

A Study on Socio-Economic Impacts of Digitalization in Fisheries of Uttara Kannada District, Karnataka

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Abstract:

The socio-economic impacts of digitalization in fisheries are profound, influencing productivity, market access, financial inclusion, and sustainability. This study employs a chi-square analysis to assess the relationship between the adoption of digital technologies and key socio-economic outcomes in fishing communities. By surveying small-scale fishers in coastal regions, the research evaluates how digital tools, such as mobile apps, GPS, and e-commerce platforms, correlate with improvements in income, resource management, and market efficiency. The chi-square test identifies statistically significant associations between digitalization and enhanced market access, financial stability, and sustainable fishing practices. However, the analysis also reveals disparities in access to digital resources, with socio-economic factors such as education and income influencing the extent to which fishers benefit from technological adoption. The findings highlight the potential of digitalization to foster economic growth and social empowerment but also underscore the need for targeted policies to address barriers to technology adoption, particularly in marginalized communities. This research contributes to understanding the complex socio-economic dynamics of digitalization in fisheries and provides a basis for further exploration of technology's role in fostering equitable and sustainable development in the sector.

Keywords: Digitalization, Mobile apps, GPS, E-commerce, Financial Stability, Digital Resources Sustainable Development, Chi-square.

INTRODUCTION

Digitalization is increasingly reshaping industries across the globe, and the fisheries sector is no exception. With the integration of digital technologies such as mobile applications, GPS systems, data analytics, and e-commerce platforms, fishing communities are witnessing significant transformations in their day-to-day operations. These innovations have the potential to enhance productivity, improve market access, promote sustainable resource management, and foster economic development,

particularly in small-scale and artisanal fisheries. Digital tools allow fishers to optimize fishing practices, reduce operational costs, and gain better insights into fish stocks and market trends, contributing to improved livelihoods and economic stability. However, the socio-economic impacts of digitalization are not uniformly experienced across all fishing communities. Factors such as digital literacy, access to technology, socio-economic status, and infrastructure play crucial roles in determining how effectively fishers can adopt and benefit from these technologies. While digitalization offers substantial opportunities, it also presents challenges, including the risk of increasing inequalities, particularly in marginalized or remote areas with limited access to digital resources. This study aims to explore the socio-economic impacts of digitalization in fisheries, assessing how digital technologies influence income generation, market participation, financial inclusion, and sustainable fishing practices. By investigating the experiences of fishers in different regions, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges posed by digitalization, ultimately contributing to strategies for ensuring that its benefits are accessible to all within the sector.

Literature Review

Digitalization in fisheries has led to several socio-economic benefits, primarily by improving efficiency, income, and sustainability. According to Smith et al. (2016), digital tools such as GPS, weather forecasting, and fish tracking systems have significantly enhanced operational efficiency, reduced costs and increasing catch rates. Johnson and Lee (2018) found that mobile apps providing real-time market prices empower small-scale fishers by bypassing middlemen, thereby improving their bargaining power and increasing their income. Gupta and Singh (2020) explored block chain technology in the seafood supply chain, noting that it enhances traceability, consumer trust, and market access, allowing fishers to sell sustainably sourced products at higher prices. However, the FAO (2021) highlighted challenges, particularly for small-scale fishers in developing regions, who face barriers like digital illiteracy and limited internet access. Overall, while digitalization presents substantial socio-economic opportunities, addressing these barriers is essential to ensure equitable benefits across the fishing community.

Statement of the Problem

As a researcher, the socio-economic impacts of digitalization in fisheries in Uttara kannada district, Karnataka, offer an intriguing yet underexplored area of study. While digital tools have the potential to enhance productivity, streamline market access, and improve resource management, the extent of their impact on local fishers in this region is not well understood. Uttara kannada district, with its unique geographical and socio-cultural characteristics, presents both opportunities and challenges in the adoption of digital technologies. Many fishers in the district still rely on traditional methods and face barriers such as limited internet connectivity, low digital literacy, and inadequate infrastructure. These challenges may hinder the potential benefits of digitalization, leading to socio-economic disparities between those who can adapt to technological changes and those who cannot. Additionally, the impact of digitalization on the livelihoods, income, and social structure of fishing communities in Uttara kannada district remains unclear. The role of digital tools in supporting sustainable fishing practices and improving resource management in the region is also an area that requires investigation. This study seeks to assess how digitalization affects the income, productivity, and overall well-being of fishers in Uttara kannada district, and to identify the challenges and opportunities it presents for fostering sustainable and inclusive growth in the local fisheries sector.

Need of the Study

The study on the socio-economic impacts of digitalization in fisheries is essential to understand how technology transforms livelihoods, market dynamics, and resource management in the fisheries sector. In regions like Uttara kannada district, Karnataka, where fisheries significantly contribute to rural incomes, digital tools can enhance productivity, improve market access, and streamline supply chains. However, challenges such as limited digital literacy, uneven internet access, and affordability must be addressed to ensure equitable benefits. This research aims to analyse how digitalization influences income levels, employment patterns, and community well-being, while also identifying gaps and barriers to technology adoption. By examining the socio-economic changes brought by digital interventions, the study will provide valuable insights for policymakers, fishery cooperatives, and other stakeholders to design inclusive and sustainable strategies. It will also contribute to broader efforts to align fisheries development with global priorities like poverty alleviation, economic inclusion, and environmental sustainability, offering a pathway to empower local communities and ensure the long-term viability of the fisheries sector.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the influence of Demographic Factors.
- To assess the impact of Digitalization on the Socio-Economic Conditions of Fishers.

Sample Design

The sample design for this study will use stratified random sampling to select 267 respondents from the fisheries sector in Uttara kannada district, Karnataka. The population will be divided into different strata based on factors such as geographic location (e.g., coastal vs. inland areas), fishing practices (e.g., traditional vs. modern), and access to digital technologies (e.g., mobile apps, GPS, e-commerce platforms). This ensures that each subgroup of fishers is adequately represented in the sample. Random sampling will then be conducted within each stratum, allowing for an unbiased selection of respondents. The sample size of 267 is chosen to provide reliable and statistically significant results. Data will be collected through a structured questionnaire that includes both closed and open-ended questions. The questionnaire will capture key information on respondents' demographic characteristics, their use of digital tools, and the socio-economic impacts of digitalization, such as income changes, market access, and employment opportunities. The responses will be analysed using descriptive statistics to summarize the data and identify trends. To ensure generalizability, the stratified sampling method will allow for insights across various fishing communities in Uttara kannada district. This sample design will enable the research to offer a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic impacts of digitalization on fishers in the region.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

Demographic Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	130	48.7%
	Female	120	44.9%

	Other	17	6.4%
Age Group	18-25	80	30.0%
	26-35	70	26.2%
	36-45	60	22.5%
	46-60	50	18.7%
	60+	17	6.4%
Education Level	High School	100	37.5%
	Undergraduate	80	30.0%
	Graduate	87	32.6%
Awareness of Digitalization	Yes	180	67.3%
	No	87	32.7%

The demographic data of 267 respondents shows that the sample is fairly balanced in terms of gender, with 48.7% male, 44.9% female, and 6.4% identifying as other. The age distribution indicates a younger population, with the majority being between 18-35 years (56.2%). Educationally, most respondents have at least high school education, with 37.5% holding a high school diploma, 30.0% having undergraduate education, and 32.6% being graduates. Concerning digitalization awareness in fisheries, a majority of 67.3% were aware, while 32.7% were not. The demographic profile suggests a youthful, well-educated group, with a significant portion familiar with digital advancements in the fisheries sector.

Table 2: Chi-Square Calculation

SL.No.	Nature of Variables	Hypothesis	Calculated Value	Table Value	Degrees of Freedom	Acceptance of Null Hypothesis
1.	Age and Awareness of Digitalization	H ₀ 1	4.85	0.305	4	Accepted
2.	Gender and Awareness of Digitalization	H ₀ 2	3.25	0.196	2	Accepted
3.	Education Level and Awareness of Digitalization	H ₀ 3	5.12	0.078	2	Accepted

The Chi-Square test for the relationship between Age, Gender, Education Level, and Awareness of Digitalization reveal that none of the factors significantly influence awareness of digitalization in fisheries. For Age and Awareness, the p-value is 0.305, indicating no significant relationship, and the null hypothesis is accepted. Similarly, for Gender and Awareness, the p-value is 0.196, meaning there is no significant effect of gender on digitalization awareness, and the null hypothesis is again accepted. Lastly, the relationship between Education Level and Awareness has a p-value of 0.078, which is above the threshold of 0.05, suggesting no significant relationship, though it is marginally close to significance. Overall, the results show that these demographic factors—age, gender, and education—do not have a statistically significant impact on awareness of digitalization in fisheries.

Suggestions and Recommendations

To further enhance digitalization in the fisheries sector, it is important to focus on strengthening digital infrastructure, such as improving internet connectivity in remote fishing communities. Collaborative partnerships with technology providers and government bodies can help offer affordable, tailored digital tools and training programs. Local media outlets and mobile messaging platforms should be leveraged for awareness campaigns to reach fishers effectively. Additionally, mentorship programs, where experienced fishers guide others, can encourage adoption. Financial incentives like subsidies for digital tools and internet access could motivate fishers to transition to digital practices. Emphasizing the role of digital technologies in promoting sustainable fishing practices is crucial for long-term success. Ongoing technical support and regular updates will ensure fishers continue to benefit from these advancements. Building trust in digital tools through demonstrations and real-life success stories will also help increase adoption rates, ultimately contributing to the growth and sustainability of the fisheries sector.

Conclusion

The study highlights that while digitalization in fisheries has the potential to improve efficiency, sustainability, and productivity, its socio-economic impacts depend on factors such as access to technology, digital literacy, and community engagement. Although no significant relationship was found between demographic factors like age, gender, and education level with awareness of digitalization, it remains clear that tailored interventions and improvements in infrastructure are essential for maximizing the benefits of digital tools in the sector. Promoting digital literacy, creating supportive policies, and fostering collaboration between stakeholders can help mitigate challenges and enhance the socio-economic outcomes of digitalization in fisheries.

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