but men controlled financial and fisheries-related assets. Fishermen of Dal Lake struggle with the stoppage of craft wood subsidies, while fisherwomen face severe discomfort due to the lack of washroom facilities. The study underscores the need for gender-sensitive policies, occupational safety measures, and institutional support to improve fisher livelihoods in Dal Lake.