

Socio-Economic Conditions and Occupational Challenges of Workers in the Fisheries Industry: A Case Study with Mukka Proteins Limited, Sasihithlu

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Abstract: The growth of the animal protein industry in India has contributed to the generation of employment, particularly in coastal regions like Mangalore. Mukka Proteins Ltd., a leading company in this sector, has played a key role in this development. This study explores the socio-economic conditions and occupational challenges of the employees working in Mukka Proteins Ltd.

The research focuses on aspects such as income level, education, job security, working conditions, and access to welfare facilities. The data collected has been used to understand the daily life and work-related issues faced by the workforce. The findings show that while some employees benefit from stable income and company-provided facilities, others face challenges such as long working hours, occupational stress, and lack of opportunities for career growth.

This research aims to highlight these concerns and provide practical suggestions for improving employee welfare and work satisfaction. The results may be useful for both the management of Mukka Proteins and policymakers in understanding employee needs and enhancing work environments in similar industries.

Key Words: Socio-economic conditions, Employee welfare, Occupational challenges, Mukka Proteins Ltd., Work environment.

I. Introduction

Mangalore, a prominent coastal city in Karnataka, is known for its cultural richness and strong industrial base. The city has developed into an important economic hub, thanks to its natural port and coastal location, which support a variety of industries. Some of the most notable industries in Mangalore include the cashew processing industry, fisheries industry, oil refineries, and chocolate manufacturing units. These sectors not only boost the city's economy but also provide employment opportunities to thousands of people in and around the region.

The cashew industry in Mangalore is one of the oldest and most established. It plays a key role in India's cashew exports, with large quantities being processed and shipped to other countries. Similarly, Mangalore also houses chocolate factories, contributing to the growing food processing sector in India. The presence of oil refineries and petrochemical industries adds further strength to the industrial landscape, bringing in investment and supporting various allied services.

Among all these, the fisheries industry holds special importance. With its location along the Arabian Sea, Mangalore has access to rich marine resources. Fishing has been a traditional occupation for many coastal families, and it continues to be a major source of livelihood. The city exports a wide range of fish and fish products to countries like Japan, the UAE, and Europe. These include fresh fish, dried fish, fish meal, and fish oil, which are widely used in animal feed, pharmaceuticals, and nutritional supplements. Fish also has medicinal properties, and its oil is commonly used in health care products due to its omega-3 fatty acids and other health benefits.

At the heart of this booming industry are the fishermen and workers who dedicate their lives to the sea. For most of them, fishing is not just a job, but a family tradition passed down through generations. Despite their contribution to the economy, fishermen and workers in the fisheries sector face many socio-economic and occupational challenges. Their income depends on seasonal catches, and many are affected by price fluctuations, changing weather conditions, and rising fuel costs. They often lack proper access to education, healthcare, and government support. Some continue to rely on traditional fishing methods, while others try to adapt to modern technology to improve their work.

In this context, this study is an attempt to understand the socio-economic conditions and occupational challenges faced by workers in the fisheries industry, especially fishermen in the Mangalore region. The research focuses on factors such as income level, education, job security, access to health and welfare facilities, and the overall impact of industrial development on their lives. By exploring these aspects, the study aims to suggest ways to improve their standard of living and ensure a more secure and sustainable future for the fishing communities.

Objectives

- ❖ To analyse the socio-economic profile of workers in the fisheries industry including income levels, education, housing and access to social services
- ❖ To investigate the occupational challenges faced by fisheries workers, such as health risks, physical labour demands, and workplace safety.

- ❖ To study the impact of socio-economic conditions on the quality of life and job satisfaction of fisheries workers.
- ❖ To assess the role of governmental and non-governmental initiatives in addressing the challenges faced by fisheries workers.

Scope of The Study

This study aims to understand the socio-economic conditions and occupational challenges of workers at Mukka Proteins Limited, Sasihihlu, Mangaluru. It focuses on aspects like income, education, health, working hours, and workplace issues. The study is limited to male and female workers involved in fish processing within the factory premises and excludes other departments. Data was collected during 2024–2025 through questionnaires and personal visits. The findings aim to highlight worker issues and suggest improvements.

Statement of The Problem

The fisheries sector is a key source of income for many families in coastal areas like Surathkal. Despite its importance, workers face issues like low income, job insecurity, poor health, lack of education, and limited access to healthcare. Their challenges often go unnoticed. This study focuses on understanding the living and working conditions of fisheries workers in Mukka Proteins Limited, Sasihihlu, Surathkal, Mangaluru, aiming to highlight their problems and suggest ways to improve their quality of life.

II. Literature Review

1. Pradeep, M. D. (2017): The study examined the socio-economic life of fisherfolk in Thota Bengre, Mangaluru. It revealed issues like overfishing, lack of infrastructure, and regulatory restrictions. The study stressed sustainable development and empowerment of small-scale fishers.
2. Saraswathi et al. (2023): This study focused on the socio-economic and occupational status of fishermen in Thoothukudi. It used surveys and interviews to assess income, health, education, and welfare access, aiming to inform policy interventions.
3. Nayak et al. (2020): A community-based survey in Mangalore revealed that fish processing workers face musculoskeletal issues due to repetitive tasks and poor ergonomics. It recommended ergonomic improvements.
4. Gunakar & Bhatta (2016): The paper explored challenges faced by fisherwomen in Karnataka, including low income and lack of credit access. It called for socio-economic empowerment measures.
5. Bhatta & Rao (2003): This study highlighted the essential but unrecognized role of women in fisheries. It emphasized the need for gender-inclusive policies and decision-making power for fisherwomen.

III. Research Methodology

Research Design

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected directly from people working in the fisheries sector in Surathkal at Mukka Proteins Limited, Sasihihlu, Mangaluru using a questionnaire. The questionnaire had questions about their age, income, education, family background, health, job safety, and working conditions. Secondary data was collected from books, government reports, internet articles, and previous studies on similar topics.

Sample Size and Techniques

For this research, data was collected from 100 employees working in a fish processing company of Mukka Proteins Limited, Sasihihlu, Mangaluru. The respondents were not fishermen or fish vendors, but people working in various roles inside the fish processing unit of Mukka Proteins Limited, Sasihihlu, Mangaluru. These included workers involved in cleaning, packing, handling machines, and other processing-related tasks. The sampling was done using a convenient sampling method, where responses were taken from those who were available and willing to participate in the study.

Tools for Data Analysis

The collected data was studied using simple tools like percentages and tables. Important information is shown using charts and tables to make the data easy to understand.

Limitations of The Study

This study is limited to Mukka Proteins Limited, Sasihihlu, Mangaluru only, so the results may not represent the whole fisheries sector in other regions. Also, the answers given by people may not always be 100% correct, as some may forget or hesitate to share the truth. Since the study depends mostly on personal opinions and self-reported information, there may be some level of bias. The focus is mainly on fishing-related jobs and daily life problems, and does not cover other big issues like sea pollution or advanced fishing technology. Even with these limits, the study gives a basic idea of the difficulties faced by workers in this sector.

Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic and Socio-Economic characteristics of the respondents:

Table No. 01 Distribution of respondents by their Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics

Characteristics		Nature	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Age	18-25	12	12%
		26-32	21	21%
		33-40	18	18%
		40-Above	49	49%
		Total	100	100.00
2	Gender	Female	60	57.10%
		Male	45	42.90%
		Total	100	100.00
3	Educational Qualification	Primary Education	2	2%
		Secondary education	7	7%
		Higher education	48	48%
		Graduate	46	46%
		Post Graduate	2	2%
		Total	100	100.00
4	Marital Status	Single	23	23%
		Married	77	77%
		Total	100	100.00
5	No of Dependents	2-3	45	45%
		4-5	55	55%
		Total	100	100

Source: Survey Data

The data reveals that 49% of respondents are aged 40 and above, showing an older workforce. Females make up 57.10%, indicating strong participation. Most are educated, with 48% having higher education and 46% being graduates. A majority (77%) are married, and 55% have 4–5 dependents, indicating financial responsibility. Overall, the respondents are mostly middle-aged, educated, and married, highlighting the need for targeted welfare and development initiatives.

Table No. 02 Distribution of respondents on the basis of Income

Income	No. of respondents	Percentage
Below 5000	20	20%
5000-10000	35	35%
10000-20000	30	30%
Above 20000	15	15%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Survey Data

In a survey of 100 individuals, 35% reported earning Rs. 5,000 – Rs. 10,000 monthly, while 30% earned Rs. 10,000 – Rs. 20,000. About 20% earned below Rs. 5,000, and only 15% earned above Rs. 20,000. This indicates that a majority fall within the lower to

middle-income brackets, with modest earnings. The data reflects economic constraints faced by a significant portion of the group, highlighting the need for income-support measures or livelihood enhancement initiatives.

Table No. 3 Distribution of respondents on the basis of challenges on health

Response	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	75	75%
No	25	25%
Total	100	100%

Source: Survey Data

Out of 100 fisheries workers surveyed, 75% reported experiencing health issues related to their job, while the remaining 25% said they did not face any work-related health challenges.

Table No. 04 Distribution of respondents on their challenges faced on fisheries industry

Challenges	No of Respondents	Percentage
Low Wages	15	15%
Lack of job security	30	30%
Poor working conditions	25	25%
Limited access to education/ training	30	30%
Total	100	100.00

Source: Survey Data

When 100 fisheries workers were asked about their main challenges, 30% cited lack of job security and another 30% noted limited access to education/training. Poor working conditions were reported by 25%, while 15% pointed to low wages. These findings highlight key concerns around employment stability, skill development, workplace conditions, and income. Addressing these issues is crucial to improving the overall well-being and sustainability of workers in the fisheries sector.

Table No. 05 Distribution of respondents based on benefits on government schemes

Response	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	17	17.71%
No	79	82.29%
Total	100	100.00

Source: Survey Data

Only 17.71% of fishermen reported receiving government scheme benefits, while 82.29% did not, highlighting a significant gap between awareness and actual access, possibly due to implementation or eligibility issues.

IV. Major Findings of The Study

- ❖ Nearly half the respondents (49%) are aged 40 and above. Younger workers (18-25 years) were only 12%.
- ❖ More participants were female (57.10%) than male (42.90%).
- ❖ Most workers (77%) are married. Single individuals were 23%.
- ❖ 100% of respondents depend primarily on the fisheries industry for income.
- ❖ The largest group (35%) earns ₹5,000-₹10,000 monthly.
- ❖ 30% described their living conditions as "Good". However, 20% reported "Poor" or "Very poor" conditions. The most common role is "Fish processing" (40% of workers).
- ❖ Most (40%) work 6-8 hours daily. 25% work over 8 hours.
- ❖ A large majority (75%) face health challenges from their occupation.
- ❖ A very high 88% face financial difficulties meeting basic needs.

- ❖ "Lack of job security" and "Limited access to education/training" are the biggest challenges (30% each).
- ❖ 66.67% of fishermen (64 respondents) face occupational challenges.
- ❖ Only 40.63% (39 fishermen) are aware of relevant government schemes.
- ❖ Only 17.71% (17 fishermen) reported receiving benefits from government schemes.
- ❖ Only 13.54% (13 respondents) are satisfied with current government support.
- ❖ Most fishermen (97.92%, 94 respondents) reported their work does not affect their mental health.
- ❖ A majority (65%) felt their work affects their family life.
- ❖ 100 % of respondents believe Mukka Proteins Limited contributes to worker welfare.
- ❖ Many workers (71.88%, 69 respondents) want training to enhance skills and socio-economic conditions.

V. Conclusion

This study focused on understanding the challenges faced by workers in the fisheries industry, particularly those employed at Mukka Proteins Limited in Sasihihlu. While basic facilities like safety gear and limited access to government schemes are available, workers still face numerous difficulties in their daily lives. Most are fully dependent on this industry for their livelihood and earn low monthly wages, leading to financial instability. Although some own homes and consider their living conditions satisfactory, many struggle with health issues, job insecurity, and economic pressure.

The study also found that awareness of government schemes is low, and only a few workers have benefited from them, pointing to gaps in implementation and outreach. Some workers noted that their jobs negatively affect family life. However, many expressed interest in upgrading their skills through training programs.

In conclusion, while companies like Mukka Proteins provide some support, collaborative efforts from the government, industry, and society are needed to improve workers' overall well-being.

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