

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING EVALUATION OF FISHERFOLK USING COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS SCALES

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses emotional wellbeing among fisherfolk in relation to community connectedness. Fisherfolk communities are susceptible to psychosocial stressors stemming from their environment, economy, and society. In this study, the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index and an adapted Community Connectedness Scale (CCS) were administered to participants from selected coastal regions to gather data. Quantitative analysis showed a correlation ($r=0.62$) between community connectedness and emotional wellbeing. Participants as peers with greater social relations and community connections reported better psychological health. Qualitative data confirmed the influence of culture and social support on resilience as a community. This research highlights the need to include community-based mental health and coastal development policy and provides proactive culturally appropriate frameworks for assessing emotional wellbeing in vulnerable occupational groups.

Keywords: emotional wellbeing, fisherfolk, community connectedness, coastal communities, mental health, resilience, psychosocial support

I. INTRODUCTION

Fisherfolk communities serve as the socio-economic backbone of myriad coastal areas and they immensely assist in food security and livelihood resources along with providing cultural heritage [1]. Besides the benefits they provide, such communities perch on the fringe of society and suffer from severe persistent vulnerabilities due to socio-economically low paying jobs, harsh working conditions, the aggravating climate, and social exclusion [5][9]. These factors, in turn, can have severe consequences on their emotional well-being manifested in the form of anxiety, depression, and other psychosocial distress [2]. Emotional wellbeing, in simplified terms, encapsulates the feeling of satisfaction with life, enduring hardships, and recovering psychologically from setbacks, sharing an increasingly vital aspect in health, becomes essential in the case of at risk groups [10]. A relatively newer concept in relation to emotional wellbeing concerns community connectedness, in other words, membership and emotional relation to a particular community [3]. For fishermen, community connectedness serves as a means to alleviate the impacts of stress as well as enhance a person's ability to cope when confronted with misfortunes. Unfortunately, there is still a research gap in the empirical literature that seeks to quantify this relationship with standardized tools in the context of fishing communities [7].

This research seeks to assess the emotional wellbeing of fisherfolk in relation to their level of community connectedness, employing relevant scales adapted to the socio-cultural context of coastal communities [4]. This approach, in turn, aims to identify the community-based psychological dynamics, and mental health intervention frameworks, and formulate policy recommendations in the domain of mental resilience enhancement [6]. This study, in the final analysis, integrates environmental livelihood analysis with psychological evaluation, and thus, advances the discourse on the sustainable development of coastal communities.

KEY CONTRIBUTION

1. This study created a culturally tailored model for assessing emotional wellbeing among fisherfolk by employing a blend of standardized and culturally appropriate measures of community connectedness.
2. It tempered empirical findings of community connectedness and emotional wellbeing and their correlation with social support structures among coastal populations.
3. This research further implemented a mixed-methods approach to capture quantitative and qualitative aspects of wellbeing, thus broadening the scope of psychological evaluation among psychologically vulnerable occupational groups.

The first section of the paper is the introduction, which highlights the background, importance, and goals of the study. Afterwards, there is a review of the related literature which focuses on the vulnerabilities of fisherfolk and how community connectedness serves to foster emotional wellbeing. In the methodology section, the sample, instruments, and the method of analysis for the collected data were outlined. In the results and discussion section, the sociological data is presented together with the relevant quantitative data, and the connection between social connectedness and wellbeing is explicated. In the last section of the paper, the author synthesizes the most relevant findings, outlines the implications of the study, and provides suggestions for further studies along with recommendations for policy changes.

II. RELATED WORK

Studies focusing on emotional wellbeing for fisherfolk seem to be few and far in between. That said, existing literature has mainly focused on economic struggle, occupational hazards, and environmental vulnerability [8]. Even though these fisherfolk face numerous challenges in their day to day life due to their profession, their emotional and psychological wellbeing has been relatively ignored [11]. Fisherfolk often work in harsh and volatile weather, face inconsistent pay due to dwindling fish populations and face natural disasters such as cyclones and tidal surges. Almost all of these factors introduce stress for the fisherfolk [12]. Even though these factors are known to cause chronic anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and various other mental health challenges, not too many comprehensive psychological assessments have been done on this demographic [13].

Connectedness has emerged as an important factor for emotional wellbeing. It includes aspects like social interaction, belonging, shared identity, and trust within a group. In rural and marginal communities, particularly those with strong cultural bonds and traditions, connectedness serves both an emotional and functional purpose. Among fisherfolk, this may be exemplified as cooperative labor, informal support networks, community ceremonies, and joint action, which help mitigate the brunt of external stressors. Although some scales measuring community connectedness evaluating sense of belonging or social cohesion has been developed, they have predominantly been used in urban or general rural areas. There is a fisherfolk and occupational communities gap [14]. In addition, most mental health support programs in coastal areas tend to be reactive, triggered by environmental crises [15]. There is an absence of proactive, community focused evaluations that blend emotional wellbeing and social support frameworks. By utilizing modified community connectedness scales to assess the psychological wellbeing of fisherfolk, this study seeks to provide a culturally appropriate, preventative strategy for mental health evaluation in coastal regions.

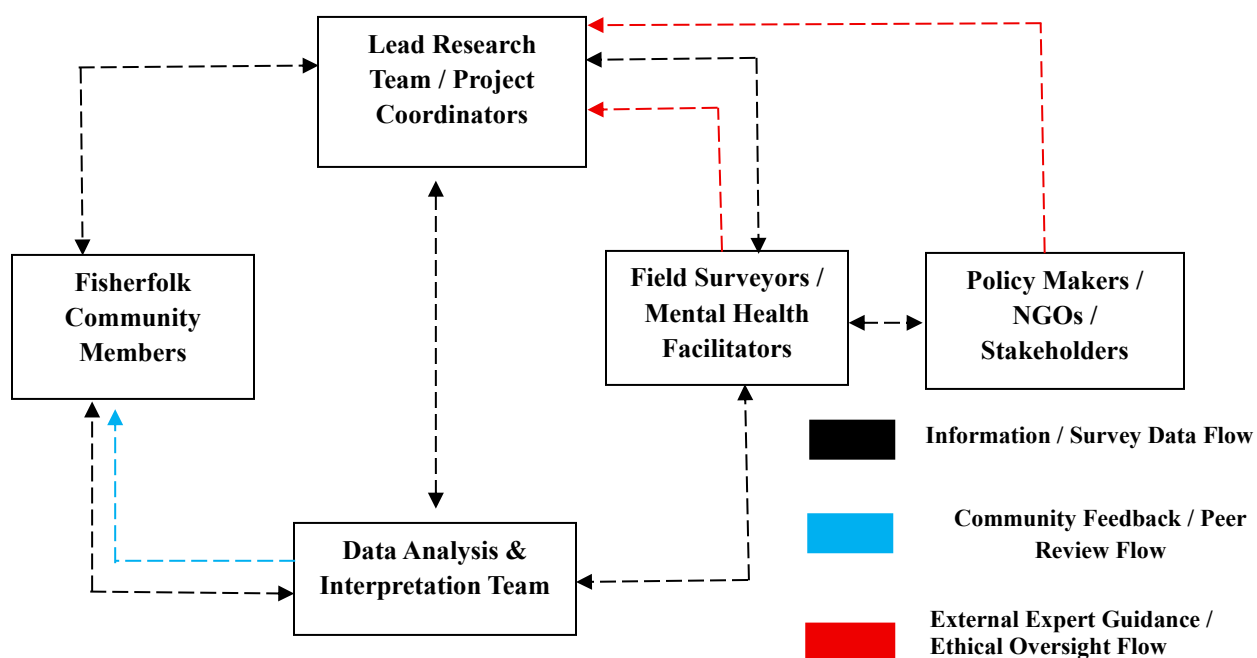
III. METHODOLOGY

To evaluate the emotional wellbeing of fisherfolk through the lens of community connectedness, this study employs a mixed methods, community-engaged approach. The study participants were drawn from the coastal fishing communities, which have socio-environmental stressors and a shared culture that influences emotion. Participants were identified through purposive sampling and were limited to those with deep engagement in traditional or small-scale fishing.

Emotional wellbeing was measured using the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index and an adapted version of the Community Connectedness Scale (CCS). All tools were translated and pre-tested for cultural accuracy. Data collection was done through structured interviews and surveys which were conducted by trained field facilitators conversant with ethical study conduct, the local dialect, and community relations and protocols.

Field facilitators functioned as a link connecting the fisherfolk with the core research team for effective communication and responsible handling of sensitive research data. Following data collection, responses were methodically coded, digitized, and transferred to the central analysis team. Descriptive statistics alongside correlation analysis were applied to quantitative data to establish correlations between emotional wellbeing and perceived community connectedness. At the same time, qualitative data from open-ended responses were analyzed to capture the community's emotional support, isolation, and resilience through thematic analysis.

To improve the credibility and utility of the research findings, stakeholder consultations were added. Inputs from NGO representatives, mental health practitioners, and local community leaders shaped both the interpretation of the data as well as the recommendations. This iterative, participatory design sought to blend scientific precision with culture and social inclusion.



As seen in Figure 1, the methodological flow illustrates the movement of data among fisherfolk, facilitators, research teams, policy actors, and the interplay among collaborators that guided data collection, processing, and reporting of results.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study indicated a meaningful connection exists between the emotional wellbeing and the community connectedness of the fisherfolk study participants. A Pearson correlation was conducted to assess the association between the two constructs with the data collected through the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index and the adapted Community Connectedness Scale (CCS).

The correlation coefficient r was computed using the formula:

$$r = \frac{\sum(X_i - \bar{X})(Y_i - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{\sum(X_i - \bar{X})^2 \sum(Y_i - \bar{Y})^2}}$$

The analysis yielded a moderately strong positive correlation of $r=0.62$, indicating that higher levels of community connectedness were associated with better emotional wellbeing among fisherfolk. This suggests that individuals who reported stronger social ties and a greater sense of belonging within their community also demonstrated higher wellbeing scores. Here, X_i and Y_i represent individual Community Connectedness Scale (CCS) scores and WHO-5 wellbeing scores respectively, while \bar{X} and \bar{Y} denote their corresponding means. The positive association supports the hypothesis that close-knit social structures, shared community identity, and locally embedded support systems play a critical role in enhancing psychological resilience in coastal fishing communities, particularly those exposed to chronic occupational and environmental stressors.

Table 1. Mean Community Connectedness and Wellbeing Scores by Connectedness Level

Connectedness Level	Mean CCS Score	Mean WHO-5 Score	Interpretation
Low	42.5	37.8	Below average wellbeing
Moderate	65.3	61.4	Moderate wellbeing
High	81.7	79.2	High wellbeing and resilience

These outcomes underscore the role of social networks in maintaining the emotional well-being of the at-risk livelihood groups. Participants with high connectedness—through family, community, or peers—demonstrated better coping strategies and greater resilience to emotional distress. Cultural and intergenerational practices, such as fishing, provided informal psychological support, as did the community’s shared cultural traditions, as noted in the qualitative observations.

This corroborates earlier findings concerning the beneficial impact of social connections in adverse contexts. Incorporation of such evidence into local policy initiatives might facilitate the development of mental health interventions at the community level that are culturally rooted, multidimensional, and community-driven.

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This study shows that community connectedness is important in determining the emotional wellbeing of fisherfolk. The connectedness and wellbeing correlation is moderately strong, indicating that social bonds, communal identity, and shared experiences considerably enhance psychological resilience, especially in high-risk occupations. With higher connectedness, participants reported greater life satisfaction, better coping skills, and lesser emotional distress, highlighting the effectiveness of community support frameworks.

The study suggests incorporating mental health aspects, especially those focused on community relationships, into coastal livelihood and disaster response frameworks. With the understanding that social and emotional wellbeing are closely linked, stakeholders can create interventions that go beyond mere economic or environmental aid and actively promote mental resilience designed from community structures.

To broaden its applicability, integrating different coastal areas into the study’s geographic scope would be useful for future research. Besides, understanding the impact of community connectedness on emotional wellbeing through the lens of seasonal or climate-induced stress over time could be achieved with longitudinal studies. The use of digital technology for real-time psychosocial monitoring and the analysis of connectedness and wellbeing on gender-specific levels would also provide useful avenues for extending the research.

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