

OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND EMPLOYMENT CHOICES OF COASTAL YOUTH IN, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

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for the Master of Social Work Degree Examination*

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ABSTRACT

The present study entitled "Occupational Aspirations and Employment Choices of Coastal Youth in Thiruvananthapuram District" was undertaken to explore the occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth and to understand the factors influencing their career decisions. The study also examined their perceptions towards traditional occupations, awareness of skill development programmes, and the challenges they encounter in accessing sustainable employment opportunities.

The study adopted a qualitative research approach using a multiple case study design. Six coastal youth aged between 19 and 29 years were selected through purposive sampling from the coastal regions of Anchuthengu, Pozhiyoor, and Vizhinjam in Thiruvananthapuram district. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview schedule, and the information obtained was analysed through thematic analysis.

The findings revealed that occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth are shaped by multiple factors, including educational attainment, family influence, economic conditions, environmental challenges, and the availability of employment opportunities. While fishing continues to be an important source of livelihood, many respondents preferred alternative occupations that provide greater financial security, stability, and opportunities for career advancement. The study also found that awareness of skill development programmes was limited, and respondents reported inadequate access to career guidance, employment information, and locally available job opportunities. Environmental risks associated with coastal livelihoods further influenced employment decisions and future aspirations.

The study concludes that improving access to education, skill development, career guidance, livelihood diversification, and employment opportunities is essential for enhancing the occupational prospects of coastal youth. The findings provide useful insights for social work practice, policy formulation, and community-based interventions aimed at promoting sustainable livelihoods and youth empowerment in coastal communities.

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Youth constitute an important segment of every nation's population and represent both its present workforce and future human resource potential. They play a significant role in economic development, social transformation, innovation, and nation building. The World Health Organization (2022) defines youth as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 years, whereas the National Youth Policy classifies youth in India as those between 15 and 29 years of age (Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, 2014). This broader definition recognises youth as a critical demographic group whose education, skill development, and productive employment are essential for achieving sustainable national development.

At the global level, youth employment has become one of the major development concerns of the twenty-first century. According to the International Labour Organization (2022), young people are nearly three times more likely to be unemployed than adults, while many of those who are employed continue to work in informal, insecure, or low-paid jobs. Rapid technological advancement, globalisation, economic restructuring, and changing labour market demands have transformed employment opportunities available to young people. As labour markets continue to evolve, youth are increasingly required to develop new skills and adapt to changing forms of work in order to secure sustainable employment. These changes have also influenced occupational aspirations, encouraging young people to pursue careers that offer financial security, career growth, and improved quality of life.

The relationship between occupational aspirations and employment choices has received increasing attention in recent years. Akosah-Twumasi et al. (2018) observed that career aspirations are shaped through the interaction of intrinsic, extrinsic, and interpersonal factors. Personal interests, self-confidence, employment opportunities, income expectations, family influence, peers, teachers, and cultural values collectively shape career decisions. Similarly, Gardiner and Goedhuys (2020) argued that occupational aspirations are closely associated with labour market opportunities, educational experiences, and the surrounding social environment. They emphasised that young people often develop aspirations based on opportunities they believe are realistically attainable. These studies demonstrate that career decisions are influenced not only by personal ambition but also by the social and economic conditions in which young people live.

Within the Indian context, youth employment continues to face several structural challenges despite improvements in educational attainment and the introduction of employment-oriented policies. Although government initiatives have attempted to improve employability through skill

development and vocational training, many young people continue to experience unemployment, underemployment, and informal employment. Raj and Alank (2024) found that socio-economic conditions, educational opportunities, awareness of employment programmes, and family economic status significantly influence employment opportunities and occupational aspirations among youth. Likewise, Jaiswal, Srivastava, and Bansal (2023) reported that educational attainment, parental expectations, occupational prestige, and socio-economic status strongly influence career aspirations and employment decisions among Indian youth. These findings indicate that employment outcomes are shaped by several interconnected factors rather than educational qualifications alone.

Kerala presents a distinctive employment scenario. Although the state has achieved remarkable progress in literacy, education, and human development, unemployment among educated youth continues to remain a major concern. The Economic Review 2023 published by the Government of Kerala State Planning Board highlights that many young people continue to face difficulties in obtaining stable and secure employment despite their educational achievements. As a result, occupational diversification, migration, self-employment, and employment in the service sector have become increasingly common among Kerala's youth. These changing employment patterns are particularly visible in the state's coastal communities where traditional occupations are gradually being reconsidered by younger generations in response to changing economic and social conditions.

Fishing has traditionally been the principal livelihood of Kerala's coastal communities and continues to contribute significantly to employment, food security, and the coastal economy. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (2022), fisheries provide livelihoods for millions of people worldwide while supporting food security and economic development. However, environmental degradation, declining marine resources, climate change, fluctuating incomes, and occupational risks have increased uncertainty within the fisheries sector. Institutional evidence from the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) indicates that Kerala's marine fisheries sector is undergoing considerable transformation characterised by livelihood diversification, labour shortages, and declining participation of younger generations in traditional fishing occupations. These developments suggest that fishing is increasingly being viewed alongside alternative employment opportunities rather than as the only occupational choice available to coastal youth.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Youth employment has emerged as a major concern globally. The International Labour Organization (2022) reports that young people are significantly more likely to experience unemployment than adults and many continue to work in informal, insecure, or low-paid forms of employment. Despite the introduction of various employment policies and skill development initiatives, unemployment and underemployment continue to affect youth across many countries including India. Gardiner and Goedhuys (2020) further argue that changing labour markets, technological advancement, and economic transformation have altered employment opportunities, making the transition from education to sustainable employment increasingly complex for young people.

In India, several programmes have been introduced to improve youth employability and strengthen skill development. However, challenges such as unemployment, skill mismatch, limited awareness of employment opportunities, and unequal access to stable jobs continue to persist. Raj and Alank (2024) observed that socio-economic conditions, educational opportunities, awareness of government employment programmes, and family economic circumstances significantly influence employment opportunities among youth. Similarly, Jaiswal, Srivastava, and Bansal (2023) emphasised that educational attainment alone does not guarantee employment unless it is supported by appropriate employability skills, career guidance, and access to labour market opportunities. Kerala presents a unique situation where high levels of literacy and educational attainment coexist with persistent youth unemployment (Government of Kerala State Planning Board, 2023).

The situation becomes particularly significant within coastal communities where fishing has traditionally served as the principal source of livelihood. However, these communities are increasingly experiencing challenges arising from declining marine resources, fluctuating incomes, occupational risks, environmental degradation, and climate-related changes. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (2022), the fisheries sector is facing growing environmental and economic pressures that affect the sustainability of traditional livelihoods. Institutional evidence from the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) also indicates that Kerala's marine fisheries sector is undergoing considerable transformation through livelihood diversification, changing workforce patterns, and declining participation of younger generations in traditional fishing occupations. These developments have increased uncertainty regarding future employment opportunities within coastal communities.

Thiruvananthapuram district is recognised as one of the environmentally vulnerable coastal regions of Kerala. The Integrated Coastal Vulnerability Analysis using Bayesian Belief Network and GIS by Gopinad et al. indicates that approximately 20 per cent of the coastal area of Thiruvananthapuram falls within the very high coastal vulnerability zone. The study highlights that coastal erosion, environmental hazards, land-use changes, and socio-economic conditions collectively contribute to livelihood insecurity within coastal communities. These environmental and livelihood challenges are likely to influence how coastal youth perceive traditional occupations such as fishing and make decisions regarding their future careers and employment choices.

Although existing studies have examined occupational aspirations, youth employment, fisheries, coastal livelihoods, environmental vulnerability, and employment challenges, limited attention has been given to understanding these issues collectively among coastal youth. International and Indian studies have identified several factors influencing occupational aspirations and employment choices while policy reports have highlighted changing employment trends and livelihood challenges. However, there remains limited qualitative evidence explaining whether coastal youth continue to aspire towards traditional occupations such as fishing or increasingly prefer alternative employment opportunities. Similarly, little is known about the personal, social, economic, and environmental factors that influence these aspirations and employment choices within the coastal context of Thiruvananthapuram district.

Therefore, the central problem addressed in the present study is the limited empirical understanding of the occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth in Thiruvananthapuram district within the context of changing livelihood conditions, environmental vulnerability, and evolving employment opportunities. Understanding these aspirations and employment choices is essential for designing appropriate interventions, strengthening skill development initiatives, promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities, and formulating employment policies that respond effectively to the emerging needs and aspirations of coastal youth.

1.3 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Youth form an important part of society. They represent both the present workforce and the future of a nation. The World Health Organization (2022) defines youth as individuals between 15 and 24 years of age. In India, the National Youth Policy classifies youth as those between 15 and 29 years (Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, 2014). This group plays a key role in economic growth,

social development, and national progress. Understanding their employment patterns and occupational aspirations is therefore important for promoting sustainable development and effective youth policies.

At the global level, youth employment has become a serious concern. The International Labour Organization (2022) reports that young people are more likely to be unemployed than adults and many continue to work in insecure or informal jobs. The nature of work is also changing due to technological advancement, economic transformation, and changing labour market demands. Traditional occupations such as agriculture and fishing are becoming less attractive to younger generations, while employment in the service sector, skilled occupations, and migration-based opportunities is increasingly preferred. Gardiner and Goedhuys (2020) also note that changing labour markets and future employment opportunities have significantly influenced the aspirations and career decisions of young people. These changes are largely driven by the need for stable income, better career prospects, and safer working conditions.

In India, youth employment continues to face several challenges. The government has introduced many programmes to improve employability and skill development. However, unemployment, skill mismatch, limited awareness of employment opportunities, and unequal access to stable jobs continue to affect many young people. Raj and Alank (2024) observed that socio-economic conditions, educational opportunities, and awareness of government employment programmes significantly influence employment opportunities among youth. Similarly, Jaiswal, Srivastava, and Bansal (2023) reported that educational attainment alone does not guarantee employment unless it is supported by employability skills, career guidance, and access to labour market opportunities. As a result, many young people continue to experience difficulties in securing regular and sustainable employment.

Kerala presents a different situation. Although the state has achieved high literacy and educational attainment, youth unemployment continues to remain a major concern. The Economic Review 2023 published by the Government of Kerala State Planning Board highlights that many educated young people continue to struggle to obtain stable employment despite their qualifications. This creates a gap between educational achievement and employment opportunities. Consequently, many young people are moving away from traditional occupations and searching for alternative career opportunities through migration, self-employment, and employment in the service sector. This transition is particularly visible in Kerala's coastal communities.

Fishing has been the principal occupation of coastal communities for generations. It is closely associated with their culture, identity, and traditional way of life and has long been passed from

one generation to the next. However, this situation is gradually changing. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (2022), the fisheries sector is increasingly facing challenges arising from declining marine resources, climate change, environmental degradation, fluctuating incomes, and occupational risks. Institutional evidence from the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) also indicates that Kerala's fisheries sector is undergoing considerable transformation characterised by livelihood diversification, changing workforce patterns, and declining participation of younger generations in traditional fishing occupations. These developments have increased uncertainty regarding the future sustainability of fishing as a livelihood.

Career choices are not shaped by economic factors alone. Social and cultural influences also play an important role. Akosah-Twumasi et al. (2018) found that family expectations, cultural values, educational experiences, peers, and the surrounding social environment significantly influence career aspirations and occupational choices among young people. In a country like India, where family and community relationships strongly influence individual decisions, these factors become even more significant. At the same time, greater exposure to higher education, technology, and new employment opportunities encourages young people to consider occupations beyond traditional livelihoods.

Environmental conditions also influence employment decisions within coastal communities. Thiruvananthapuram has been identified as one of the most environmentally vulnerable coastal districts in Kerala. The Integrated Coastal Vulnerability Analysis using Bayesian Belief Network and GIS by Gopinad et al. indicates that approximately 20 per cent of the coastal area of Thiruvananthapuram falls within the very high coastal vulnerability zone. Coastal erosion, flooding, environmental hazards, and changing land-use patterns have increased livelihood insecurity among coastal households. These environmental challenges reduce the long-term sustainability of fishing and encourage many young people to explore alternative employment opportunities.

Research also demonstrates that occupational aspirations significantly influence employment outcomes. Brooks et al. (2010) found that young people with higher occupational aspirations are more likely to pursue higher education, occupational mobility, and migration in search of better employment opportunities. Similarly, Gardiner and Goedhuys (2020) argue that employment aspirations are shaped by labour market opportunities, educational experiences, and changing economic conditions. When young people perceive better employment opportunities outside their local communities, they are more likely to move away from traditional occupations and pursue

alternative careers. This demonstrates that employment decisions are shaped by both personal aspirations and the surrounding socio-economic environment.

Although several studies have examined youth employment, occupational aspirations, fisheries, and livelihood changes, there remains limited understanding of these issues within specific local contexts. Most studies focus on broader populations, general employment trends, or environmental challenges. Very few studies have specifically examined the occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth within individual coastal communities. Similarly, limited research has focused exclusively on the coastal areas of Thiruvananthapuram district despite their distinctive social, economic, and environmental characteristics.

In this context, the present study focuses on coastal youth in Thiruvananthapuram district. It examines whether young people are moving away from traditional fishing occupations and explores their occupational aspirations and employment choices. The study also seeks to understand the factors influencing these aspirations, perceptions towards traditional occupations, awareness of skill development programmes, and employment challenges experienced by coastal youth. Through this exploration, the study aims to provide a better understanding of the changing livelihood aspirations of coastal youth and contribute to the development of appropriate employment and livelihood interventions.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 SIGNIFICANCE TO COASTAL COMMUNITIES

Coastal communities in Kerala have traditionally depended on fishing and other marine-based occupations for their livelihood. However rapid socio-economic changes environmental challenges and changing aspirations among younger generations have created significant transformations within these communities. This study is important because it provides a deeper understanding of how coastal youth perceive their future occupations and employment opportunities within this changing context.

The findings of the study contribute to understanding the changing livelihood patterns among coastal youth in Thiruvananthapuram district. As younger generations increasingly explore alternatives to traditional occupations it becomes important to understand the factors influencing these transitions. The study helps identify the opportunities challenges and constraints experienced by coastal youth while making occupational decisions.

Further the study provides insights into the influence of environmental challenges such as sea erosion, climate-related risks, declining fish availability, and livelihood insecurity on occupational choices. Understanding these issues can assist local communities, development agencies, and policymakers in designing livelihood interventions that are responsive to the emerging needs of coastal populations. The findings may also contribute to the development of sustainable livelihood strategies that balance traditional occupations with alternative employment opportunities.

1.4.2 SIGNIFICANCE TO YOUTH

Youth represent an important segment of society and play a crucial role in shaping the future social and economic development of communities. The study is significant because it focuses specifically on coastal youth a group that often faces unique employment related challenges due to their socio-economic and environmental context.

The study provides an understanding of how educational aspirations family occupational background, economic considerations, social influences, and environmental conditions shape the occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth. It highlights the opportunities available to young people as well as the barriers they encounter while pursuing employment and career goals.

The findings also contribute to understanding how youth perceive traditional occupations such as fishing in comparison with alternative employment opportunities. This understanding is important for identifying the changing aspirations of younger generations and for developing programmes that support their educational, vocational, and employment needs.

In addition the study provides insights into the awareness and accessibility of skill-development programmes among coastal youth. Understanding the experiences and perceptions of youth regarding these programmes may help improve their effectiveness and relevance. The findings may therefore support initiatives aimed at enhancing employability, career development, and livelihood security among coastal youth.

1.4.3 SIGNIFICANCE TO SOCIAL WORK DISCIPLINE

The study holds considerable significance for the discipline of social work as it addresses issues related to youth development, employment, livelihoods, community development, and social change. Social work recognizes the importance of empowering individuals and communities to overcome social and economic challenges and improve their quality of life.

The findings contribute to social work knowledge by providing an understanding of the employment related experiences, aspirations, and challenges of coastal youth. This knowledge can help social workers develop more context specific interventions aimed at improving livelihood opportunities and promoting youth empowerment in coastal communities.

The study also provides evidence that can support social work practice in areas such as career guidance, skill development, youth counselling, livelihood promotion, and community organization. Understanding the factors influencing occupational aspirations and employment choices can assist social workers in designing interventions that are responsive to the needs and realities of coastal youth.

Further the findings may contribute to policy advocacy and programme development by highlighting gaps in employment opportunities, skill-development initiatives, and institutional support systems. The study therefore provides valuable information that can be used by social workers, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, and government agencies working in the field of youth development and coastal community welfare.

Finally the study contributes to the existing body of social work research by focusing on a relatively underexplored area, namely the occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth in Thiruvananthapuram district. It provides a foundation for future research on youth employment, livelihood transitions, and community development within coastal settings.

1.5 CHAPTERIZATION

The present study is divided into six chapters. Chapter I introduces the study by presenting the background statement of the problem and significance of the study along with its relevance to the coastal community youth and the social work profession. Chapter II reviews the available national and international literature related to occupational aspirations employment patterns career choices skill development coastal livelihoods and employment challenges. It also discusses relevant policy documents identifies the research gap and provides the conceptual foundation for the study. Chapter III explains the research methodology adopted for the study including the research questions definition of concepts pilot study research design description of the research site and participants sampling strategy data collection methods ethical considerations and the scope and limitations of the study. Chapter IV presents detailed case descriptions of the respondents through narrative accounts to provide a comprehensive understanding of their socio economic background occupational experiences aspirations and livelihood realities. Chapter V analyses the qualitative

data using thematic analysis by presenting the respondent profile major themes subthemes and discussion of the findings in relation to existing literature and theoretical perspectives. Chapter VI presents the major findings suggestions and conclusion of the study and is followed by the bibliography appendices and the research tool used for data collection.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter critically examines existing research and literature relevant to the occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth, with particular reference to Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala. By reviewing studies on youth aspirations, coastal and fishing-dependent livelihoods, employment policy, and skill-development interventions, this chapter situates the present study within the broader body of knowledge on youth and livelihood transitions in resource-dependent communities.

The review begins by examining global and national perspectives on youth employment and the demographic significance of the youth population. It then explores literature on occupational aspirations among youth in rural and resource-dependent settings, followed by studies specific to coastal and fishing communities. The chapter further reviews the policy and institutional landscape governing youth skill development in India and Kerala, before concluding with the research gap that justifies the present study.

2.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.2.1 Theme I: Occupational Aspirations and Career Decision Making among Youth

- Occupational aspirations refer to the occupations and career paths that individuals hope to pursue in the future. These aspirations are developed during adolescence and early adulthood through a continuous interaction between personal interests, educational experiences, family expectations, cultural values, economic circumstances, and labour market opportunities. Rather than being fixed ambitions, occupational aspirations evolve as young people interpret their social environment and assess the opportunities and constraints available to them. Consequently, career decisions are influenced not only by individual preferences but also by the broader social, cultural, and economic context in which young people grow up.
- The literature consistently demonstrates that occupational aspirations are multidimensional and shaped by the interaction of individual, familial, institutional, and structural factors. In their systematic review of international literature (Akosah-Twumasi, 2018) identified three broad categories of influences on youth career choices: intrinsic factors, extrinsic factors, and interpersonal factors. Intrinsic factors include personal interests, abilities, self-confidence, and career goals, while extrinsic factors comprise income expectations, employment opportunities, job security, and working conditions. Interpersonal factors include the influence of parents, family members, peers, teachers, and cultural

expectations. The review argues that career decisions cannot be understood solely through individual motivation, as they are embedded within wider social and cultural contexts. This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study, where occupational aspirations among coastal youth are expected to emerge from the interaction between personal ambitions and the realities of life within fishing communities.

- Similarly, (Goedhuys, 2020) emphasise that occupational aspirations are closely linked to the future of work and are shaped by changing labour markets, educational opportunities, technological advancement, and socio-economic inequalities. Their review highlights that aspirations should not be viewed merely as personal ambitions but as socially constructed expectations influenced by family environments, community norms, labour market conditions, and public policies. The authors further argue that aspirations develop within the opportunities available to young people and are often constrained by structural inequalities such as poverty, inadequate educational opportunities, and limited access to quality employment. Consequently, young people's career choices frequently reflect what they perceive as achievable rather than what they ideally desire. This understanding provides an important conceptual foundation for interpreting occupational aspirations among coastal youth, whose employment decisions are often influenced by the availability of local livelihood opportunities and the economic realities of coastal communities.
- Within the Indian context, (Jaiswal, 2023) synthesised existing literature on youth career aspirations and observed that educational attainment, parental expectations, socio-economic status, gender roles, occupational prestige, and perceived employment opportunities significantly influence career aspirations. The review notes that increasing educational participation has encouraged many young people to aspire towards occupations that offer greater financial security, social recognition, and career advancement. However, these aspirations frequently encounter structural barriers, including unequal access to quality education, limited employability skills, and insufficient career guidance. The authors also emphasise that aspirations are increasingly shaped by changing social values, where employment is viewed not only as a source of income but also as a means of achieving social mobility and improved quality of life. These observations correspond closely with the present study, which explores how coastal youth negotiate between traditional livelihoods and emerging occupational opportunities.
- The influence of occupational aspirations on subsequent employment decisions is further demonstrated by (Brooks, 2010), who examined the relationship between occupational aspirations and the migration decisions of rural youth. Their findings indicate that young people aspiring to professional and managerial occupations were considerably more likely

to seek employment outside their rural communities than those aspiring to traditional or manual occupations. The study suggests that occupational aspirations shape not only career preferences but also broader life decisions, including migration and occupational mobility. Where local labour markets fail to provide opportunities consistent with young people's aspirations, they increasingly consider alternative occupations or relocate in search of better employment prospects. Although the study was conducted in a rural context, its conceptual insights are highly relevant to coastal communities where limited employment diversification often influences occupational choices and future aspirations.

- Supporting this perspective, (Alank, 2024) examined occupational aspirations among Dalit youth in rural India and found that aspirations are strongly influenced by education, socio-economic status, awareness of employment opportunities, and access to government employment programmes. The study highlights that structural disadvantages such as poverty, unemployment, and limited educational opportunities often restrict the realisation of career aspirations despite young people's desire for upward occupational mobility. It further argues that occupational aspirations cannot be separated from broader social inequalities, as access to employment opportunities is shaped by economic resources, institutional support, and social inclusion. Although conducted among Dalit youth rather than coastal communities, the study demonstrates that occupational aspirations are closely connected with structural opportunities and constraints, a perspective that is equally relevant to understanding employment choices among coastal youth.

2.2.2 Theme II: Youth Employment Patterns and Employment Choices

- The International Labour Organization (2022) highlights that youth continue to experience disproportionately higher unemployment rates than adults across the world. The report indicates that many young people remain concentrated within informal, insecure, and low-paid occupations despite improvements in educational attainment. The increasing proportion of youth who are not in employment, education, or training reflects persistent structural challenges within labour markets. Furthermore, rapid technological change, digitalisation, climate change, and economic uncertainty have altered the nature of employment, requiring young people to develop new skills and adapt to changing occupational demands. The report argues that creating decent employment opportunities requires investments in education, vocational training, and labour market policies that respond to the aspirations and capabilities of young people. These observations demonstrate that employment choices are increasingly shaped not only by the availability

of jobs but also by broader economic and institutional conditions that influence access to meaningful and sustainable employment.

- A similar perspective is presented by Gardiner and Goedhuys (2020), who argue that the future of youth employment is closely connected to changing labour market structures and emerging forms of work. Their review emphasises that occupational aspirations cannot be separated from employment realities, as young people continuously adjust their aspirations according to the opportunities available within their surrounding labour market. The authors note that employment decisions are increasingly influenced by the availability of stable occupations, technological developments, labour market flexibility, and public employment policies. Young people are therefore required to balance their personal aspirations with practical considerations such as job security, income stability, and long-term career prospects. This understanding is particularly relevant in communities where employment opportunities remain limited and occupational choices are largely determined by local economic structures.
- The relationship between occupational aspirations and employment choices is further demonstrated by Brooks et al. (2010), who examined how occupational aspirations influence employment decisions among rural youth. Their findings indicate that young people aspiring towards professional and managerial occupations are more likely to seek employment beyond their local communities when suitable opportunities are unavailable. Conversely, youth whose aspirations align with traditional occupations are more likely to remain within their local labour markets. The study therefore suggests that employment choices represent the practical outcome of occupational aspirations interacting with local employment opportunities. Where labour markets fail to accommodate changing aspirations, young people increasingly pursue migration or occupational diversification. Although conducted among rural youth, these findings provide valuable insights for understanding employment transitions within coastal communities, where younger generations are increasingly exposed to educational opportunities and alternative occupations beyond traditional fishing.
- Evidence from the Indian context also demonstrates that youth employment patterns are undergoing significant transformation. Raj and Alank (2024) observed that occupational aspirations among Indian youth increasingly extend beyond traditional occupations towards employment that offers greater economic stability, social recognition, and long-term career development. Their study found that education, awareness of employment opportunities, government employment programmes, and socio-economic conditions significantly influence employment decisions. At the same time, structural barriers such as

unemployment, poverty, inadequate skills, and limited employment opportunities continue to restrict the ability of many young people to realise their occupational aspirations. Consequently, employment choices often reflect a compromise between aspiration and opportunity rather than a completely voluntary career decision. These findings illustrate that employment patterns among Indian youth are shaped by both personal ambitions and structural constraints.

- The changing nature of employment preferences among Indian youth is further reinforced by Jaiswal, Srivastava, and Bansal (2023), who argue that career aspirations increasingly favour occupations associated with professional growth, economic security, and social mobility. Their review suggests that young people no longer perceive employment merely as a source of income but also as a pathway towards improved social status and personal fulfilment. The authors note that higher educational attainment and increased exposure to diverse career opportunities have encouraged youth to reconsider traditional occupations that are characterised by income uncertainty or limited career progression. Nevertheless, disparities in educational quality, employability skills, and labour market access continue to influence employment outcomes, particularly among socially and economically disadvantaged groups. These observations indicate that employment choices are becoming progressively diversified, reflecting broader socio-economic changes within Indian society.
- While international and Indian literature primarily focuses on youth employment in general, employment transitions become particularly significant within coastal communities where livelihoods have historically depended upon fisheries and marine-based occupations. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (2022), fisheries continue to provide livelihoods for millions of people globally and contribute substantially to food security and local economies. However, the fisheries sector increasingly faces challenges arising from declining fish stocks, environmental degradation, climate change, fluctuating incomes, and changing labour market dynamics. These developments have encouraged many younger generations to seek alternative occupations outside the traditional fisheries sector while others continue to depend upon fishing due to limited employment opportunities. Thus, employment choices within coastal communities are increasingly characterised by livelihood diversification rather than exclusive dependence on fishing.
- The Government of Kerala State Planning Board (2023) similarly observes that Kerala's coastal economy continues to depend significantly upon fisheries and allied activities while simultaneously experiencing considerable socio-economic transformation. Rising

educational attainment, migration, service-sector expansion, and diversification of the state's economy have created new employment opportunities for younger generations. Nevertheless, coastal communities continue to experience livelihood insecurity arising from fluctuating fish production, environmental changes, and occupational risks. These developments have contributed to changing employment aspirations among coastal youth, many of whom increasingly seek occupations beyond traditional marine livelihoods while maintaining strong socio-cultural connections with fishing communities.

- Institutional evidence provided by the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) further supports this changing employment scenario within Kerala's fishing sector. CMFRI's research on marine fisheries and fishing communities indicates that the sector is experiencing labour shortages, increasing dependence on migrant workers, livelihood diversification, and declining participation of younger generations in traditional fishing occupations. The institute also highlights the importance of sustainable fisheries management, alternative livelihood opportunities, and skill development to ensure the long-term sustainability of coastal livelihoods. Although CMFRI's work primarily focuses on fisheries research rather than occupational aspirations, its findings provide valuable contextual evidence demonstrating that employment patterns within Kerala's coastal communities are undergoing gradual transformation. This institutional perspective strengthens the understanding that employment choices among coastal youth are increasingly influenced by changing economic realities within the fisheries sector.

2.2.3 Theme III: Factors Influencing Occupational Aspirations and Employment Choices

- (Akosah-Twumasi, 2018) identified intrinsic, extrinsic, and interpersonal factors as the primary determinants of career choice among youth. Intrinsic factors include personal interests, abilities, self-efficacy, and career goals, whereas extrinsic factors comprise income expectations, employment opportunities, working conditions, and job security. Interpersonal influences, including parents, family members, peers, teachers, and cultural expectations, also play a significant role in shaping occupational aspirations. The review emphasises that career decisions are socially constructed and influenced by the interaction between personal ambitions and external circumstances rather than individual choice alone.
- Similarly (Goedhuys, 2020) argue that occupational aspirations are strongly influenced by labour market conditions, educational opportunities, social norms, family background, and public policies. Their review highlights that young people often develop aspirations based on what they perceive to be realistically achievable within their surrounding environment.

Structural inequalities such as poverty, unequal educational access, unemployment, and limited career opportunities frequently restrict the realisation of occupational aspirations. The authors further emphasise that aspirations evolve alongside changes in labour markets and technological development, requiring young people to continuously adapt their employment expectations.

- Within the Indian context, (Jaiswal, 2023) observed that educational attainment, socio-economic status, parental expectations, gender norms, occupational prestige, and career guidance significantly influence career aspirations among youth. The review notes that increasing access to higher education has encouraged young people to seek occupations offering greater financial security, social mobility, and professional growth. However, disparities in educational quality, employability skills, and access to labour market information continue to influence employment choices and limit career opportunities for many young people.
- The relationship between occupational aspirations and employment decisions is further demonstrated by (Brooks, 2010), who found that occupational aspirations significantly influence employment-related decisions among rural youth. Young people aspiring to professional and managerial occupations were more likely to seek employment beyond their local communities when suitable opportunities were unavailable. The study indicates that employment choices are shaped not only by aspirations but also by the availability of local employment opportunities. When desired occupations cannot be accessed locally, youth increasingly consider occupational mobility or migration as alternative strategies for achieving their career goals.
- Evidence from (Alank, 2024) further highlights the influence of socio-economic conditions on occupational aspirations and employment choices. Their study found that education, poverty, awareness of employment opportunities, government employment programmes, and family economic conditions significantly affect career aspirations among youth. Although young people expressed aspirations for stable and secure employment, limited employment opportunities and financial constraints often compelled them to accept occupations that differed from their preferred career choices. The study demonstrates that occupational aspirations are frequently negotiated within the realities of economic and social disadvantage.
- The broader employment environment also plays a significant role in shaping occupational decisions. The International Labour Organization (2022) reports that persistent youth unemployment, informal employment, and unequal labour market access continue to affect employment opportunities worldwide. The report highlights the growing importance of

vocational education, employability skills, digital competencies, and labour market policies in supporting young people's transition into decent work. It further emphasises that investments in education, skill development, and sustainable employment opportunities are essential for improving youth employment outcomes.

2.2.4 Theme IV: Skill Development, Employability, and Institutional Support

- The International Labour Organization (2022) emphasises that the transition from education to employment has become increasingly complex due to persistent youth unemployment, informal employment, and labour market inequalities. The report highlights that many young people face difficulties in obtaining decent work because their skills do not correspond with labour market demands. It therefore advocates greater investment in vocational education, technical training, digital competencies, and lifelong learning to improve youth employability. The report also stresses that effective employment policies should create opportunities for young people to develop relevant skills while ensuring equitable access to sustainable employment.
- Similarly, (Goedhuys, 2020) argue that employability extends beyond academic qualifications and depends upon the development of practical skills, adaptability, career guidance, and institutional support. Their review suggests that young people's aspirations are more likely to be realised when educational systems, labour market policies, and training programmes respond to emerging employment opportunities. The authors further note that career guidance and mentorship enable youth to make informed occupational decisions by increasing awareness of available career pathways and reducing uncertainty during the transition from education to employment. Consequently, institutional interventions should not only prepare youth for existing occupations but also equip them to adapt to changing labour market conditions.
- Within the Indian context, (Alank, 2024) found that awareness and utilisation of government employment programmes significantly influence employment opportunities among youth. Their study highlights that schemes promoting vocational training, entrepreneurship, and skill development contribute to improving employability, particularly among socially and economically disadvantaged groups. However, the authors also observed that limited awareness, inadequate access to training programmes, and socio-economic constraints often prevent young people from fully benefiting from these initiatives. As a result, many youth continue to experience unemployment or underemployment despite the availability of institutional support.

- Supporting this perspective, (Jaiswal, 2023) argue that educational institutions play a vital role in shaping employability by providing career guidance, skill enhancement, and exposure to emerging employment opportunities. Their review indicates that academic qualifications alone are insufficient for successful career development unless accompanied by practical competencies, communication skills, problem-solving abilities, and career planning. The authors further emphasise that collaboration between educational institutions, employers, and government agencies is essential for preparing young people to meet contemporary labour market expectations.
- The National Youth Policy (2014) also recognises skill development and employability as central priorities for youth development in India. The policy emphasises the importance of providing equitable access to quality education, vocational training, entrepreneurship support, and employment opportunities to enable young people to participate productively in the country's socio-economic development. It advocates strengthening institutional mechanisms that promote career guidance, innovation, and skill acquisition, particularly among disadvantaged youth.
- The importance of institutional support becomes increasingly significant within coastal communities where employment opportunities are often concentrated around traditional occupations. The Government of Kerala State Planning Board (2023) notes that although Kerala has achieved considerable progress in education and human development, employment challenges continue to exist, particularly in sectors experiencing structural transformation. Expanding skill development programmes and employment-oriented training has therefore become an important strategy for improving youth employability and facilitating occupational diversification.
- Institutional evidence provided by the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) also highlights the need for capacity building and livelihood diversification within fishing communities. Through its research and extension activities, CMFRI promotes sustainable fisheries management, scientific awareness, entrepreneurship, and alternative livelihood opportunities for fishing households. These initiatives contribute to strengthening the resilience of coastal communities by encouraging skill enhancement and reducing excessive dependence on traditional fishing occupations. Such institutional efforts demonstrate the importance of linking scientific knowledge, community participation, and livelihood development in supporting sustainable employment among coastal populations.

2.2.5 Theme V: Coastal Livelihoods, Fisheries, and Employment Challenges

- A similar concern is reflected in the Government of Kerala State Planning Board's Economic Review (2023), which identifies fisheries as one of the important livelihood sectors in Kerala's coastal economy while acknowledging the challenges associated with declining productivity, changing marine ecosystems, and occupational uncertainty. The report notes that increasing educational attainment, migration, and diversification of the state's economy have expanded employment opportunities beyond traditional marine occupations. Consequently, many young people increasingly seek alternative employment in the service sector, private employment, government jobs, and overseas labour markets, reflecting broader socio-economic transformations occurring within coastal communities.
- Institutional evidence from the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) further demonstrates that Kerala's fishing sector is undergoing significant structural change. Through its research on marine fisheries and fishing communities, CMFRI highlights the growing dependence on migrant labour, changing workforce composition, livelihood diversification, and the declining participation of younger generations in traditional fishing occupations. The institute also emphasises the importance of sustainable fisheries management, scientific resource conservation, entrepreneurship, and alternative livelihood opportunities for strengthening the long-term resilience of fishing communities. These institutional observations indicate that the occupational environment within Kerala's coastal regions is gradually shifting from exclusive dependence on fishing towards more diversified livelihood strategies.
- The Integrated Coastal Vulnerability Analysis using Bayesian Belief Network and GIS conducted by (Gopinath, 2026) . further reinforces the vulnerability of Kerala's coastal districts. Based on the available abstract, the study found that approximately 20 per cent of the coastal area of Thiruvananthapuram falls within the very high coastal vulnerability zone, while significant portions of Kozhikode and Ernakulam also experience high levels of physical and socio-economic vulnerability. The study attributes this vulnerability to the combined effects of coastal erosion, environmental hazards, population density, land use changes, and socio-economic conditions. These findings demonstrate that coastal communities are exposed to multiple environmental risks that directly influence livelihood security and long-term occupational sustainability. Although the study focuses on coastal vulnerability rather than employment, it provides important contextual evidence explaining why coastal youth increasingly encounter uncertainty in traditional livelihood systems.
- The broader international literature similarly recognises that environmental and economic transformations significantly influence employment opportunities among young people. The International Labour Organization (2022) argues that labour markets are increasingly

shaped by economic restructuring, climate-related challenges, and technological changes, requiring young people to adapt to emerging employment opportunities. The report suggests that sectors experiencing environmental uncertainty require investments in skills development, employment diversification, and sustainable livelihood planning to ensure decent work opportunities for future generations. These recommendations are particularly relevant to coastal regions where environmental changes directly affect livelihood security.

- Supporting this perspective, (Goedhuys, 2020) argue that employment aspirations are strongly influenced by the opportunities available within local labour markets. Where traditional occupations become economically unstable or socially less attractive, young people increasingly aspire towards occupations that provide greater income security, career progression, and long-term stability. The authors further note that aspirations are continuously reshaped by changing economic conditions and labour market opportunities, indicating that occupational decisions are often responses to structural transformations rather than individual preferences alone.

2.3 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

Author & Year	Title	Method	Findings
Akosah-Twumasi, Emeto, Lindsay, Tsey, and Malau-Aduli (2018)	A Systematic Review of Factors That Influence Youths' Career Choices The Role of Culture	Conducted a systematic review of published studies examining factors influencing youth career choices. Studies from different countries were screened, evaluated, and synthesised to identify	Career aspirations are influenced by intrinsic, extrinsic, and interpersonal factors such as family, culture, education, self-efficacy, and employment opportunities.

		common determinants of	
Gardiner & Goedhuys (2020)	Youth Aspirations and the Future of Work (ILO Working Paper No. 8)	Reviewed literature on youth aspirations and the future of work.	Occupational aspirations are shaped by labour market conditions, education, family background, public policy, and socio-economic inequalities.
Jaiswal, Srivastava, and Bansal (2023)	The Essence of Youth's Career Aspirations in India	Reviewed literature on youth career aspirations in India.	Educational attainment, parental influence, occupational prestige, and career guidance significantly influence career aspirations among Indian youth.
Brooks, Lee, Berry, and Toney (2010)	The Effects of Occupational Aspirations and Other Factors on the Out-Migration of Rural Youth	Examined survey data collected from rural youth to analyse the relationship between occupational aspirations and migration decisions through statistical analysis.	Youth with higher occupational aspirations were more likely to migrate in search of better employment opportunities when suitable local employment was unavailable.
International Labour Organization (2022)	Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022: Investing in Transforming	Prepared a global analytical report using labour	Youth continue to experience unemployment, informal employment, and

	Futures for Young People	market statistics, employment indicators, and comparative analysis of youth employment trends across countries.	insecure work, highlighting the need for skill development and decent employment opportunities.
Raj and Alank (2024)	Employment Opportunities, Aspirations and Challenges among Dalit Youth: A Sociological Analysis	Conducted a sociological study using primary data to examine employment opportunities, aspirations, and challenges among Dalit youth in India.	Education, socio-economic conditions, awareness of government programmes, and structural inequalities significantly influence occupational aspirations and employment opportunities.
Gopinath, G., Achu, A. L., Eldhose, S., & Jessiya, N. P. (2026)	An Integrated Coastal Vulnerability Analysis of Selected Coastal Areas of Kerala Using Bayesian Belief Network and GIS.	Conducted an integrated coastal vulnerability assessment using Bayesian Belief Network and GIS by combining physical and socio-economic indicators	Identified that approximately 20% of the coastal area of Thiruvananthapuram falls within the very high coastal vulnerability zone, affecting livelihood sustainability.

		across Kerala's coastal districts.	
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2.4 SUMMARY OF POLICY AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Document	Purpose
(Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports. National Youth Policy, 2014)	Defines youth and outlines national priorities for youth development, employability, and skill development.
Food and Agriculture Organization. The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (2022)	Examines global fisheries, livelihood sustainability, food security, and challenges affecting fishing communities.
ICAR–Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI)	Provides scientific research and institutional evidence on Kerala's marine fisheries, fishing communities, and livelihood diversification.
Government of Kerala State Planning Board. Economic Review (2023)	Presents Kerala's socio-economic profile, employment scenario, and fisheries sector performance.

2.5 RESEARCH GAP

A review of the existing literature indicates that considerable attention has been given to youth occupational aspirations, employment patterns, career decision-making, and labour market challenges at both international and national levels. Studies by (Akosah-Twumasi, 2018), (Brooks, 2010), (Goedhuys, 2020), (Alank, 2024), and (Jaiswal, 2023) have significantly contributed to understanding the factors influencing occupational aspirations and employment choices among young people. Likewise, policy reports published by the International Labour Organization (2022), the Government of Kerala State Planning Board (2023), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (2022) provide valuable insights into youth employment trends, fisheries, and livelihood conditions. Despite these contributions, several important gaps remain in the existing body of knowledge.

2.5.1 Limited Understanding of Occupational Aspirations among Coastal Youth in Kerala

Although previous studies have extensively examined occupational aspirations among youth, they largely focus on general youth populations rural communities or socially disadvantaged groups. Limited empirical attention has been given to understanding the occupational aspirations and employment choices of youth belonging to coastal fishing communities in Kerala. Consequently there remains inadequate knowledge of how the unique social, cultural, economic, and environmental context of coastal communities shapes the career aspirations of young people.

2.5.2 Limited Evidence on Occupational Transition from Traditional Fishing

Existing literature acknowledges the changing nature of employment and the declining attractiveness of traditional occupations among younger generations. Reports published by the FAO (2022), Kerala Economic Review (2023), and institutional evidence from CMFRI indicate ongoing transformations within the fisheries sector. However, limited empirical research has explored how coastal youth perceive traditional fishing as an occupation, what motivates them to continue or move away from fishing, and which alternative occupations they aspire to pursue. Understanding these employment transitions is essential for designing effective livelihood and youth development interventions within coastal communities.

2.5.3 Lack of Qualitative Context Specific Studies in Thiruvananthapuram Coastal Communities

Most available studies examine youth employment, occupational aspirations, or coastal livelihoods at national international or broader regional levels. Similarly studies addressing coastal vulnerability primarily focus on environmental and socio-economic conditions rather than the lived experiences of coastal youth. Limited qualitative research has specifically explored occupational aspirations and employment choices among coastal youth in the coastal belt of Thiruvananthapuram district. Consequently, the voices experiences and perceptions of young people within these communities remain underrepresented in the existing literature.

The present study seeks to address these gaps by providing a qualitative exploration of the occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth in Thiruvananthapuram district. By examining how personal aspirations family expectations educational opportunities traditional occupations, skill development, and employment challenges interact within the coastal context, the study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge while generating context specific evidence that may inform future policies and interventions for sustainable youth employment and livelihood development in Kerala's coastal communities.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 TITLE OF THE STUDY

“OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND EMPLOYMENT CHOICES OF COASTAL YOUTH IN THIRUVANANTHAPURAM DISTRICT”

The present study seeks to explore the occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth residing in selected coastal communities of Thiruvananthapuram district. The study focuses on understanding how coastal youth perceive employment opportunities, traditional occupations, skill-development initiatives, and future livelihood prospects within the changing socio-economic and environmental context of coastal Kerala.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.2.1 General Research Question

How do coastal youth in Thiruvananthapuram district perceive and experience their occupational aspirations and employment choices?

3.2.2 Specific Research Questions

1. How do coastal youth describe their current employment experiences and livelihood patterns?
2. How do coastal youth perceive the factors shaping their occupational aspirations?
3. How do coastal youth perceive traditional occupations such as fishing in the present context?
4. How do coastal youth perceive and understand the available skill development programmes in their community?
5. How do coastal youth experience employment related challenges and concerns regarding their future livelihoods?

3.3 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

3.3.1 Occupational Aspiration

3.3.1 (a) Theoretical Definition

Occupational aspirations refer to the occupations or career positions that individuals hope to achieve in the future. Such aspirations are influenced by personal interests, educational

opportunities, family background, socio-economic conditions, and environmental factors (Bernsen et al., 2022).

3.3.1 (b) Operational Definition

In the present study, occupational aspirations refer to the career goals, preferred occupations, future employment expectations, and livelihood ambitions expressed by coastal youth during the interview process. It includes aspirations related to education, professional employment, traditional occupations, and alternative livelihood opportunities.

3.3.2 Employment Choices

3.3.2(a) Theoretical Definition

Employment choices refer to the occupational decisions individuals make based on available opportunities, personal aspirations, economic considerations, and social circumstances (Brooks et al., 2010).

3.3.2(b) Operational Definition

Employment choices refer to the occupations currently pursued, preferred, or considered by coastal youth residing in selected coastal communities of Thiruvananthapuram district. These choices include traditional occupations such as fishing as well as alternative employment opportunities.

3.3.3 Youth

3.3.3 (a) Theoretical Definition

According to the National Youth Policy (2014), youth are individuals between the ages of 15 and 29 years. This age group represents an important stage of transition involving education, employment, livelihood formation, and social participation.

3.3.3(b) Operational Definition

For the purpose of this study, youth refers to male and female participants aged between 19 and 29 years residing in selected coastal regions of Thiruvananthapuram district.

3.4 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study was conducted prior to the commencement of the main study in order to assess the feasibility and appropriateness of the research instrument. The pilot study was carried out in the Valiyathura coastal area of Thiruvananthapuram district. Two coastal youth who fulfilled the inclusion criteria were selected and interviewed using the preliminary interview schedule.

The purpose of the pilot study was to evaluate the clarity, relevance, sequence, and comprehensibility of the interview questions. It also helped the researcher assess the time required

for conducting interviews and identify any practical difficulties that might arise during the data collection process.

The pilot study provided valuable insights regarding participant understanding, question wording, and interview flow. Based on the observations and feedback obtained from the participants, minor modifications were made to improve the structure and clarity of the interview schedule. The participants involved in the pilot study were excluded from the final sample of the study to avoid duplication of responses.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study adopted a Multiple Case Study Design. According to Yin (2018), a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident. A case study enables the researcher to gain an in depth understanding of a social phenomenon by using multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single method of data collection. Similarly Creswell and Poth (2018) define a case study as a qualitative research design in which the researcher explores one or more bounded cases over time through detailed and in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information such as interviews, observations, documents, and reports.

The present study adopted a Multiple Case Study Design because it aimed to understand the occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth across different coastal communities in Thiruvananthapuram district. The multiple case study design was considered appropriate as it enabled the researcher to examine each participants experiences within their own social and environmental context while also comparing similarities and differences across different cases.

The design facilitated an in depth exploration of the experiences, perceptions, and livelihood decisions of individual participants. Since occupational aspirations and employment choices are influenced by multiple social, economic, cultural, educational, and environmental factors, the multiple case study approach provided a comprehensive understanding of these complex realities. The design was particularly useful in capturing the diverse experiences of coastal youth from different locations and backgrounds. It also facilitated a deeper understanding of how local contexts shape employment opportunities, career aspirations, and livelihood decisions within coastal communities

3.6 DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

The study was conducted in selected coastal regions of Thiruvananthapuram district, namely Anchuthengu, Pozhiyoor, and Vizhinjam. These coastal communities were selected because fishing continues to be a major livelihood activity and because the younger generation in these regions is experiencing significant social, economic, and occupational changes. In addition, these areas face various environmental challenges such as sea erosion, climate-related risks, and livelihood insecurity, making them relevant to the objectives of the study.

The participants of the study consisted of coastal youth aged between 19 and 29 years residing in the selected coastal communities. Both male and female participants were included to obtain diverse perspectives regarding occupational aspirations, employment choices, traditional occupations, skill-development opportunities, and future livelihood concerns.

3.7 SAMPLING STRATEGY AND SELECTION OF RESPONDENTS

The study employed purposive sampling as the sampling strategy. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are selected based on their relevance to the research objectives and their ability to provide information rich data.

The inclusion criteria consisted of youth aged between 19 and 29 years residing in the selected coastal communities of Thiruvananthapuram district and willing to participate in the study. Participants were selected based on their experiences and knowledge regarding employment, livelihood opportunities, and occupational aspirations.

Initially ten interviews were conducted. However, four interviews were excluded from the final analysis as they did not sufficiently align with the objectives and inclusion criteria of the study. The final sample consisted of six participants.

Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved. After the sixth interview, recurring patterns related to employment experiences, educational aspirations, fishing dependency, occupational risks, skill development awareness, and livelihood challenges repeatedly emerged. Since no substantially new themes were identified data collection was concluded at the point of thematic saturation.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data.

Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview schedule. The interview schedule consisted of open ended questions designed to explore participants employment experiences, occupational aspirations, perceptions towards traditional occupations, awareness of skill-development programmes, and employment-related challenges. The semi-structured nature of the interview schedule provided flexibility to probe responses while ensuring consistency across interviews.

Secondary data were collected from books, peer reviewed journals, government reports policy documents research articles and other relevant sources related to youth employment, occupational aspirations, coastal livelihoods, environmental vulnerability, and skill development.

3.9 PRE-TEST

The interview schedule was pre tested through the pilot study conducted in the Valiyathura coastal area. The pre-test helped assess the clarity, relevance, sequencing, and suitability of the questions. It also enabled the researcher to identify potential difficulties in question wording and participant understanding.

Based on the observations and feedback obtained during the pre-test, minor modifications were made to improve the structure and flow of the interview schedule. This process enhanced the reliability and appropriateness of the research instrument before the commencement of the main study.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical principles were strictly followed throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants. The purpose, objectives, and nature of the study were clearly explained to them, and participation was entirely voluntary.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using case codes instead of personal identifiers. Participants were assured that the information they provided would be used solely for academic purposes. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without facing any negative consequences.

Respect for participants' dignity, privacy, and opinions was maintained throughout the interview process. All collected information was handled responsibly and used only for research purposes.

3.11 ASSUMPTIONS, LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Assumptions

1. Participants provided honest and accurate information regarding their occupational aspirations and employment experiences.
2. The selected participants possessed adequate knowledge and experience relevant to the research topic.
3. The interview schedule was appropriate for exploring occupational aspirations and employment choices among coastal youth.

Limitations

1. The study was limited to six participants from selected coastal communities in Thiruvananthapuram district.

2. The findings cannot be generalized to all coastal youth due to the qualitative nature of the study.
3. Time and resource constraints limited the scope of data collection.
4. The study relied on participants' perceptions and experiences at the time of data collection.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on understanding the occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth in selected coastal regions of Thiruvananthapuram district. It explores employment patterns, factors influencing career aspirations, perceptions towards traditional occupations, awareness of skill-development programmes, and employment-related challenges. The findings provide insights into the changing livelihood preferences and employment experiences of coastal youth within their social, economic, and environmental context.

CHAPTER 4 : CASE DESCRIPTION

4.1 CASE A

Case A is a 29 year old married woman from Anchuthengu who has completed her education up to the SSLC level and is currently a homemaker. As a mother and member of a coastal fishing community, her experiences and perspectives are closely connected to the changing livelihood conditions within the community. She expressed concern regarding the declining reliability of fishing as a source of income and highlighted the uncertainty surrounding the future of fishing-dependent households.

According to her, fishing continues to be the dominant occupation among men in the community and is viewed as a traditional livelihood that has been passed down from one generation to another. However, she observed that the income generated from fishing has decreased considerably over the years, making it difficult for families to depend solely on the sea for their livelihood. While she acknowledged the economic importance of fishing, she also emphasized the dangers associated with the occupation, including accidents and loss of life at sea. These concerns have led many families to rethink the future of younger generations within fishing communities.

When discussing occupational aspirations, she strongly emphasized the importance of education. She believed that education is the most valuable asset parents can provide to their children and viewed it as a pathway to a more secure and stable future. She observed that many young women are increasingly pursuing higher education and vocational courses such as nursing and tailoring. Although fishing remains the primary occupation for many young men, she noted that some youth are seeking employment opportunities outside the community, particularly in Gulf countries. Economic stability and income security were identified as the most important factors influencing occupational decisions.

She also discussed the availability of skill-development opportunities within the community. According to her, both the Panchayat and the Church play a role in providing information about vocational training programmes. However, she pointed out that accessibility remains a challenge, especially for women who find it difficult to travel to neighbouring areas to attend training programmes. She therefore emphasized the need for more locally accessible and youth-oriented skill-development initiatives.

Overall Case A represents the perspective of a coastal mother who respects the traditional significance of fishing but places greater hope in education and skill development as pathways towards improved livelihood security and future opportunities for the younger generation.

4.2 CASE B

Case B is a 28 year-old married man from Anchuthengu who has completed his education up to the SSLC level. He is engaged in both fishing and driving, reflecting the dual-livelihood pattern

that is increasingly common among coastal youth. His experiences illustrate the complex relationship between traditional occupations, economic necessity, and the desire for alternative employment opportunities.

According to him, fishing continues to be the primary occupation for most young men in the coastal community. He explained that many youth enter fishing after completing their basic education because it remains the most accessible livelihood option available to them. However, he described fishing as an uncertain and seasonal occupation where income and employment opportunities depend heavily on weather conditions and the availability of fish. He noted that there are periods when fishermen are unable to go to sea, forcing them to remain without work for several days. Although he is also employed as a driver, he observed that even driving does not always provide stable employment or income.

When discussing occupational aspirations and employment choices, he identified safety and economic security as major concerns influencing the decisions of young people. He explained that many youth obtain driving licences immediately after reaching adulthood because they believe it increases their employment opportunities. However, he also acknowledged that road accidents and occupational risks are concerns associated with driving. For him, employment decisions are largely shaped by family circumstances, financial responsibilities, and the need to secure a stable income. He emphasized that fishing continues to support the livelihood of many families despite its uncertainties.

A significant aspect of his experience relates to migration and financial vulnerability. He explained that some coastal youth aspire to work abroad in search of better income opportunities. However, he pointed out that many families invest large amounts of money through recruitment agents who promise overseas employment. According to him, cases of fraud and exploitation are common, with some agents disappearing after receiving payment. As a result, families are often left with heavy debts and are forced to return to fishing as the only available means of repaying those debts. This situation reinforces dependence on traditional occupations even among those who wish to pursue alternative livelihood opportunities.

Regarding skill-development opportunities, he reported limited awareness of programmes organized through local government institutions. While he had heard about certain training opportunities facilitated through Church-related organizations, he felt that the availability and reach of such programmes remain insufficient. He also expressed concern that some young people participate in training programmes without clear career goals and emphasized the importance of making informed and realistic employment decisions.

Overall, Case B reflects the experiences of a coastal youth who has attempted to diversify his livelihood through driving while remaining connected to fishing due to economic realities, family

responsibilities, and limited employment alternatives. His narrative highlights the challenges of occupational transition, the risks associated with migration, and the continuing dependence of coastal households on traditional livelihoods.

4.3 CASE C

Case C is a 23 year-old unmarried man from Anchuthengu who has completed his education up to the Plus Two level. He is engaged in both fishing and auto driving, representing a younger generation of coastal youth who combine traditional occupations with alternative sources of income. His experiences reflect the realities of livelihood uncertainty, occupational risks, and the challenges faced by coastal communities in adapting to changing socio-economic conditions.

According to him, fishing continues to be an important source of livelihood for many families in the community. Despite the uncertainties associated with the occupation, he expressed a strong emotional attachment to fishing and described it as a livelihood that has sustained coastal families for generations. At the same time, he acknowledged that fishing involves considerable risks and uncertainty. He explained that those who go to sea are never fully certain about their safety, and many families continue to live with concerns regarding accidents and unpredictable sea conditions. Nevertheless, he believed that fishing provides a sense of security because it ensures at least a basic means of survival for many households.

When discussing occupational aspirations and employment choices, he observed that there has been a gradual shift among young people towards alternative occupations such as auto driving and migration-based employment. He noted that some youth seek opportunities outside the community, particularly in Gulf countries, while others engage in driving-related work. According to him, employment decisions are largely influenced by personal interests rather than direct family pressure. He emphasized that many young people prefer occupations that offer greater safety and stability compared to fishing.

A major concern highlighted by Case C was the issue of harbour safety, particularly the challenges associated with the Muthalapozhi harbour. He described the harbour as a serious concern for the coastal community and stated that several young people had lost their lives due to accidents in the area. In his view, resolving the problems associated with the harbour would significantly improve the lives of coastal youth and reduce many of the challenges faced by fishing communities. He also referred to the impacts of the Vizhinjam harbour project, noting that it had generated both opportunities and conflicts within coastal regions. While certain employment opportunities and

training programmes emerged following the project, community concerns regarding livelihood and environmental impacts continued to persist.

With regard to skill development and institutional support, he reported limited awareness of programmes specifically designed for coastal youth. He stated that he had not received information about programmes such as computer training or spoken English courses and felt that many government initiatives fail to effectively reach the intended beneficiaries. According to him, the benefits of development programmes often depend on the efficiency and commitment of implementing authorities. He expressed dissatisfaction with the limited engagement of elected representatives and emphasized the need for more practical and accessible programmes that address the actual needs of coastal youth.

Overall, Case C represents the perspective of a young coastal man who continues to value fishing as an important livelihood while simultaneously recognizing the need for alternative opportunities. His narrative highlights concerns regarding occupational safety, infrastructural challenges, institutional shortcomings, and the growing desire among youth for more secure and diversified livelihood options.

4.4 CASE D

Case D is a 29 year old married man from Pozhiyoor who has completed his education up to the primary level and is engaged in fishing as his primary occupation. Having grown up in a fishing community, his life and livelihood are closely connected to the sea. His experiences reflect the realities of traditional fishing households where occupational choices are strongly influenced by family history, limited educational opportunities, and dependence on marine resources for survival. According to him, fishing remains the dominant source of livelihood for most men in the community. He explained that many young people continue in fishing because it offers relatively better income compared to other forms of daily wage labour, particularly when sea conditions are favourable. He noted that the immediate earning potential of fishing often encourages young men to remain in the occupation despite its uncertainties. At the same time, he observed that some younger individuals are increasingly pursuing education and exploring alternative employment opportunities, although limited local job options often lead them back to fishing.

When discussing occupational aspirations and employment choices, he highlighted the significant influence of family occupational background. Fishing has been the traditional occupation of his family for generations, with both his father and grandfather working as fishermen. As a result, entering the fishing profession was viewed as a natural continuation of family tradition. He also

pointed out that many fishermen experience hesitation when considering alternative occupations because they are familiar with fishing and possess the skills required for it. Starting a completely new occupation is often perceived as difficult and uncertain.

Environmental challenges emerged as one of the major concerns in his narrative. He expressed worry about the increasing unpredictability of the sea and the growing impact of coastal erosion on fishing communities. According to him, seawater intrusion and coastal degradation have become common problems affecting both livelihoods and living conditions. He explained that even when fishing provides good income on certain days, uncertainty about future earnings remains a constant concern. The changing environmental conditions have also increased fear among younger generations regarding the sustainability of fishing as a long-term occupation.

With regard to skill development and institutional support, he reported limited awareness of government-led programmes aimed at coastal youth. He stated that most training opportunities known to him were provided through Church-related organizations rather than government institutions. In his view, many government schemes fail to effectively reach fishing communities, resulting in a gap between policy initiatives and the actual needs of coastal workers. This perceived lack of institutional support contributes to the difficulties experienced by youth seeking alternative livelihood opportunities.

Overall, Case D represents the perspective of a traditional fisherman whose livelihood remains deeply rooted in family history and community culture. While he continues to depend on fishing due to its economic importance, he also recognizes the growing environmental risks, occupational uncertainty, and limited institutional support affecting the future of coastal livelihoods. His experiences illustrate the challenges faced by many coastal youth who remain attached to traditional occupations while confronting increasing pressures for occupational transition and livelihood diversification.

4.5 CASE E

Case E is a 28 year old married woman from Pozhiyoor who has completed her education up to the primary level and is currently a homemaker. Her experiences reflect the realities of many women in coastal communities whose livelihood opportunities are shaped by household responsibilities, limited educational opportunities, and gender-specific social expectations. Despite being primarily engaged in domestic responsibilities, she has participated in tailoring training and possesses experience related to home-based income-generating activities.

According to her, fishing continues to be the primary source of livelihood for most young men in the community. However, she observed positive changes among younger girls, particularly those between the ages of 18 and 19, who are increasingly pursuing higher education and seeking opportunities beyond traditional roles. She explained that after marriage and the assumption of family responsibilities, it becomes difficult for many women to engage in employment outside the home. Consequently, home-based activities such as tailoring are often considered the most practical livelihood option for women in similar circumstances.

When discussing factors influencing occupational aspirations and employment choices, she emphasized the importance of financial stability. According to her, economic security is a major consideration in choosing any occupation. At the same time, she pointed out that women's employment decisions are often influenced by family responsibilities and the need to balance income generation with household duties. In contrast, many young men continue to enter fishing due to financial pressures, family obligations, and limited alternative employment opportunities. Her perception of fishing reflects both appreciation and concern. She described fishing as physically demanding and challenging work that requires considerable effort and endurance. Despite these difficulties, she acknowledged that fishing often provides better income than many other daily wage occupations available in the locality. However, she also expressed concern regarding the increasing risks associated with the occupation. Environmental changes, unpredictable weather conditions, and the dangers faced during the monsoon season have created growing uncertainty for fishing-dependent households. Although these challenges are evident, she explained that fishing remains difficult to abandon because it is deeply rooted in family tradition and community identity.

With regard to skill development and institutional support, she reported limited awareness of vocational training programmes organized by the Panchayat. However, she had personally attended tailoring classes conducted through the Church and considered such programmes beneficial for women seeking income-generating opportunities. She emphasized the need for more accessible and locally available skill-development programmes, particularly for women who face mobility constraints and family responsibilities. In her view, strengthening such initiatives would help improve the economic security and independence of women within coastal communities.

Looking towards the future, she identified environmental hazards, occupational insecurity, and lack of safety as major challenges affecting coastal livelihoods. At the same time, she expressed optimism regarding the younger generation, particularly because more young people are recognizing the value of education and professional employment. She believed that increased educational attainment and access to diversified livelihood opportunities could improve the future prospects of coastal youth and reduce their dependence on uncertain traditional occupations.

Overall, Case E represents the perspective of a coastal woman navigating the intersection of family responsibilities, livelihood needs, and changing social aspirations. Her narrative highlights the growing importance of education, the need for women-oriented skill-development opportunities, and the challenges associated with sustaining livelihoods in an increasingly uncertain coastal environment.

4.6 CASE F

Case F is a 19 year old unmarried woman from Vizhinjam who has completed her Plus Two education and is currently pursuing an aviation course. As the youngest participant in the study, she represents a generation of coastal youth whose aspirations extend beyond traditional occupations and are increasingly shaped by higher education, professional career goals, and changing social expectations. Coming from a fishing family, she possesses a deep understanding of the realities of coastal livelihoods while simultaneously aspiring towards alternative career opportunities.

She explained that her decision to pursue higher education was driven by a desire for a more secure and stable future. Unlike previous generations where early marriage was common among young women, she consciously chose to continue her studies and invest in her professional development. According to her, education plays a crucial role in improving life opportunities and provides a pathway towards occupations that offer greater stability and long-term security. She strongly believes that young people should acquire qualifications and pursue careers that match their educational achievements.

When discussing occupational aspirations, she expressed a clear preference for professional and education-based employment. She viewed qualified occupations as more secure and sustainable compared to dependence on traditional fishing livelihoods. Although she acknowledged the importance of fishing within coastal communities, she believed that education creates opportunities for social mobility and allows young people to explore a wider range of career options. Her aspirations reflect a growing trend among coastal youth, particularly young women, who increasingly view education as a means of improving their future prospects.

Her perception of fishing was characterized by both respect and concern. Coming from a family where her father is a fisherman, she expressed appreciation for the occupation and recognized its significance in supporting coastal households. However, she also highlighted the growing uncertainty associated with fishing due to environmental changes, climate-related risks, and fluctuations in income. According to her, the sea has become increasingly unpredictable, making

fishing a less reliable livelihood option than it was in the past. She therefore viewed fishing as an important occupation that could continue as a supplementary livelihood but not necessarily as the sole source of income for future generations.

With regard to skill development and institutional support, she was aware of certain training programmes offered through private organizations and institutions. She mentioned programmes related to nursing, driving, and other vocational skills but noted that many of these opportunities involve financial costs that can limit participation among economically disadvantaged youth. She emphasized that making such programmes more affordable and accessible would enable a greater number of young people to benefit from them. Although she had not personally participated in these training initiatives, she recognized their potential value in improving employability and expanding career opportunities.

When reflecting on the challenges faced by coastal youth, she identified occupational insecurity and uncertainty regarding the future as major concerns. In her view, many young people worry about the sustainability of fishing and the limited employment opportunities available within coastal communities. She strongly believed that higher education and professional training provide the most effective means of overcoming these challenges. Looking towards the future, she expressed optimism that increasing educational attainment among coastal youth would contribute to improved employment outcomes and greater livelihood security.

Overall, Case F represents the voice of an aspirational and education-oriented coastal youth. Her experiences highlight the growing importance of higher education, professional career aspirations, and livelihood diversification among younger generations. While she continues to respect the cultural and economic significance of fishing, she views education and skill development as essential pathways for achieving long-term security, personal growth, and sustainable employment opportunities.

CHAPTER 5 : THEMATIC ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from coastal youth residing in selected coastal regions of Thiruvananthapuram district. The study aimed to understand the occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth and the various factors influencing their livelihood decisions. Data were collected through in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview schedule and analysed using thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis enabled the identification of recurring patterns, experiences, and perspectives shared by participants regarding employment, occupational aspirations, traditional occupations, skill development opportunities, and employment related challenges. The findings reveal the complex interaction between social, economic, cultural, educational, and environmental factors that influence the occupational decisions of coastal youth. The chapter is organised around five major themes that emerged from the analysis: employment experiences and livelihood patterns, factors shaping occupational aspirations, perceptions towards traditional occupations, awareness and accessibility of skill development programmes, and employment challenges and future livelihood concern

5.2 PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

CASE CODE	AGE	GENDER	FEMALE	OCCUPATIONAL STATUS	MARITAL STATUS
CASE A	29	FEMALE	SSLC	HOMEMAKER	MARRIED
CASE B	28	MALE	SSLC	FISHING & DRIVING	MARRIED
CASE C	23	MALE	PLUS TWO	FISHING & DRIVING	SINGLE
CASE D	29	MALE	PRIMARY	FISHING	MARRIED

CASE E	28	FEMALE	PRIMARY	HOME MAKER	MARRIED
CASE F	19	FEMALE	PLUS TWO	STUDENT	SINGLE

5.3 DATA ANALYSIS

5.3.1 THEME I: EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS AND LIVELIHOOD TRENDS

Employment experiences among coastal youth are closely connected to the livelihood structure of coastal communities. Fishing continues to occupy a central position in everyday life and remains the primary source of income for many households. For several generations, fishing has functioned not only as an economic activity but also as an important part of community identity and family tradition. Consequently, many young people grow up within an environment where fishing is viewed as a natural occupational pathway.

Alongside the continued importance of fishing, noticeable changes are evident in the employment patterns of younger generations. While some youth remain directly engaged in fishing activities, others are increasingly exploring occupations such as driving, tailoring, skilled trades, vocational careers, and migration-based employment. These changing patterns reflect the growing search for occupations that offer greater income security, stability, and long-term prospects. Employment choices are therefore becoming more diverse than in previous generations.

Livelihood diversification is a common feature within coastal households. Fishing often continues as the primary occupation, while additional sources of income are pursued to cope with economic uncertainty. Such arrangements help families manage fluctuations in earnings and reduce dependence on a single livelihood source. In this context, alternative occupations are not necessarily viewed as replacements for fishing but as supplementary means of improving household economic security.

Employment experiences also differ according to gender. Men are generally more involved in fishing and other outdoor income-generating activities, whereas women frequently balance livelihood aspirations with household responsibilities. Educational attainment and vocational training have expanded employment aspirations among women, yet domestic responsibilities continue to influence their participation in paid work. As a result, many women view home-based or skill-oriented occupations as more accessible and practical.

Employment opportunities within coastal communities remain limited outside the fishing sector. The absence of diverse local employment options encourages many young people to seek opportunities elsewhere. Migration, particularly to Gulf countries, is often considered an avenue for improving household income and achieving financial stability. At the same time, migration involves economic risks, uncertainty, and significant financial investment, making it a complex occupational choice for many families.

Environmental conditions form an important part of employment experiences within coastal communities. Changes in weather patterns, sea erosion, declining fish availability, and increasing uncertainty in marine resources influence perceptions regarding livelihood security. These conditions contribute to concerns about the long-term sustainability of fishing and encourage consideration of alternative occupational pathways. Employment experiences among coastal youth are therefore shaped by the interaction of traditional livelihood practices, economic realities, social expectations, and environmental challenges.

5.3.2 SUBTHEMES

5.3.2.(a) Fishing Dependency

CASE B: "For most people my age here, the ocean is our primary livelihood." CASE A: "Most young men here still depend on fishing."

CASE D: "If the sea is good and we go regularly, the income is much better than any other labor work."

Fishing continues to be the dominant source of employment among coastal youth. The occupation remains economically attractive despite environmental risks and occupational uncertainty.

5.3.2(b) Educational Aspirations

CASE A: "Many girls aged 18–19 are now pursuing higher education."

CASE F: "It is better to study and get a qualified job than depend only on fishing."

The data indicate a gradual shift towards higher education, particularly among young women.

Education is increasingly viewed as a pathway to secure and stable employment opportunities.

5.3.2(c) Gendered Employment Pattern

CASE E: "For women in my situation, home-based work like tailoring is the most practical option."

CASE E: "For women in my situation, home-based work like tailoring is the most practical option."

Employment participation differs significantly by gender. Men are primarily engaged in fishing, whereas women often rely on home-based income-generating activities due to domestic responsibilities.

5.3.2(d) Occupational Diversification

CASE C: "Some work as auto drivers."

CASE B: "Some people go outside and even to Gulf countries for fishing-related work."

Although fishing remains central, some youth are exploring alternative occupations such as driving and migration based employment. This reflects attempts to diversify livelihood options.

5.3.2(e) Intergenerational Occupational Continuity

CASE B: "My father and grandfather were fishermen. Naturally, I also continued in it."

Occupational choices are strongly influenced by family tradition. Fishing remains embedded within the cultural and social identity of coastal households.

5.3.3 THEME II: DETERMINANTS OF CAREER ASPIRATIONS

Occupational aspirations among coastal youth are shaped by a combination of personal, familial, social, economic, and environmental influences. The narratives of participants demonstrate that career aspirations are not formed in isolation but emerge through continuous interaction with the realities of everyday life within coastal communities. Educational opportunities, family background, economic security, occupational risks, migration prospects, and changing social values all play an important role in shaping how young people imagine their future occupations. Education emerged as one of the most significant influences on occupational aspirations. Participants frequently associated education with improved employment opportunities, financial stability, and social mobility. Many viewed higher education and professional training as pathways to occupations that offer greater security and status than traditional livelihood options. Educational attainment was often linked to aspirations for government employment, professional careers, and skilled occupations. Among younger participants, education was perceived as an important means of expanding career choices and reducing dependence on uncertain livelihood activities.

Family background also played a significant role in shaping occupational aspirations. In many coastal households, fishing has historically been the primary occupation passed from one generation to another. Growing up within fishing families exposes youth to the skills, values, and experiences associated with traditional livelihoods from an early age. As a result, occupational aspirations are often influenced by family expectations and familiarity with fishing-related activities. At the same time, participants described situations where parents encouraged their

children to pursue education and alternative occupations in the hope of achieving greater economic security and improved living conditions.

Economic considerations strongly influenced aspirations regarding future employment. Financial stability emerged as an important factor when participants discussed preferred occupations. Occupations perceived as providing regular income, job security, and long-term stability were often viewed more favourably than livelihoods characterised by uncertainty and fluctuating earnings. Aspirations towards professional careers, migration, and skilled employment were frequently associated with expectations of improved financial well-being. Economic pressures within households also influenced occupational decisions, particularly among youth who felt responsible for supporting their families.

Occupational safety and security were additional factors shaping career aspirations. Participants expressed concerns regarding the risks associated with traditional occupations, particularly fishing. Unpredictable sea conditions, occupational hazards, accidents, and livelihood insecurity contributed to perceptions of fishing as a challenging occupation. These concerns influenced aspirations towards occupations that were viewed as safer and less physically demanding. Employment opportunities that offered structured working conditions and predictable income were often considered more attractive than occupations involving high levels of uncertainty.

Migration aspirations also emerged as an important aspect of occupational decision-making. Employment opportunities in Gulf countries and urban centres were frequently viewed as avenues for economic advancement. Migration was often associated with higher income, improved living standards, and opportunities unavailable within local communities. However, aspirations for migration were accompanied by awareness of challenges such as financial costs, recruitment-related risks, and uncertainty regarding employment conditions. These considerations influenced how participants evaluated migration as a potential occupational pathway.

Gender influenced occupational aspirations in significant ways. While young men often discussed aspirations related to fishing, driving, migration, and income generation, young women frequently emphasised education, professional employment, and vocational training. Household responsibilities, social expectations, and cultural norms shaped the opportunities available to women and influenced their occupational preferences. Despite these constraints, female participants demonstrated strong aspirations for educational advancement and economic independence, indicating changing perceptions regarding women's roles within coastal communities.

Environmental conditions formed another important influence on occupational aspirations. Participants repeatedly referred to sea erosion, climate-related changes, declining fish availability, and uncertainty within the fishing sector. These experiences contributed to concerns regarding the

long-term sustainability of fishing as a livelihood. Consequently, many youth expressed interest in occupations that were less dependent on environmental conditions and more resilient to economic and ecological uncertainties.

Occupational aspirations among coastal youth therefore reflect an ongoing negotiation between traditional livelihood systems and emerging opportunities. While family traditions and community identity continue to influence aspirations, education, economic security, occupational safety, migration opportunities, and environmental concerns increasingly shape how young people imagine their future employment pathways.

5.3.4 SUBTHEMES

5.3.4(a) Educational Ambition

CASE F: “I always wanted to study and get a professional job.” “I believe every young person should study and get qualified jobs.” “I think education gives more security and stability in life.” Educational attainment emerged as a major influence on career aspirations. Respondents viewed education as a pathway to stable employment, social mobility, and reduced dependence on traditional occupations.

5.3.4(b) Professional Career Aspirations

CASE F: “I prefer jobs based on educational qualifications rather than depending completely on fishing.”

CASE A : “Future generations should study and get good jobs.”

Some respondents expressed aspirations towards professional and education based careers. Such occupations were perceived as more secure, prestigious, and sustainable than traditional fishing livelihoods.

5.3.4 (c) Economic Stability

CASE E: “For everyone, financial stability is the main reason behind choosing a job.”

CASE A: “Income is the main thing.” “Daily family expenses are difficult because fishing income is not enough.”

Economic considerations strongly influence occupational decisions among coastal youth. Stable income and financial security were repeatedly identified as key determinants of career aspirations.

5.3.4 (d) Gender Transformation

CASE F: “I wanted to continue my studies instead of getting married early.”

CASE E : “But now younger girls are thinking differently.” “They want better jobs connected with education.”

The findings indicate changing gender norms within coastal communities. Young women increasingly aspire towards higher education and professional employment rather than following traditional gender expectations.

5.3.4 (e) Family Occupational Background

CASE D: “It is a family occupation.” “My father and grandfather were also fishermen.”
“Naturally, I also continued in it.”

Family occupational history continues to influence career choices. Traditional fishing occupations are often inherited across generations and shape the aspirations of coastal youth.

5.3.5 THEME III: ATTITUDES TOWARDS TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS

Traditional occupations continue to hold an important place within coastal communities, particularly fishing, which has historically served as the primary source of livelihood for generations. The narratives of participants reflect a complex relationship with traditional occupations, characterised by both attachment and uncertainty. Fishing is widely recognised as an occupation deeply connected to family heritage, community identity, and cultural traditions. Many participants described fishing as an integral part of coastal life and acknowledged its contribution to sustaining families and local economies.

Despite this cultural significance, perceptions towards fishing have undergone noticeable changes among younger generations. Fishing is increasingly viewed as an occupation associated with uncertainty, physical hardship, and occupational risk. Concerns regarding unpredictable income, changing weather conditions, declining fish availability, and safety at sea have influenced how young people perceive the occupation. While fishing continues to be respected as an important livelihood, it is no longer universally regarded as the most desirable occupational option for the future.

The occupational risks associated with fishing emerged as a significant concern. Participants frequently referred to accidents at sea, harsh working conditions, and the constant uncertainty faced by fishing households. The sea is often perceived as both a source of livelihood and a source of risk, creating a sense of insecurity regarding long-term occupational sustainability. Such experiences contribute to growing hesitation among some youth about continuing in the occupation despite their strong cultural connections to it.

Environmental changes have further influenced perceptions towards traditional livelihoods. Coastal erosion, unpredictable climatic conditions, and fluctuations in marine resources have affected confidence in fishing as a stable source of income. These environmental challenges are often perceived as factors that reduce the attractiveness of fishing and increase concerns regarding its future viability. Consequently, traditional occupations are increasingly evaluated not only in terms of cultural significance but also in relation to economic security and livelihood sustainability. At the same time, traditional occupations continue to be valued for their accessibility and familiarity. Many coastal youth possess knowledge and skills related to fishing through family and community experiences. For some individuals, fishing remains one of the few readily available livelihood options within the local context. The occupation therefore continues to provide an important economic foundation for many households, particularly where alternative employment opportunities are limited.

Perceptions towards traditional occupations are also influenced by generational differences. Older generations often view fishing as a respected occupation that has sustained communities for decades, whereas younger generations tend to place greater emphasis on education, professional employment, and economic stability. This does not necessarily indicate a rejection of traditional occupations but rather reflects changing aspirations and evolving understandings of livelihood security. Many youth continue to value fishing while simultaneously aspiring towards occupations that offer greater predictability and social mobility.

The coexistence of respect for tradition and aspirations for alternative livelihoods illustrates the changing occupational landscape within coastal communities. Traditional occupations remain important symbols of identity and community belonging, yet they are increasingly assessed against contemporary expectations of stability, safety, and future opportunities. Perceptions towards fishing and other traditional livelihoods therefore reflect broader social, economic, and environmental transformations occurring within coastal regions.

5.3.6 SUBTHEMES

5.3.6 (a)Traditional Occupational Attachment

CASE A: “Fishing is a traditional occupation passed down from generation to generation.”

CASE B: “Even with these fears, it is difficult to leave fishing because it is a traditional occupation passed down through generations.”

CASE F: “Fishing is our traditional occupation and many families survive because of it.”

Fishing is not viewed merely as an occupation but as an inherited livelihood deeply embedded in community identity. The findings indicate a strong emotional and cultural attachment to fishing despite increasing occupational challenges.

5.3.6 (b) Physical Hardship in Fishing

CASE E: “Fishing is very hard physical work.”

CASE A: “Fishing is dangerous. When people go to the sea, they are risking their lives.”

Respondents perceived fishing as a physically demanding and hazardous occupation. The occupation requires considerable physical effort and exposes workers to significant occupational risks.

5.3.6 (c) Better Comparative Income

CASE E: “Compared to other daily wage jobs, the income from fishing is often better.”

CASE D: “If the sea is good and we go regularly, the income is much better than any other labor work.”

Despite its uncertainties, fishing continues to be valued for its comparatively higher earning potential. This economic advantage contributes to the continued dependence on fishing among coastal households.

5.3.6 (d) Climate Uncertainty and Environmental Vulnerability

CASE A: “Now there is no trust in depending on the sea for the future.”

CASE D: “The sea is changing.” “Sea erosion and seawater entering our living areas have become regular problems.”

CASE F: “Climate changes and sea-related risks are increasing.”

Environmental changes have significantly altered perceptions towards fishing. Declining fish availability, sea erosion, and climate-related uncertainties have reduced confidence in fishing as a stable long-term livelihood.

5.3.6 (e) Livelihood Insecurity

CASE A: “Now the income from the sea is reducing badly. Every year it becomes worse.”

CASE D: “There is no stability anymore.”

CASE F: “Depending only on fishing is not safe anymore.”

Respondents expressed growing concern regarding the sustainability of fishing as a livelihood. Income instability and environmental uncertainty have increased feelings of occupational insecurity among coastal youth and families.

5.3.7 Theme IV: SKILL DEVELOPMENT ACCESS AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Skill development programmes are increasingly recognised as important mechanisms for improving employability and expanding livelihood opportunities among youth. Within coastal communities, awareness of such programmes varied considerably, reflecting differences in access to information, institutional outreach, and individual engagement. While some participants were familiar with certain vocational training initiatives, others possessed only limited knowledge regarding the availability of skill development opportunities in their locality.

Information regarding skill development programmes was primarily obtained through local institutions such as churches, community organisations, educational institutions, and informal social networks. In comparison, awareness of government-sponsored programmes appeared relatively limited among several participants. This suggests that the visibility and outreach of many skill development initiatives remain uneven within coastal communities, resulting in varying levels of participation among youth.

Accessibility emerged as an important factor influencing participation in skill development programmes. Geographical distance, transportation difficulties, financial constraints, and family responsibilities often affected the ability of youth to attend training programmes. These challenges were particularly evident among female participants, whose participation was frequently shaped by domestic responsibilities and mobility-related constraints. Consequently, even when training opportunities were available, practical barriers sometimes limited access and participation.

Participants generally viewed vocational training and skill development positively. Such programmes were often associated with improved employment prospects, enhanced competencies, and opportunities for occupational diversification. Training in areas such as tailoring, nursing, driving, computer applications, and other vocational skills was perceived as valuable for securing alternative livelihood opportunities beyond traditional occupations. Skill acquisition was also viewed as an important means of adapting to changing labour market demands and increasing economic independence.

At the same time, concerns were expressed regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of existing programmes. Some participants felt that training opportunities were insufficient in number, limited in scope, or inadequately aligned with local employment needs. Others highlighted the need for programmes that provide not only technical skills but also practical support for job placement and career guidance. The perceived gap between training opportunities and actual employment outcomes influenced attitudes towards the usefulness of certain programmes.

The discussion surrounding skill development also reflected broader aspirations for economic security and social mobility. Many youth viewed vocational training as a pathway towards occupations that offer greater stability and reduced dependence on environmentally vulnerable livelihoods. The growing interest in professional courses, technical education, and specialised

training indicates an increasing recognition of the importance of skills in securing sustainable employment opportunities.

Awareness and accessibility of skill development programmes therefore occupy an important place in the occupational experiences of coastal youth. While such initiatives are generally perceived as beneficial, variations in awareness, accessibility, and programme effectiveness continue to influence participation and outcomes. Strengthening outreach mechanisms, improving accessibility, and aligning training opportunities with local employment realities may enhance the potential of skill development programmes to support the aspirations and livelihood transitions of coastal youth.

5.3.8 SUBTHEMES

5.3.8 (a) Lack of Panchayat Awareness

CASE A: “I am not aware of any special vocational training programmes from the Panchayat.”

CASE C: “I have not seen many programmes for coastal youth.” “I do not know much about computer classes or spoken English programmes.”

Awareness regarding Panchayat-led skill development initiatives was found to be very low among respondents. This suggests weak dissemination of information and limited visibility of government-supported programmes within coastal communities.

5.3.8 (b) Church-Led Skill Development

CASE E: “I attended tailoring classes conducted through the Church.”

CASE D: “I have heard that Church-led TSS programmes provide some training.”

CASE B: “Through church, some young people go for programmes.

Religious institutions emerged as the most visible and trusted providers of skill-development opportunities. The Church plays a significant role in connecting coastal youth and women to vocational training programmes.

5.3.8 (c) Tailoring Classes as a Livelihood Skill

CASE A: “Tailoring classes are conducted through Panchayat.” “Some women go for tailoring classes.”

CASE E: “I attended tailoring classes conducted through the Church.”

Tailoring was identified as the most commonly accessed vocational skill among women. It is viewed as a practical livelihood option that allows women to earn income while fulfilling family responsibilities

5.3.8 (d) Institutional Disconnect

CASE C: “Even if programmes come through Panchayat, only part of it reaches us.” “Many times we do not properly receive the benefits.”

CASE D: “These schemes do not properly reach coastal workers like us.”

Respondents reported a gap between the existence of programmes and their actual accessibility. Many perceived that benefits fail to reach intended beneficiaries, creating mistrust toward institutional support systems.

5.3.8 (e) Women-Oriented Training Needs

CASE E: “There is a real need for more skill-development programmes from the local government side for women like us.”

CASE (A): “Future generations should get more opportunities to study and learn different courses.”

Women highlighted the need for more accessible and localized training opportunities. Existing programmes were perceived as insufficient to address the livelihood and employment needs of coastal women

5.3.8 (d) Vocational Training Accessibility

CASE A: “Some women do not attend because the classes are conducted in another Panchayat area and travelling is difficult.”

CASE F: “Those courses are not completely free and payment is needed.” “More youth can benefit if such programmes become more accessible and affordable.”

Accessibility barriers such as travel difficulties and training costs restrict participation in skill-development programmes. The findings suggest that affordability and local availability are crucial factors influencing programme utilization.

5.3.9 THEMEV: EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES AND FUTURE LIVELIHOOD CONCERNS

Employment experiences within coastal communities are shaped by a range of challenges that influence both present livelihood conditions and future occupational prospects. These challenges extend beyond the availability of employment opportunities and are closely connected to economic uncertainty, environmental vulnerability, occupational risks, and limited access to alternative livelihood options. The interaction of these factors creates a complex environment in which coastal youth make decisions regarding their future careers and employment pathways.

Economic insecurity emerged as a significant concern in relation to employment and livelihood sustainability. Many occupations available within coastal communities are characterised by irregular income patterns and dependence on external conditions. Livelihood activities linked to marine resources often experience fluctuations that affect household income and financial stability. As a result, concerns regarding long-term economic security influence the way young people evaluate occupational opportunities and plan their futures.

Environmental vulnerability forms another important challenge affecting coastal livelihoods. Coastal communities increasingly experience issues such as sea erosion, changing weather patterns, rising climatic uncertainty, and fluctuations in marine resources. These environmental changes have implications not only for traditional occupations but also for the overall economic stability of fishing-dependent households. The uncertainty associated with environmental conditions contributes to growing concerns regarding the sustainability of existing livelihood systems and the future of coastal employment.

Occupational risks associated with traditional livelihoods continue to influence employment experiences. Fishing is often recognised as a physically demanding occupation involving exposure to hazardous working conditions and safety-related concerns. The possibility of accidents, unpredictable sea conditions, and occupational insecurity creates anxiety regarding the long-term viability of fishing as a primary source of livelihood. Such concerns contribute to increasing interest in occupations perceived as safer and more stable.

Limited availability of diverse employment opportunities within coastal regions also presents a significant challenge. Although aspirations for alternative occupations are increasing, access to suitable employment remains constrained in many localities. Opportunities for professional employment, skilled work, and career advancement are often concentrated in urban centres, leading many young people to consider migration or employment outside their communities. This situation highlights the gap between occupational aspirations and the opportunities available within the local context.

Migration is frequently perceived as a strategy for achieving economic advancement and improving livelihood security. However, migration itself involves uncertainties and challenges, including financial costs, adjustment difficulties, and concerns regarding employment conditions. The decision to migrate is therefore often influenced by both aspirations for improved opportunities and awareness of the risks associated with migration processes.

Gender-related challenges also shape employment opportunities and future livelihood planning. Social expectations, household responsibilities, and cultural norms may influence the extent to which young women can participate in employment and skill-development activities. While

educational attainment and career aspirations among women are increasing, structural and social barriers continue to affect access to employment opportunities and occupational mobility.

Concerns regarding the future are closely linked to changing social, economic, and environmental conditions within coastal communities. Young people increasingly seek occupations that provide stability, security, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. Education, vocational training, and skill acquisition are often viewed as important pathways for addressing employment challenges and improving future livelihood prospects. At the same time, strong emotional and cultural connections to traditional occupations continue to influence how youth imagine their future within coastal communities.

Future livelihood concerns therefore reflect a broader process of transition occurring within coastal regions. While traditional occupations remain important sources of identity and livelihood, changing aspirations, environmental pressures, and economic uncertainties are encouraging youth to explore new possibilities. The challenges experienced by coastal youth are not limited to employment alone but are closely connected to questions of livelihood sustainability, social mobility, and long-term community resilience.

5.3.10 SUBTHEMES

5.3.11 (a) Environmental Hazards and Occupational Insecurity

CASE E: “Environmental dangers during the monsoon season and lack of safety are the biggest challenges.”

CASE F: “One of the biggest challenges is the uncertainty connected with fishing.” “The sea is not stable like before.”

Environmental changes and occupational risks emerged as major concerns affecting coastal livelihoods. Respondents perceived fishing as increasingly uncertain due to changing sea conditions and safety challenges.

5.3.11 (b) Monsoon Vulnerability and Safety Concerns

CASE E: “Environmental dangers during the monsoon season and lack of safety are the biggest challenges.”

CASE E: “I have hope in the younger generation because many of them are now giving importance to education.”

Education is increasingly viewed as a pathway to secure employment and social mobility. Respondents expressed optimism that future generations can improve their livelihood prospects through higher education and professional careers.

5.3.12 (c) Livelihood Diversification for Future Security

CASE F: “Fishing can continue as a support or alternative livelihood, but education-based jobs are more secure for the future.”

The findings indicate a growing preference for diversified livelihood options beyond traditional fishing. Respondents emphasized the importance of combining educational advancement with alternative employment opportunities to ensure long-term livelihood security.

5.4 DISCUSSION ON THEORETICAL PREPOSITION

The present study is guided by General Systems Theory proposed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), which views individuals as functioning within a network of interconnected systems. According to the theory, human behaviour and decision-making are influenced by continuous interactions between various systems such as family, community, educational institutions, economic structures, and the broader social environment. The occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth can therefore be understood within the context of these interrelated influences rather than as purely individual decisions.

The analysis indicates that occupational aspirations and employment choices are shaped by multiple social systems operating simultaneously in the lives of coastal youth. Family emerged as an important influence, particularly in communities where fishing has traditionally been passed from one generation to another. Community norms and cultural values also play a significant role in shaping perceptions towards traditional occupations. At the same time, educational institutions contribute to the development of new aspirations by expanding awareness of alternative career opportunities and encouraging occupational mobility.

The study also highlights the influence of economic and environmental systems on employment-related decisions. Economic insecurity, limited local employment opportunities, and concerns regarding livelihood sustainability affect how youth evaluate occupational options. Similarly, environmental challenges such as sea erosion, climate variability, and declining marine resources influence perceptions regarding the future of traditional livelihoods. These factors demonstrate that employment choices are not determined by individual preferences alone but are closely connected to broader structural conditions.

CHAPTER 6 : FINDINGS SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 FINDINGS

6.1.1 Finding 1: Fishing Remains the Default Livelihood for Young Men

Fishing persists as the dominant livelihood for young men in coastal communities, not necessarily as a result of individual occupational preference but due to hereditary occupational continuity, family expectations, and the limited availability of accessible alternative employment opportunities. Growing up in fishing households exposes youth to the occupation from an early age, making it a familiar and readily available livelihood option. Despite concerns regarding income instability, occupational risks, and environmental uncertainties, many young men continue to engage in fishing because of its strong cultural roots and the absence of viable livelihood alternatives within their communities.

6.1.2 Finding 2: Women's Work Remains Informal and Unrecognised

Married women between the ages of 18 and 29 predominantly remain within the household, with their economic contributions often taking place through informal and home-based activities. Tailoring has emerged as a significant source of supplementary income for some women; however, such work remains largely unrecognised and undervalued within the broader employment structure. Women's engagement in income-generating activities is frequently shaped by domestic responsibilities, childcare obligations, and spousal expectations rather than independent occupational choice. As a result, their economic contributions often remain invisible despite their importance in supporting household livelihoods.

6.1.3 Finding 3: Psychological Reluctance as a Barrier to Occupational Transition

Beyond traditional influences and economic considerations, a subtle psychological reluctance appears to hinder occupational transition among young men in coastal communities. Familiarity with fishing and other inherited livelihood practices provides a sense of confidence and security, whereas alternative occupations are often perceived as unfamiliar and uncertain. Limited exposure to diverse career pathways, lack of confidence in acquiring new skills, and fear of failure contribute to hesitation in pursuing alternative employment opportunities. This suggests that occupational

transition is influenced not only by structural constraints but also by psychological factors that shape individuals' willingness to move beyond familiar livelihood practices.

6.1.4 Finding 4: Debt and Exploitation Sustain Dependence on Fishing

Attempts to migrate for employment are often complicated by financial risks and exploitation by fraudulent intermediaries. In several instances, families invest substantial amounts of money in the hope of securing better employment opportunities outside their communities, only to experience financial loss and indebtedness. Such circumstances place significant economic pressure on households and frequently compel individuals to return to fishing as the most accessible means of generating income and repaying debts. In this context, fishing functions not only as a traditional livelihood but also as a financial safety net that supports families during periods of economic distress and uncertainty.

6.1.5 Finding 5: Education as Survival Strategy Not Just Aspiration

Education is increasingly perceived by coastal youth as more than a pathway to academic achievement or career advancement. It functions as a strategic response to the uncertainties associated with traditional livelihoods and emerging employment challenges. In the context of occupational insecurity, environmental vulnerability, and limited livelihood options, education is viewed as a means of securing greater economic stability and expanding future employment opportunities. It serves both as a mechanism for social mobility and as a protective strategy that enables youth to reduce dependence on uncertain occupations and strengthen their livelihood resilience.

6.1.6 Finding 6: Institutional Gaps in Skill Development

Government and Panchayat-led skill development programmes demonstrate limited visibility and reach within coastal communities. Awareness regarding available training opportunities remains relatively low among many coastal youth, restricting participation in programmes designed to enhance employability and livelihood diversification. Barriers such as inadequate dissemination of information, accessibility challenges, and limited community engagement further reduce the effectiveness of these initiatives. This suggests the existence of a gap between institutional efforts and the actual needs, circumstances, and aspirations of coastal youth, thereby limiting the potential impact of skill development interventions.

6.1.7 Finding 7: Church as a Source of Skill Development

The Church plays an important role in supporting skill development and livelihood enhancement among coastal youth. Through the provision of vocational training programmes, career guidance, and community-based initiatives, the Church contributes to the development of skills that can improve employability and expand occupational opportunities. In contexts where awareness of government-sponsored programmes remains limited, Church-led interventions often serve as accessible sources of information, training, and support. This highlights the significant role of faith-based institutions in promoting capacity building and facilitating livelihood diversification within coastal communities.

6.1.8 Finding 8: Fishing Under Increasing Uncertainty

Fishing continues to serve as a primary source of livelihood for many coastal households and remains central to the economic and cultural life of coastal communities. However, the occupation is increasingly characterised by uncertainty due to environmental changes, fluctuating income patterns, and declining marine resources. Challenges such as unpredictable weather conditions, sea erosion, and variations in fish availability have affected the stability and reliability of fishing as a livelihood. These conditions have contributed to growing concerns regarding the long-term sustainability of the occupation and its capacity to provide secure livelihood opportunities for future generations.

6.1.9 Finding 9: Physical Safety Has Become Central to Occupational Decision Making

Physical safety has emerged as a significant factor influencing occupational decision-making among coastal youth. Concerns regarding accidents, drowning, adverse weather conditions, and the inherent risks associated with fishing have increased awareness of occupational safety within coastal communities. Rather than being viewed as a secondary concern, personal safety is increasingly considered alongside economic and livelihood factors when evaluating occupational options. This growing safety consciousness influences the willingness of young people to continue in traditional fishing occupations and contributes to the exploration of alternative livelihood opportunities perceived as safer and more secure.

6.2 DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

The study highlights the complex realities shaping the occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth in Thiruvananthapuram district. Although fishing continues to be the dominant livelihood among young men, engagement in the occupation is often influenced by hereditary occupational continuity, family expectations, and limited access to alternative employment opportunities rather than personal preference. This reflects the continuing influence of traditional livelihood structures within coastal communities. At the same time, women's economic contributions largely remain informal and under-recognised, with home-based activities such as tailoring functioning as important supplementary sources of income while remaining constrained by domestic responsibilities and gendered social expectations.

The analysis further demonstrates that occupational decisions are influenced not only by structural factors but also by psychological considerations. Familiarity with traditional occupations and limited confidence in pursuing unfamiliar career pathways create barriers to occupational transition. Migration is frequently viewed as a means of improving economic conditions; however, experiences of debt, financial exploitation, and fraudulent recruitment practices often reinforce dependence on fishing as a livelihood safety net. These realities indicate that occupational mobility is shaped by a combination of economic, social, and psychological factors.

Education emerged as a significant factor influencing occupational aspirations and future livelihood planning. Rather than being viewed solely as a pathway to academic achievement, education is increasingly perceived as a strategy for achieving economic security, social mobility, and resilience against livelihood uncertainty. Similarly, skill development is regarded as important for enhancing employability and expanding occupational opportunities. However, limited awareness and accessibility of government and Panchayat-led programmes indicate a gap between institutional initiatives and the actual needs of coastal youth. In contrast, Church-based interventions appear to play a more visible role in providing vocational training, career guidance, and livelihood support within coastal communities.

The study also reveals growing concerns regarding the sustainability of traditional livelihoods. Environmental changes, declining marine resources, fluctuating income patterns, and occupational

risks have contributed to increasing uncertainty surrounding the future of fishing. Concerns regarding physical safety, including accidents, drowning, and hazardous sea conditions, have become important considerations in occupational decision-making. Consequently, many youth aspire towards occupations that offer greater stability, security, and long-term sustainability. Overall, the findings suggest that the occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth are shaped by the interaction of family traditions, educational opportunities, institutional support systems, economic realities, and environmental conditions, reflecting a gradual transition in livelihood preferences within coastal communities.

6.3 SUGGESTIONS

1. Strengthen Skill Development and Vocational Training Opportunities

There is a need to expand skill development programmes that are relevant to the changing employment aspirations of coastal youth. Training initiatives should focus on market-oriented skills, technical competencies, entrepreneurship, digital literacy, and emerging employment sectors. Such programmes should be organised within coastal communities to ensure greater accessibility and participation. Special attention should be given to making training opportunities affordable and responsive to local employment needs.

2. Improve Career Guidance and Employment Support Services

Many coastal youth face uncertainty regarding educational pathways, career opportunities, and employment prospects. Career guidance services should be strengthened through schools, colleges, community organisations, and local self-government institutions. Regular career counselling programmes can help young people make informed occupational decisions, identify suitable training opportunities, and develop realistic career plans. Such interventions may also reduce the psychological barriers associated with occupational transition.

3. Promote Livelihood Diversification Among Coastal Youth

The continued dependence on fishing as the primary livelihood exposes coastal households to economic and environmental vulnerabilities. Therefore, efforts should be made to promote diversified livelihood opportunities in sectors such as tourism, aquaculture, fisheries-related enterprises, small-scale businesses, skilled trades, and service-based occupations. Supporting livelihood diversification can reduce dependence on a single occupation and improve household economic security.

4. Enhance Women's Economic Participation and Recognition

The study highlights that women's economic contributions often remain informal and under-recognised despite their importance to household livelihoods. Greater efforts should be made to strengthen women's access to skill development programmes, entrepreneurship opportunities, self-help groups, and income-generating activities. Policies and programmes should recognise women's unpaid and home-based work while creating opportunities for greater economic participation and financial independence.

5. Strengthen Awareness and Accessibility of Government Programmes

Awareness regarding government-sponsored employment and skill development programmes remains limited among many coastal youth. Government agencies, Panchayats, educational institutions, and community organisations should work together to improve information dissemination and outreach. Community-level awareness campaigns, orientation programmes, and youth engagement initiatives can help ensure that available opportunities effectively reach the intended beneficiaries.

6. Develop Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Livelihood Strategies

Environmental challenges such as sea erosion, climate variability, declining fish availability, and livelihood insecurity increasingly affect coastal communities. There is a need for policies and programmes that support climate-resilient livelihood strategies and sustainable coastal development. Strengthening fisheries management, promoting alternative livelihood opportunities, improving coastal protection measures, and supporting community adaptation initiatives can contribute to long-term livelihood sustainability and resilience among coastal youth. The implementation of these suggestions can contribute to creating more inclusive, sustainable, and youth-centred livelihood opportunities within coastal communities. Addressing educational, economic, institutional, gender-related, and environmental challenges in an integrated manner may enhance the occupational prospects and overall well-being of coastal youth in Thiruvananthapuram district.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The present study explored the occupational aspirations and employment choices of coastal youth in selected coastal regions of Thiruvananthapuram district. The study sought to understand the employment experiences of coastal youth, the factors shaping their occupational aspirations, their perceptions towards traditional occupations, their awareness of skill development programmes, and the challenges influencing their future livelihood decisions. Through a qualitative multiple

case study approach, the study provided an in-depth understanding of the changing occupational landscape within coastal communities.

The study demonstrates that fishing continues to remain the dominant livelihood among coastal youth, particularly young men, due to its strong connection with family traditions, community identity, and the limited availability of alternative employment opportunities. However, the occupation is increasingly associated with uncertainty arising from environmental challenges, fluctuating income patterns, and occupational risks. As a result, many youth are gradually exploring alternative livelihood options while maintaining varying degrees of attachment to traditional occupations.

Education emerged as a significant factor influencing occupational aspirations and future planning. Coastal youth increasingly view education as a means of achieving economic security, social mobility, and improved livelihood opportunities. Occupational aspirations are shaped not only by individual interests but also by family expectations, economic conditions, environmental realities, and access to institutional support systems. The study further highlights the importance of skill development in facilitating occupational diversification and enhancing employability. Nevertheless, limited awareness and accessibility of government-sponsored programmes continue to restrict the effective utilisation of such opportunities.

The findings also reveal important gender dimensions in employment experiences and livelihood opportunities. While men remain predominantly engaged in fishing and other income-generating activities, women's economic contributions often remain informal and under-recognised despite their importance to household livelihoods. This highlights the need for greater attention to women's economic participation and access to livelihood opportunities within coastal communities.

Environmental vulnerability emerged as a critical factor influencing both present livelihood conditions and future occupational choices. Concerns regarding sea erosion, climate variability, declining marine resources, and livelihood insecurity have increased uncertainty regarding the long-term sustainability of traditional occupations. Consequently, many coastal youth aspire towards occupations that offer greater stability, safety, and economic security.

Overall the study indicates that coastal youth are navigating a period of transition in which traditional livelihood systems coexist with emerging aspirations for educational advancement, occupational diversification, and economic mobility. Understanding these changing aspirations and employment realities is important for developing policies and interventions that support sustainable livelihoods, youth empowerment, and inclusive coastal development. The study therefore contributes to a deeper understanding of the opportunities, challenges, and aspirations shaping the future of coastal youth in Thiruvananthapuram district.

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ANNEXURE

BASIC INFORMATION

1. Age:
2. Gender:
3. Educational Qualification:
4. Occupational Status
5. Marital status

Employment Patterns and Livelihood Trends

6. What are you currently focusing on the most (employment, education, or other activities)? Could you please explain?
7. What types of occupations are young people of your age commonly engaged in within this community?
8. Have you noticed any changes in the occupations chosen by young people in this community over the past few years? If yes, could you please explain?
9. Have you observed any changes in the types of occupations chosen by young people in this community over the past few years? If yes, could you please explain?
10. How do you perceive the current employment patterns of young people compared to those of the previous generation? Could you please explain?

Determinants of Career Aspirations

11. What factors do you think influence the occupational aspirations of coastal youth? Could you please explain?
12. What occupation do you aspire to pursue in the future? Could you please explain why?
13. What factors do you consider most important when choosing an occupation?
14. In your opinion, how do family background and community influence occupational decisions? Could you please explain?
15. How do the conditions and circumstances of living in a coastal area influence the occupational choices of young people? Could you please explain?

Attitudes Towards Traditional Livelihoods

16. How do you perceive traditional occupations such as fishing in the present context? Could you please explain?
17. In your opinion, what are the advantages and challenges associated with traditional occupations such as fishing?
18. How do young people of your age generally respond to continuing traditional occupations such as fishing? Could you please explain?

Skill Development Access and Institutional Support

19. Are you aware of any skill development or vocational training programmes available for youth in your community? Could you please explain?
20. How do young people in your community generally respond to these skill development or vocational training programmes?
21. To what extent do you think these programmes help improve the employment opportunities of young people? Could you please explain?
22. In your opinion, what changes are needed to make these skill development or vocational training programmes more effective?

Employment Challenges and Future Outlook

23. What are the major challenges that young people generally face while seeking employment? Could you please explain?
24. How do these challenges influence their occupational aspirations and employment choices? Could you please explain?
25. In your opinion, what types of support are needed to improve employment opportunities for coastal youth?
26. What are your expectations regarding the future employment prospects of coastal youth in this district? Could you please explain?