

# “Understanding the Socio-Economic and Political Status of Fisherwomen through the Fishery Activities in Kharagpur Sub-Division in Paschim Medinipur District of West Bengal”

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of fishery activities in empowering women within Kharagpur Sub-division of Paschim Medinipur district, West Bengal. Applying mixed method approach, it investigates women participation across the fishery values chain – including fish production, processing, marketing and selling and assesses women economic condition, social and political empowerment. This study explores how women involvement in fishery activities has led to increase the women’s income, enhanced decision-making power and grater social mobility. The government initiatives have provided financial assistance and training, yet challenges such as limited access to resource, inadequate infrastructure and gender biases persist. The study points out the necessity of gender equality, increasing access to credit and training, and promotion women leadership in fishery activities. By addressing these systemic barriers, fishery activities can serve as a vital tool for sustainable women empowerment in rural Kharagpur Sub-division.

**Keywords-** Women Status, Fishery Activities, Economic Empowerment, Social Status, Political Empowerment

## 1. Introduction

Empowerment plays a crucial role in achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development for women. It contributes enhancing the women access to resource, education, decision making power and social recognition (Kabeer, 1999). West Bengal ranks among the fish production state in India, with Paschim Medinipur district, particularly Kharagpur Sub-Division, emerging as centre point of inland fishery (Department of Fisheries, West Bengal, 2020). In this region, natural water bodies like ponds, canals, and wetlands serve as an important source of livelihood.

Women significantly contribute to the fish processing, marketing, and fish related Artcraft, with limited access to capital and recognition (Weeratunge et al., 2010). Its efforts to enhance women participation in fishery activities have gained traction worldly, recognizing the important role of women in both household sustenance and community development (Williams, 2008). It explores the multidimension empowerment of women by the context of fishery activities, focusing on the particularly local dynamics of Kharagpur sub division (Harper et al., 2013).

The previous review of literature further supports this exploration. Bennet (2005) highlights that the role of women in fisheries is often "invisible", especially like cleaning, drying and marketing. Women in rural India, including West Bengal, are widely involved in these roles despite the lack of recognition and decision -making authority. The study emphasizes the need to account for gender levels in the development of fisheries to promote true empowerment.

Debnath and Das (2017) find that small aquatic farming projects improves women's income, mobility and family decision making. Through self-help groups (SHGs) many women gained access to small loans and training in fish farming strategies.

Kleiber et al. (2015) argued that fisheries development policies often ignore gender-specific roles and benefits, which prevent women in empowerment. They advocate emphasizes the importance of participatory management and inclusive administration that recognizes women as stakeholders. These national insights are important for design local policies in districts like Paschim Medinipur.

Chakraborty and Saha (2014) examine women's role in fishery activities in South Bengal, showing that both the family and community structures lead to the extended agency. The survey further mentions that the traditional colours and gender rules sometimes limit the opportunities for empowerment. This brief attitude is helpful in understanding the specific mobility in the sub-section of the Kharagpur sub-section.

Panda (2018) explores how self-help groups in Orissa and West Bengal, when fisheries-based livelihood programs are integrated with programs, contribute to the growth of financial freedom and leadership skills among rural women. Research notes literacy, health awareness and improvement of community participation. So, through this study, the researcher focuses to understand the status of women through fishery activities in Kharagpur Sub Division. This study examines the aspects of economic independence, political participation and psychological satisfaction of women. The paper analyses support systems available, such as government schemes and challenges that women face in the fishery activities.

This study aims to analyse women's economic independence, political participation, and psychological satisfaction in Kharagpur Sub-Division, while assessing the impact of government support and identifying challenges in fishery activities.

### 3. Research Gap

Despite the growing literature about the women participation in fishery activities, existing studies often generalize results without focusing localised contexts like the Kharagpur sub division of Paschim Medinipur District. While the role of women in post-harvest activities and the benefits of SHGs are recognized, but there is limited research on women empowerment through the fishery activities affect women's empowerment in micro-regional level. There is a significant gap in exploring how these activities increased the status of women in the economy, politics, social and psychological sectors.

### 4. Objectives of the Study

- 1 To examine the role of women in the fisheries sector of Kharagpur Sub Division
- 2 To analyse the economic, social, and political status of women through fishery activities.
- 3 To evaluate the role of government programs in enhancing women's participation.
- 4 To identify the key challenges faced by women in the fisheries sector and suggest recommendations for policy interventions.

### 5. Methodology

#### Area of Study-

Kharagpur is a sub- division of Paschim Medinipur district, West Bengal, India. It consists of Kharagpur municipality and ten blocks: Debra, Pingla, Keshiari, Dantan-I, Dantan-II, Narayangarh, Mohanpur, Sabang, Kharagpur-I, and Kharagpur-II (*Subdivision and Blocks | District Paschim Medinipur | India*).

#### Method-

We have applied descriptive and explanatory research with quantitative and qualitative method to understand the "Women Empowerment through Fishery Activities in Kharagpur Sub-Division in Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal".

#### Data Collection Process-

This study is completely based on primary as well as secondary data. The primary data has been collected from the participants of this particular area and secondary data collected form government data, journals, newspaper, books, report etc.

#### Sampling-

For this study, the researcher has constructed a purposive systematic sampling. So, the researcher has taken three raw data from every blocks. Since, there are ten blocks in Kharagpur sub-division, this work has been completed with a 30 raw data.

#### Statistical analysis-

Throughout this statistical analysis, the researcher has applied MS excel analysis tools.

### 6. Result

This study aimed to understand the women's condition and how the women of Kharagpur sub-division are empowering themselves through the fishery activities. So, the researcher has applied descriptive and explanatory research with qualitative and quantitative method for the statistical analysis to understand the role of fisherwomen in Kharagpur sub-division. These results have been demonstrated below with the help of histogram and descriptive tools.

### 1. Age Wise Participation of Fisherwomen in Kharagpur Sub-Division

Table No – 1. Age Wise Description of fisherwomen Participation

Description of Age	Result
Mean	38.43333333
Median	37
Mode	38

The average age of Fisherwomen in the sub-Division of Kharagpur is 38.43 years, with a standard error 1.86. The median age 37, and most frequent age (mode) is 38. The age range 24 to 65 years. Data was collected from 30 participants. This data indicates that women of various age groups, especially, those in their mid to late 38, are actively participated in fishery activities in the region.

Table No – 2. Age Wise Fisherwomen's Participation in Fishery Activities in Kharagpur Sub-division

Age Wise Range	Frequency	Percentage%	Cumulative %
18-28	15	50%	50.00%
29-39	6	20%	70.00%
40-50	5	16.666%	86.67%
51-60	2	6.666%	93.33%
61-70	2	6.666%	100.00%
Total 30 women			

Participation according to women's age in the sub-section of Kharagpur shows that the most of the fall in the 18-28 age group, which is accounting for 50% (15 out of 30). It highlights a strong youth busyness. The 29-39 age group follows with 20% participants, while 40-50 years accounts for 16.67%. The participation significantly drops in older age groups is 6.67% each for 51-60 and 61-70 years. The cumulative percentage reaches 70% by the age 39 and 86.67% by age 50, which is indicating that most active fisherwomen are below 50 years, it suggests that younger fisherwomen dominate fishery activities in this area.

### 2. Type of Activities of Fisherwomen in Kharagpur Sub-Division

Table No – 3. Types of Activities of Fisherwomen in Kharagpur sub-division

Types of the Fishery Activities	Frequency	Percentage %	Cumulative %
Production	7	23.33 %	23.33%
Selling	4	13.33 %	36.67%
Production & selling	15	50 %	86.67%
Catching & selling	3	10 %	96.67%
Catching	1	3.33 %	100.00%
Total=30			

The data reveals that the majority of majority of women in Kharagpur Sub-Division (50% women) engaged in both production and selling activities, it showing their dual role in fishery value chain. About 23.33% women are sole participated in production, while 13.33% women involved in selling. Additionally, 10% women engaged in catching and selling, and small portion (3.33%) is participated in catching. Altogether, 86.67% of the women are engaged in more than one activity, which indicating their multi-functional role in the sector. It indicates a strong contribution of women across various fishery operations, especially in combined roles.

### 3. Economic Condition of Fisherwomen in Kharagpur Sub-Division

Table No – 4. Description of the Monthly Income of Fisherwomen by the Fishery Activities

Description of the Monthly Income of Fisherwomen	
Mean	8333.333
Median	8500
Mode	10000
Standard Deviation	3097.088

The table provides a statistical summary of monthly income of women in Kharagpur Sub-Division. The mean income is ₹8,333.33, with a median of ₹8,500 and a mode of ₹10,000, indicating that a significant number earn around ₹10,000. The income ranges from ₹2,000 to 15,000, showing a wide disparity. The standard deviation of 3097.088 around the means indicate the reliability of the average income estimate. With a sample size of 30, the data reflects moderate consistency but reveals economic inequality among the fisherwomen.

Table No – 5. Monthly Income of Fisherwomen by the Fishery Activities

Monthly Income of Fisherwomen	Frequency	Percentage %	Cumulative %
1000-5000	7	23.33%	23.33%
5001-10000	17	56.66 %	80.00%
10001-15000	6	20 %	100.00%
15001-20000	0	0 %	100.00%
20001-25000	0	0 %	100.00%
	Total women 30		

Data indicates that most women (56.67%) earn monthly between 5,001 and \$ 10,000, which is indicating this as the most common bracket. Approximately, 23.3% women earn a lower income of ₹1,000-₹5,000, while 20% women earn between ₹15,001-₹25,000. This distribution suggests that 80% fisherwomen earn ₹10,000 or less, reflecting modest earnings and economic vulnerability. This absence of higher income groups highlights a lack of upward income mobility in the fishery activity of these women.

#### 4. Social Status of Fisherwomen in Kharagpur Sub-Division

Table No – 6. Description of the Social Condition of Fisherwomen by the Fishery Activities

Social Status of Fisherwomen	
Mean	3.933333333
Median	4
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	0.63968383

The social status of fisherwomen in Kharagpur Sub-Division in Paschim Medinipur, rated on ratio scale (likely 1 to 5), has a mean score of 3.93, which is indicating a moderately good condition. The median and mode are both 4, which is suggesting that most of fisherwomen rate their social condition as fairly positive. The low standard deviation (0.64) indicates the responses are closely clustered around the mean, which is reflecting consistency in perceptions. Overall, the data indicates that most of the women experience relatively stable and decent social condition within the community.

Table No – 7. Social Satisfaction Level of Fisherwomen by the Fishery Activities

Social Satisfaction level of fisherwomen	Frequency	Percentage %	Cumulative %
Strongly Not Satisfied	0	0	0.00%
Not Satisfied	0	0	0.00%
Satisfied	7	23.33333333	23.33%
Moderately Satisfied	18	60	83.33%
Very Strongly Satisfied	5	16.66666667	100.00%
	Total 30	100	100.00%

It shows that majority of fisherwomen reported high levels of social satisfaction. Approximately 60% of women are "moderately satisfied," 23.33% women are "satisfied," and 16.67% women are "very strongly satisfied." Notably, none of the women indicated being "Not Satisfied" or "Strongly Not Satisfied," indicating that they were not dissatisfied. Overall, all of the women say they are somewhat happy with their social situation, which suggests that they feel very happy about their community and work environment. It indicates the generally positive social environment surrounding fisheries activity in the Kharagpur Sub-Division.

#### 5. Political Participation of Fisherwomen in Kharagpur Sub-Division

Table No – 8. Political Participation of Fisherwomen by the Fishery Activities

Do You Take Part in Local Politics	Frequency	Percentage %	Cumulative %
YES	26	78.00%	86.67%
NO	4	12.00%	100.00%
	Total 30		

According to the table, 78% of women in the Kharagpur Sub-Division actively involve in local politics, with only 12% not doing so. This high level of political activity indicates that fisherwomen are actively participated and aware of their rights and local governance. Which is suggested their willingness to influence decision-making steps that could have an impact on their livelihood. This active involvement can also be interpreted as

a sign of social empowerment and strength. Overall, the results show a favourable trend in the political empowerment of women through fishery activities in Kharagpur sub-division.

## 6. Government helps to the Fisherwomen in Kharagpur Sub-Division

Table No – 9. Government Helps to Fisherwomen by the Fishery Activities

Government Helps to Fisherwomen	Frequency	Percentage %	Cumulative %
YES	20	66.66666667%	66.67%
NO	10	33.33333333%	100.00%
	Total 30		

The data reveals that 66.67% women reported receiving government help, while 33.33% did not. It suggests that the majority of the women receive government assistance in the fishery activities, which can help to improve their livelihoods and economic stability. However, the fact that one-third of participants did not receive any support, which indicates a lack of outreach or accessibility. It emphasizes on the importance of improved coverage and more inclusive policy execution to guarantee that all women may benefit from government programs and support chains.

## 7. Discussion

The results of the study indicate that young fishermen are dominating the sector, which is likely due to their physical strength and adaptability. Their diversified role reflects deep participation and flexibility in various activities of fishery activities. Despite the presence of moderate incomes, the absence of high-income women indicates that there are barriers to entering or scale-up in lucrative markets. The level of social satisfaction indicates a supportive community environment, although more research is needed on the depth and nature of this satisfaction.

The rate of political participation is impressive, which is indicating a growing awareness of rights and decision making. However, the challenges such as limited awareness, lack of education, technical knowledge and administrative complexity are still creating structural obstacles.

Although government schemes have a positive impact on the fisherwomen's livelihoods, but their reach is limited. The study emphasises that an integrated policy approach, which is including educational, awareness and infrastructure development, is needed for long-term empowerment of fisherwomen. The Discussion shows the relationship among the facts, it puts results in context of previous researches, and the emphasis must be on presenting results in relation to established knowledge (Kabeer, 1999; Harper et al., 2013; Debnath & Das, 2017).

## 8. What are the Main challenges Infront of the Empowerment of Fisherwomen in Kharagpur sub division

(A). A Lack of Awareness- The fisherwomen of Kharagpur sub division are not aware their right, production, selling technology, and government schemes etc.

(B). Lack of Educational Access- They have not much amount of literacy rate because they are left behind from the education.

(C). Decision Making Issue- Women of this particular filed, they cannot take decision in their family as well as society.

(D). Administrative Complicities- For these administrative complicities they cannot take facilities form the government.

(E). Gender Bias in workplace- It is a big problem, which all professional women have to face gender bias in workplace. So, the same problem is being faced in the case of fishery activities.

(F). Lack of Technological Knowledge- They have such as no technological and advancement knowledge.

These problems have become a special barrier to women empowerment. So, the government and individual have to positively take action for the policies implementation, awareness building, decision making, power enhancement, abolish the gender bias in workplace and better education facilities for the betterment of fisherwomen. And also, women have to take part all the activities in society.

## 9. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to examine the multi -faceted role of women in the fishery activities of the Kharagpur sub -division, analyse their economic, social and political positions, evaluate the impact of government policies on women and identify the main challenges. The results show that women are actively participating in various stages of fishery activities- such as processing, marketing, selling and fish related handcraft- yet their contributions often remain undervalued. Economically, fisheries activities have enabled women to increase their income and achieve a measure of financial freedom, resulting in the ability to make more decisions in the family. Socially, women who are involved in fisheries have expanded the mobility of women, access to community networks and educational desires for the next generation. Politically, although some women have been left participating in local politics, overall representation remains very good, highlighting the need for greater institutional assistance. Government Schemes have created new

opportunities for women to involve in fishery sectors. However, issues related to awareness, access and bureaucratic barriers often prevent the complete perception of these benefits. In conclusion, although the fishery activities provide a significant way to empower women in the Kharagpur sub-division. Through these activities, women are slowly empowering themselves in aspects of socially, politically, economically and psychologically.

### Co-Author

He is my guide, who has monitored this whole work.

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### Disclosure statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

### Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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