



Cultural Beliefs and Occupational Practices of Fishermen in Negombo Fishermen

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Abstract

Cultural beliefs play a significant role in shaping fishermen's daily lives and professional practices in Negombo. This study explores how religious and traditional beliefs influence their work ethics, decision-making, and lifestyle. This research, conducted using a mixed-methods approach, involved sixty-seven respondents selected through simple random sampling from five fishing villages in the Negombo District. Interviews and participant observation were used to collect data. Findings reveal that the fishing community in Negombo is deeply rooted in cultural traditions, with Roman Catholicism playing a central role in both personal and professional life. Religious practices and communal activities significantly shape their daily routines, reinforcing a strong sense of identity and belonging. Fishermen often rely on faith-based rituals and customs to guide and protect them at sea, and cultural and professional decision-making. Cultural values also influence their perceptions of risk, cooperation, and conflict resolution within fishing communities. The study highlights how these beliefs contribute to the resilience and sustainability of the fishing industry while presenting challenges such as resistance to modernization and external regulations. Understanding the role of cultural beliefs in the lives of fishermen in Negombo provides valuable insights into the socialization of traditional fishing communities. This research highlights the importance of integrating a cultural perspective into policies aimed at protecting the unique heritage of fishermen and improving their livelihoods. Fostering interfaith and community participation will seek to maintain support and coexistence among the community.

Keywords: *Cultural beliefs, Negombo fishermen, religious influence, occupational practices, fishing communities*

1. Introduction

Culture consists of patterns of behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols (Baecker, 1997). The essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and their attached values. It is one of the key elements and a valuable treasure of human life. This is because it is deemed to be an important factor in distinguishing humans from other lives in the universe (Blackman, 2014). Culture consists of shared patterns of thought and behavior within a community. It is a complex system of meaning and behavior that explains the way of life of a particular group or community (Baecker, 1997). The word "culture" in English is derived from the Latin that sounds

“colere”, which means human lives that always function to protect, treat, and do a variety of activities that can produce cultural action (Blackman,2014). In this sense, culture is the man-made environment and the people living in society, as well as the way of life they develop over time. It plays a crucial role in all aspects of our lives, influencing beliefs, religion, conflicts, and numerous challenges. The first thing that is to be defined is the culture and why it is important in work life.

Many researchers have defined a culture from various perspectives. According to the culture definition by Macionis (2010), “Culture is the ways of thinking, the way of acting, and the material objects that together form a people’s way of life” (Wuthnow,2002: 258). According to Macionis, culture is seen as beliefs, values, behavior, and materialistic objects shared by a particular population. Macionis divides culture into two, which are materialistic and non-materialistic cultures. Culture refers to a man-made material that is not real, and it is unclear which includes all objects. Created in the community, such as buildings, art, tools, toys, print media, electronic media, and other objects are decisive and visible, while the non-material culture encompasses the norms, rules, and beliefs of a group of people.

Culture and subculture are interconnected concepts that describe the ways groups of people in societies organize, understand, and give meaning to their lives and the world around them. Subcultures exist within a dominant culture. (Blackman, 2014), emphasizes that “subcultures are smaller groups within the dominant culture that have slightly different or additional traditional traditions and ideas. They tend to share much in common with the dominant culture and typically interact with members of the majority regularly. Large groups of friends or family members tend to form their subcultures” (Blackman,2014:496). Fishing culture is also a unique subculture within the dominant society. Its subcultural characteristics emerge due to the customs, traditions, and rituals associated with the profession based on the natural environment. Fishing villages are intricate ecosystems that encompass both the natural environment and the man-made structures that support the livelihoods of the local communities. These villages serve as subcultures within the broader culture of the nation, adhering to the customs and traditions of the overarching culture while simultaneously maintaining their unique practices and beliefs (Khakzad & Grittith, 2016).

Moreover, when considering the fishing community as a subculture, fishing villages have different social norms, values, customs, and patterns of behavior that are unique to them. All of these relationships are very related to the sea. These villages are isolated from the larger society and are in a somewhat isolated situation with their own unique economic, geographical, social, and environmental factors. This community focuses directly on the needs and priorities of the fisheries community; they have created a unique subculture for the fisheries community, ignoring the formal legal structures of mainstream society. Some subculture rituals were accepted within the fishing community but viewed as unlawful or non-conforming by the main society. Furthermore, Fishing is an inherently risky profession, and fishermen often deal with the unpredictability of nature. Risk-taking is an essential feature of the subculture of fishing villages (Witbooi et al, 2020).

The fisheries sector plays a significant socioeconomic role nationally and internationally. Regarding nutrition, income, employment, and foreign exchange earnings depend on fish as the principal source of animal protein (Kumar and Menta, 2015). When considering the Sri Lankan fisheries sector, Alexander (1995) explains that Sri Lankan fisheries culture is deeply intertwined with the island's history, geography, and social fabric. The country's extensive coastline and numerous inland water bodies provide rich fishing grounds that support a diverse array of marine and freshwater species. Traditional fishing methods, such as stilt fishing, casting nets, and using outrigger canoes, have been passed down through generations and are integral to the coastal communities' way of life. Fishing villages are intricate ecosystems that encompass both the natural environment and the man-made structures that support the livelihoods of the local communities. These villages serve as subcultures within the broader culture of the nation, adhering to the customs and traditions of the overarching culture while simultaneously maintaining their unique practices and beliefs.

According to Alexander (1995), who focuses on the Sri Lankan fisheries industry, the country's fishing culture has strong historical, geographical, and social roots. The country's extensive coastline provides fertile fishing grounds for many inland water bodies as well as marine and freshwater aquifers. Traditional fishing methods such as casting nets, weaving nets, and fishing using toller boats have been around for generations and are essential to the livelihoods of coastal communities. According to Alexander, further, the fishing industry plays a vital role in the economy and supports the livelihoods of many people, especially in rural areas. Despite modern influences on fishing villages, many fishing villages maintain their traditional customs, language, and festivals, creating a vibrant and cohesive community identity (Alexander, 1995).

Furthermore, many dimensions of life are not known to outsiders about the characteristics of coastal communities. They have different ways in the aspects of knowledge, beliefs, social roles, and social structures. Fishing communities are part of the social construction of communities in coastal areas. Also, although there are no residents who work as fishermen in every village in the coastal areas, most of the population are fishermen. Accordingly, fishing culture is mainly influenced by building the cultural identity of the entire coastal community. Moreover, the fisherman culture is closely related to the sea. Due to these conditions, the cultural beliefs of the fishing communities depend on natural and social environmental conditions. Accordingly, this study focuses on the cultural belief system of fishing communities. The condition of the fishing community or the coastal community is a group of people that is relatively left behind economically, socially (especially in terms of access to education and health services), and culturally compared to other community groups. The condition of coastal communities or fishing communities in various regions is generally characterized by several characteristics, such as poverty, socio-cultural backwardness, and low human resources. They also live a lifestyle based on their own culture (Campbell et al, 2014).

Accordingly, this study has been carried out on fishing villages in Negombo, and the research problem of this study is to identify how cultural beliefs influence the daily lives and occupational practices of fishermen in Negombo. The following objectives

were emphasized about the above research problem: to examine the influence of religious beliefs on the work ethic, decision-making, and lifestyle of Negombo fishermen, to explore the cultural practices, rituals, and traditions that define the fishermen's identity and social structure and to investigate generational differences in adherence to traditional practices and their implications for the future of the community.

Building the research based on the concepts, ideologies, and research presented by various scholars and academics is important. The literature review establishes a clear framework for research purposes and problems. Thus, various scholars and academics have conducted lots of research related to the fishing communities' cultural rituals and lifestyles. Religious beliefs shape the ethical framework of fishermen and influence their work and relationships. Many fishermen believe in the justice of God. They believe that gods will punish theft, fraud, and crime. Superstitions rooted in religious traditions also further regulate their behavior. For example, certain days are considered inauspicious for fishing, and specific rituals are performed to ward off bad luck. They also conduct their livelihoods under spiritual and moral standards (Khakzad & Griffith, 2016).

Religious beliefs play a fundamental role in shaping the lives of fishermen. Fishermen often believe that their work is connected to divine forces. They also seek spiritual protection against the unpredictable nature of the sea. In this way, religious rituals provide not only comfort in a job filled with routine and certainty but also a sense of security. Beyond individual faith, religious beliefs also foster social cohesion within the fishing community (Campbell et al., 2014). As Campbell et al identify, the characteristics of the fishing community in India are not homogeneous, as they belong to different castes.

These communities have their distinct social and cultural governance structures and traditional practices, depending on the coast where they inhabit. At least 2-3 castes are exclusively involved in marine fishing in each maritime area and are not related to the mainstream agrarian system. The community institutions, mostly organized along caste, kinship, or religious lines, play an important role in resolving conflicts, besides regulating and allocating resource use, ensuring equitable access to resources, and providing some form of social insurance (Campbell et al, 2014). Campbell et al., research has primarily focused on identifying the common characteristics of the fishing villages.

Katz (2016) has emphasized that Indian fishing villages typically exhibit a rich culture characterized by closely-knit communities that rely heavily on traditional fishing practices for their livelihood. It is very closely linked to religion. (Fish are believed to be deities). These villages are often located along the coastline and feature simple, sturdy dwellings made from locally sourced materials such as bamboo, thatch, and mud. Women play a vital role in the community by processing and selling the fish, maintaining the household, and participating in various cultural and religious activities. Social bonds are strong, with extended families living close to one another and sharing resources. Despite modern influences, many villages retain their traditional customs, languages, and festivals, creating a vibrant and

resilient community identity. In the present of India, the fisheries sector is one of the main livelihoods (Ray et al,2015).

Cultural beliefs play a significant role in shaping the professional and daily lives of traditional fishermen. They strongly believe that these beliefs affect their safety and success. Culture also directly influences the shaping of traditional roles and hierarchies in fishing communities. Fishing communities transmit knowledge and skills from generation to generation due to subcultural characteristics. Culture also directly influences the gender structure of that society. For example, women do not do deep-sea fishing and only trade fish (Sregphea and Touch,2016).

Both Bandaroff et al. (2015) and Sregphea and Touch (2016) emphasize the importance of fishing culture in their studies. But they approach the issue from different perspectives. Bandaroff et al. (2015) study how social and cultural factors influence fishing-related crime and argue that fishing is not just a job, but a way of life based on cultural norms, values, and collective practices, rituals, and customs. This shows that fishing is a culturally embedded profession. Sregphea and Touch (2016) did not focus on crime but rather on the cultural traditions and customs of traditional fishing communities, which underpin the fishing profession. Considering both the above studies, it is clear that the fishing community conducts its activities based on its cultural customs and traditions. Both studies have confirmed that these factors influence daily decision-making and control over personal life, but the fact that these two studies have not formally addressed the research problem is an experimental gap. Bandaroff et al. have only studied illegal practices, customs, and traditional occupations, but have paid less attention to the daily cultural beliefs, religious practices, and traditions of the fishing community. Similarly, Sregphea and Touch provide a detailed understanding of the beliefs and professional practices of a culture, but have paid less attention to how relevant fishing beliefs and traditions operate within a specific geographical setting.

The topic "The intersection between illegal fishing crimes at sea and social well-being," researched by Yan & Gruycar (2020), has deeply explained the relationship between crime and fishing culture. The research question of this study was to identify the natural and physical factors that affect criminal behavior in the fishing community. Australian fisheries villages were chosen as the research area to gather data for this in-depth examination of fishing culture. Fishing villages are very directly connected with the natural environment. It has been found that the fishing community resorts to crime in the face of environmental challenges because the fishermen's main livelihood is tied to the sea. Also, one of the primary crimes associated with fishing culture is illegal fishing, and the researcher has confirmed that this process affects the global economy as well as sustainable development through the case studies of this study. This researcher mentions fishing culture, but does not conduct a deep study of it.

Andreson's (2010) Research in fishing villages in Australia explores the possibility of preventing criminal behavior by strengthening traditional norms and values. The researcher further states that the fishermen's customs and traditions are peculiar to them, and those customs can encourage their deviant actions in some cases, such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, and illegal fishing. According to the sample

selected by Andreson, although certain case studies are interpreted as oppressive activities in outside society, it has been reported that they are not unfair or oppressive acts in the fishing community. According to the research findings, the researcher has reported that the fishing subculture justifies criminal behavior. The researcher has also added that these communities engage in criminal activity in order to maintain their social standing and to succeed economically. The researcher claims that cultural cooperation is the main thing driving criminality in fishing communities. There, he states, the solidarity of a culture makes people afraid to report crimes.

Harrison (2015) emphasized that social and cultural factors directly influence fisheries-related crime. This study's research question is to identify fisheries' social and cultural characteristics. Globally, the fisheries sector is shaped by unique social norms, customs, and morals. Harrison identified two main cultural variables influencing crime: community dynamics and the influence of external factors. Considering the above-mentioned research, both emphasized fisheries culture and criminal behavior in the fishing villages. According to Ferrel's (1999) research, "When people commit crimes, they focus on their culture. Young people turn to crime according to their gang label. They have no moral panic. The reason they don't have such moral panic is that they adapt to the subculture. The media culture also leads the person to crime. There, people are tempted to try some of the extreme acts contained in the movies". Depending on the characteristics of different local subcultures, individuals may turn to crime. Research results confirm that culture is a significant factor influencing individual criminality. The two studies by Harrison and Ferrel mentioned above have examined how cultural factors and beliefs associated with the fishing profession affect individual deviance from two perspectives. Harrison's study justified deviant behavior in the fishing profession based on cultural factors in society. Felson's study also stated that the fishing subculture creates deviance. Similarly, the deviance that arises from subculture is culturally justified based on the relevant cultural customs and traditions. Accordingly, both studies show that culturally based customs and traditions and professional life are responsible for creating individual deviance. However, both studies have very limited research on the traditions associated with the professional practices and cultural beliefs of the fishing community, which creates a research gap.

When considering the Sri Lankan Fishing community, Alexander (1995) researched the Gahavella fishing village in Sri Lanka. As mentioned by Alexander in his book on the "Sri Lankan fishermen", the Sri Lankan fishing villages are vibrant coastal communities deeply intertwined with the sea, characterized by traditional and modern practices. Houses, often constructed from locally sourced materials like wood and thatch, line the shores alongside boat sheds and net drying areas. The villagers' lives revolve around fishing, with men typically venturing out to sea while women handle processing and selling the catch. Strong family units and cooperative organizations underpin the social structure, fostering mutual support and collective decision-making. Rich cultural traditions, including religious rituals and festivals, celebrate and seek blessings for bountiful harvests. Alexander further stated that the blessing of the boats before setting sail or the celebration of a bountiful catch serves to strengthen the bond between the people and their environment. These practices are not merely symbolic but are integral to the survival and well-being of the

community. Despite challenges such as environmental threats and economic vulnerability, these villages exhibit resilience by integrating modern technology and improving disaster preparedness, all while preserving sustainable fishing methods and community solidarity (Alexander, 1995).

Accordingly, considering all the above-mentioned literature investigations, many researchers have identified the cultural factors associated with fishing villages and, through this study, have not conducted an in-depth study of the cultural factors and the fisheries lifestyle. These researchers have identified that cultural beliefs and characteristics directly affect the criminality of the fishing community, environmental challenges, and other social problems, but these cultural beliefs have not been studied separately. This study aims to address this research gap, as the above studies have not systematically examined how cultural beliefs, customs, and traditions affect professional life and daily life while focusing on the aforementioned literature reviews.

2. Methods and materials

Negombo fishing village was selected for this study because Negombo is one of the biggest open-air fishing villages and markets in the country. Thirty-nine fishing villages are included in the jurisdiction of the Negombo police division. It has been analyzed that the population of the Negombo area will be one hundred and fifty thousand (1,50000) by the end of December 2022. Based on the research objectives, five fishing villages were selected by simple random sampling from among the fishing villages in the Negombo district. Namely: Wellaveediya, Pallansena, Thaladuuwa, Palagathure, and Welihena. In determining the sample size, the sample must be representative so that the results can be generalized. The samples to be taken in this study were determined to be as many as 67 people out of 200 data contributors. There was a limited period of two months to access data from the fishing community, and considering the time duration, the total population was determined to be 200, based on the ease of managing and accessing the study population within the available time. Sampling was determined using Slovin's formula. The data contributors were selected using a simple random sample. In addition, this research was conducted using qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, and the study also analyzed the very limited quantitative data, such as the age, gender, and demographics of the data contributors, through analysis of the percentages. Moreover, the data sources included primary and secondary data. Primary data were gathered using an interview method during the two months in which this research was conducted; also, information was obtained under participant observation during this period. In this study, secondary data were obtained from the literature (journals and books). Finally, data analysis was the using mixed-methods analysis, which interprets the interview and observation.

3. Result and Discussion

Based on the research results, the cultural beliefs of the Negombo Fishing Villages community include Fisherman status, Religious and spiritual beliefs, cultural identity, and heritage.

3.1 Fishermen Status

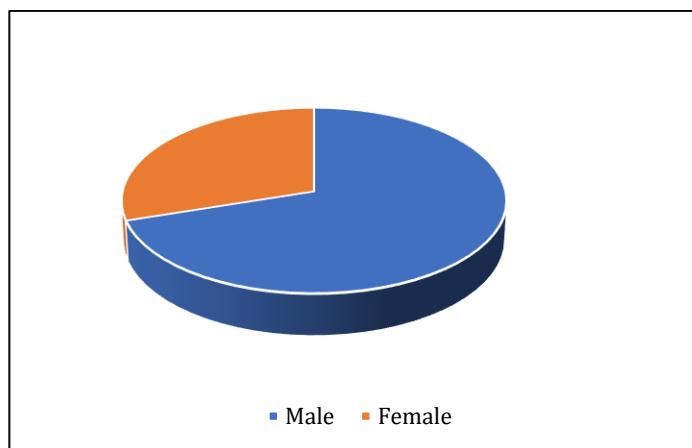


Figure 1. Gender of the data contributors

When selecting the sample for the research, 70% of the respondents were men and 30% were women. The special feature is that fishing is the main livelihood of both sexes. According to the obtained data, sixty-two married people (93%) and three divorced people (4%) were reported in the Negombo fishing village; remarkably, no one was reported as unmarried. Also, two single moms were reported. Considering the religion of the people living in these villages, 90 % were Roman Catholic, 3 % were Islam, 5% Hindu, and 2% were Buddhist. The length of residence in Negombo fishing villages has varied significantly depending on several factors, including family heritage, migration patterns, and socio-economic conditions.

Many fishing families in Negombo have lived in the same villages for a long time. They have taken care not to change their residence as the fishing industry is passed down from generation to generation. It was also clear that they believed this deep-rooted connection with land and sea is part of their identity and culture. Furthermore, according to the obtained data, it was clear that the ownership of fishing gear and boats is also passed down from generation to generation. Also, there are cases where newer residents have moved into these villages, either from other parts of Sri Lanka or from different occupations. Such as Anuradhapura, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, and Jaffna. Overall, based on the data, while many residents have long-standing ties to the area, the length of residence in Negombo fishing villages is a complex mix of long-term generational habitation and more recent migration.

The house condition of the fishing villages can be presented as follows, according to the above pie chart. Fishermen's houses in Negombo from 67 respondents whose house conditions are only coconut leaf-roof huts amounting to 10 people (15%), while those with tin roof wooden houses are 26 people (39%) specially reported in these houses lack sanitary facilities. 2 people (3%) had ready-made houses, 6 people (9%) had semi-permanent houses and 23 people (34%) had permanent houses. This shows that the conditions of the houses of the fishing community in Negombo fishing village are generally in an irregular condition. In addition, the houses in these villages

are generally simple in terms of layout, consisting of two bedrooms, a living room, and a kitchen. In addition, some houses have a small shed or outdoor area for drying fish or storing fishing gear.

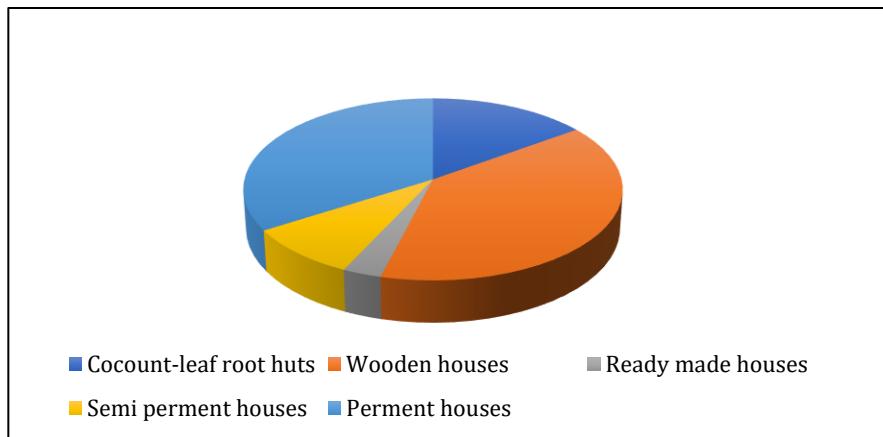


Figure 2. House condition of the data contributor

3.2 Religious and spiritual belief

Based on the data obtained, Cultural rituals in fishing communities are rich in symbolism and tradition, reflecting the deep connection between the community, the sea, and their livelihood. Also, the belief system of Negombo fishing villages is a fusion of Roman Catholic Christianity. Known as "Little Rome", Negombo has a mainly Catholic fishing community, but other religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam are also present. Religious beliefs play a significant role in the lives of fishermen, influencing their daily routines, rituals, and community activities. The fishing community of Negombo prays to St. Anthony, St. Sebastian, and St.Peter for their protection before going into the sea. Religious symbols such as crosses and statues of saints are often placed on boats and in homes. The village community comes together to celebrate the festival of St. Anthony and St. Mary. The annual church festival, processions strengthen the unity of the fishermen. There, festivals in the churches are held to promote unity among families as well as ethnic harmony. Many fishermen follow religious beliefs before setting fishing. It can be presented as follows:

3.2.1 Pre-Fishing rituals

It is common in these areas for fishermen to perform a ritual to bless their boats before setting out to sea. For that, a priest or a religious leader conducts a ceremony, offering prayers or sprinkling holy water on the boat to invoke divine protection. In some fishermen, offerings such as flowers, food, or incense are made to the sea or to deities believed to control the ocean. This is done to appease the spirits of the sea and ensure safe passage and a good catch. It was clear based on the data obtained, that in certain traditions, small animals or symbolic items are sacrificed to the sea

gods or spirits before the fishing season begins. This is believed to prevent accidents and bring prosperity.

3.2.2 Fishing-Related Superstitions

Based on the data obtained, it was clear that Negombo fishing communities have beliefs about auspicious and inauspicious days for fishing. Specific days or times can be avoided because they are believed to bring bad luck or poor catches. Also, fishermen have certain actions, words, or behaviors among fishermen might be considered taboo while at sea or before a fishing trip. For example, whistling on a boat is often avoided in fishing cultures, as it is believed to summon strong winds.

3.2.3 Rituals for Success

The data obtained further revealed that the fishermen engage in various rituals peculiar to themselves to bring a good catch. Accordingly, it was mentioned that before casting the nets, they performed their gestures, wearing their own traditional clothes, reciting prayers or chants. Moreover, it was mentioned that another festival called the Fishing Festival is held in these villages. At the beginning or end of the fishing season, communities often hold ceremonies or festivals to honor the sea and thank the gods for their protection and generosity. For that, they have held a Perahara festival. They further mentioned that it was a sacrifice made entirely for the sea.

"God is the master of our lives. No matter what we have to do, we go to God first. We first offer every benefit we receive to the church"
(Fishermen, Wellaveediya).

Also, in the further study of these rituals, the festival of 'St. Anne can be introduced as a special festival for the fishing village of Negombo, which is not unique from any other fishing village. The saint is believed to protect fishermen and bless their endeavors.

"As fishmongers, we have never fallen on hard times. We get food always. We even dedicate our boats to God" ***(Fishmonger, Thaladuuwa).***

Also, another festival held among fishermen for success is the "boat festival". During these festivals, fishing communities celebrate with boat races or festivals where boats are decorated and paraded. These festivals are not only a display of community pride but also a way to invoke blessings for future voyages.

3.2.4 Ritual during fishing

The ritual of catching is performed by the fishermen when there is a large catch of fish. When a particularly large or significant catch is made, fishermen perform a ritual to express gratitude or to honor the spirit of the fish. This could involve a p based on the obtained data, it was clear that one of the rituals during fishing. Some fishermen maintain the practice of praying or meditating while fishing. This helps

them remain focused and calm, and they believe it invites spiritual guidance. A symbolic act, such as pouring a small amount of the first catch back into the sea.

"When I was a child, one day I went to the sea with my father. I remember that my father prayed to God while he was fishing"
(Fishermen, Wellaveediya).

Based on the data obtained, it was clear that one of the rituals was during fishing. Some fishermen maintain the practice of praying or meditating while fishing. This helps them remain focused and calm, and they believe it invites spiritual guidance.

3.2.5 post-fishing rituals

After a successful fishing trip, the fishermen hold a thanksgiving ceremony in which the entire community participates. The first fish harvest is offered to a church or temple, or shrine as a gesture of gratitude. Also, after successfully catching fish, it is common practice to hold a communal feast and distribute the fish among all the nations living in fishing villages. Through this festival, they believed in strengthening communal bonds and celebrating the success of the fishing venture. Therefore, after returning from the sea, some fishermen participate in cleansing rituals to wash away any negative energy or spirits that might have followed them back. This could involve bathing in special waters, using herbs, or receiving blessings from a spiritual leader.

3.2.6 Death and Remembrance Rituals

The people living in these areas have many rituals for fishermen who died at sea. By doing this ritual, they hope to comfort the souls of those who died at sea. During these rituals, they pray to the dead and offer candles and lamps to guide the spirits of the dead.

3.3 Cultural Identity and Heritage

According to the data obtained from the Negombo fishing area, it was clear that many fishermen have symbols specific to their culture. They further stated that many of these symbols are closely related to their career, such as tattoos, dress codes, jewelry, and vocabulary. They also recognize that animals such as fish and birds are spiritually significant creatures. For that reason, they represent these animals in their jewelry and tattoos. Many fishermen's tattoos are not just body art, but also a form of spirituality, and through this, they believe that they can show their identity to society. The fish tattoo symbolizes prosperity and survival, while the boat tattoo represents a strong personal connection to the ocean.

The cross and the saints' tattoos are believed to protect during sea voyages. Many fishermen wear sarongs and lace shirts as a symbol of traditional identity and culture. However, the data obtained reveals that the modern generation wears trousers. Experienced fishermen wear sarongs to emphasize their status as guardians of ancestral knowledge. The data also revealed that traditional fishermen wear red and blue headbands. The red headband symbolizes the dangerous nature of deep-sea fishing, while the blue headband symbolizes the fishermen's loyalty to

the sea. The fishing profession is often passed down through family generations. Many fishermen's surnames are tied to professions or specific fishing activities, which reinforces their sense of heritage. Fishing, in particular, is passed down from father to son. Furthermore, according to the data obtained, fishing is also done through brotherly ties, such as elder brothers and younger brothers. This is maintained as a joint venture. They do the fishing business among trusted people. Furthermore, men go to sea in the family while women sell fish, weave nets, and produce dried fish. A very complex family household can be seen, and the father is the main person of the family. Negombo's fishing village's main trading center is Lellama, which is a traditional trading center. Traditional leadership in fishing villages is hierarchical. The decision of senior fishermen is final, and this is a representation of respect for their culture. Furthermore, the obtained data revealed that fishermen still use traditional methods to catch fish. The use of modern methods is very minimal. Another thing that was clear from the data is that they strongly believe that techniques passed down through generations are more important to them in this industry. Also, the fact that the Negombo fishing industry is a tourist attraction is of greater cultural importance.

The obtained data revealed that the family structures of the Negombo fishing community are preserved by deep-rooted traditions. Most fishermen are married, reflecting the stability and importance of the family in the community. Catholicism is the predominant religion, and it shapes cultural and professional life. According to research by Khakzad & Griffith (2016) and Campbell et al. (2014), the daily lives and professional practices of fishermen are dependent on religious and cultural beliefs. The fishing community in Negombo has also shaped its daily lives and professional lives in accordance with the primacy of Catholicism. This community has shaped its spiritual and physical lives in accordance with religiously based customs and traditions. Blessings before and after fishing, seeking protection from God, participation in church ceremonies, and giving religious priority to conflict resolution are all clearly evident from the research results.

Many live in traditional or temporary housing in fishing villages, and the nature of the houses has changed, highlighting socio-economic disparities. It was clear from the data obtained that religious beliefs and spiritual practices are a prominent feature of the Negombo fishing culture.

Furthermore, the Negombo fishing communities meet their daily needs by respecting superstitions and elder leadership. Similarly, Alexander (1995) and Campbell et al. (2014) acknowledge the importance of rituals, the nature of houses, and family background, as well as community institutions in fishing villages. Their studies have noted how daily activities are carried out based on superstitions. Currently, people in Negombo fishing villages, despite socio-economic changes and modern influences, rely on socio-cultural factors for their livelihoods. The protection of Catholic saints such as St Anthony and St. Sebastian is always expected from fishermen. Funerals in fishing villages are held according to Catholic rites. They firmly believe that the dead person goes to heaven after death. Participation in church ceremonies is considered an integral part of fisheries' lives. Also, problems that arise in fishing villages are often resolved by the priest. Blessings are performed before and after fishing to

ensure safety and success. Superstitions in the fishing culture play an important role in their lives. It is also clear from the data obtained that those superstitions could guide their actions at sea. These rituals not only ensure safety and success but also strengthen the racial bond of connection in their community. Furthermore, the cultural identity of the fishing community is protected by distinctive symbols, traditions, and leadership hierarchies. Traditional leadership structures and cultural practices have reflected the identity of the community even despite modern influences. Accordingly, it is clear from the findings that the identity of the Negombo fishing community is a unique blend of professional, religious, and cultural elements.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Negombo fishing community is deeply rooted in tradition and its rich religious heritage. Living by their cultural identity, they have been involved in the fishing industry for generations. The majority are Roman Catholics, and communal activities have had a direct impact on both their daily and professional lives. The beliefs and practices that fishermen practice in their professional lives further highlight the interconnectedness between their culture and their identity. Finally, this study contributes by isolating cultural belief systems as a central organizing force in fishermen's occupational life. Considering all the factors, can introduce the following recommendations:

Improving living conditions: Given the disparities in housing conditions, Initiatives should be introduced to improve access to infrastructure, sanitation, and essential services. Government and non-governmental organizations can assist in improving housing and ensuring a better standard of living for fishing families. **Cultural preservation and documentation:** It is important to document and preserve the rich traditions, customs, and beliefs of the Negombo fishing community for future generations. Local governments, cultural institutions, and research groups can support this heritage preservation project. Interfaith and community participation will also be encouraged to maintain support and coexistence in the community. Furthermore, by fostering interfaith and community participation, it is possible to maintain cooperation and peace among communities.

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