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Downsizing of Social Capital in Traditional Communities: An Inquisitive Approach

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Abstract

The author has begun to focus on various factors that affect aspects of social relationships and elements such as cooperation, trust, engagement, kinship, and leadership—often referred to as social capital. This paper traces the changing trajectory of social capital in traditional Hindu fisherfolk of Bangladesh in particular. A technique of qualitative method, hereby Focus Group Discussion (FGD), with 7 males and 7 females, was adapted as a primary data collection tool. This study revealed that the lives and livelihoods of *Jaladas* (slaves of water) have improved in the realms of awareness, education, health, leadership, bargaining power, and substandard living conditions in one village (North Salimpur Fishing Village) due to donor-led investments. However, the effectiveness of social capital, herein, cooperation, traditional social institutions, ethnic values, observance of religious rituals pattern, kinship, mutual trust, caste identity, and community belongings have downsized in the aforesaid village. People of the other study village are still fostering elements of social capital, especially to be united for protecting their communal and social matters.

Keywords

Social capital; external investments; *Jaladas*; traditions; wellbeing

1. Introduction

'Social capital' is a commonly used term and an old concept. But its principle has been applied differently in changing contexts (Bankston & Zhou, 2002). Institute for Social Capital asserted, in 2005, that Lyda Judson Hanifan (a social reformer) first described the concept of social capital in 1916. It comprised mutual sympathy, fellowship, goodwill, trust, kinship, and social connections within a community. This also essentially refers to positive characteristics of social interaction that might help individuals and society as a whole. Bourdieu (1986) and Putnam (1995) emphasized mutual acquaintance and recognition, norms, trust, networks, coordination and cooperation, and personal and collective benefits in the legacy of social capital. Colclough and Sitaraman (2005) specified that social capital can distinguish among multiple communities in one place by its boundaries, mutual trust, and qualities of social relations.

Biddle (2012) mentioned that indigenous Australians usually reside in private dwellings. Their social capital has a strong association with self-reported happiness and sadness. Still, they have good community ties. Costa et al. (2020) identified that remote traditional fishing communities of Brazil have collective, constructed space and are legitimized within the same occupational group. Mathews (2002) claimed that globalization has not only promoted capital but also many ideas. It injures indigenous culture and threatens their longstanding traditions. Interventions of NGOs are one of the agents for such changes. Jaladas (2012), a Bangladeshi novelist, described the decay of indigenous

organization of low-caste Hindus, including fisherfolk and sweepers, due to the reign of power and capitalist ideology. The main objective of this study is to examine and contextually measure the entrance of diversified investments (financial and non-financial) from the state, donors, NGOs, the private sector, and other sources towards traditional *Jaladas* (slaves of water) communities and their effect on their social capital.

1.1 Hindu Fishing Community

Sen (1985) cited that the Australoid in Bangladesh were only engaged in catching fish, hunting animals, and farming. But they also put the commercial economy on the original footing by building big and small boats of different types for communication between places in the littoral and riverine Bangladesh, and for commerce and trade. The ancient history of the boats of Bangladesh substantiates this. The fishing groups of Bangladesh have been traditionally categorized into different castes and sub-castes of the Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist communities. The census of 1901 found that there were 550,000 fishers in Bengal; of them, over 95% consisted of Hindu fishing castes (Pokrant & Rashid, 1997). Traditional Hindu fishing group and caste in the colonial Bengal were *Kaibartta / Kaivarta, Kewat, Mala / Jhala / Malo / Jhalo, Tiyar / Tiwar (Rajbangshi), Karita, Pod, Das Shikari (Rajbangshi origin), Berua (Namasudra sub-caste), Jiani (Namasudra sub-caste), Bind / Bindu, Bagdi, Nadial, Mali / Bhuimali, Gonrhi / Gunhri / Mallah, Banpar (sub-caste of Gonrhi), Lohait / Lohait-Kuri, Muriari / Mariyari, Mala (possible Kewat connection), Surahiya / Kalwat-Mallah, and Patni* (Gupta, 1908; De, 1910; Pokrant & Rashid, 1997; Dastidar, 2009).

A few significant studies revealed that *Jaladas* (slaves of water) communities have been fishing in the Bay of Bengal for many generations (Associated Services, 1979; BOBP, 1985; Ahmed, 1994; Alam, 1996). In most cases, they live in segregated *para* (kinship) which is located within a community. By and large, the high-caste Hindu and the Muslim aristocrats do not interact socially with them. Moreover, in the general perception of Bangladeshi people, fishing is treated as an occupation with low status.

Traditional Hindu fishing communities of Bangladesh face chronic poverty from generation to generation. Rahman et al. (2002) specified that the fishing village is characterized by a high degree of poverty among the fishermen. It was estimated that about 88% of the households were below the poverty line. Lack of proper input supply to take up fishing as an economically viable occupation, the year round, may be the major reason for the high incidence of poverty among the fisherfolk. Kleih et al. (2003) identified access to fishery resources in the sea and the river as a traditional livelihood asset by households in a coastal fishing community of Bangladesh. This was complemented by gear such as boats and nets. Other assets included land and means of agricultural production, transport, health, education, and financial resources in the form of savings, cash, or credit. NGOs have myriad contributions for awareness building, health, education, vocational and leadership training, skills development, alternative income generation, self-help groups, fish marketing, and social mobility of *Jaladas,* particularly those who live in the coastal belt of Sitakunda sub-district, Chittagong.

The study by Dastidar (2009) examined the development of different capitalists and innovation of technologies in open-water capture fisheries of Bangladesh. It indicated that pre-existing forms of production organization among *Jaladas* had been partially weakened by the arrival of new technologies, while new forms of capital-mediated production had emerged under the control of commercial entrepreneurs. The existing study is comprehensive and innovative in its nature and prosperity of future reference. As for example, Jonayed (2009) cited that education bridges society and development. The rate of literacy is gradually increasing in *Jalada* communities. Here, parents have a fascination in their mind to educate their child and at least send them to school for a few years. More children of *Jalada* families are now receiving formal education than their parents. Development agencies and NGOs have a prime contribution to their higher education. It brings change in the socio-cultural arena of the society, increases job diversity, broadens the horizon for young people, removes social superstitions, and helps to develop competent future leaders. Unfortunately, no study was conducted about the perception and attitude formation of such educated youths (due to donor investment) from *Jaladas* communities on their lives and livelihoods, and responses to ever-changing socio-economic, political, and cultural contexts.

Habib (1992) stated that incoming Muslims who take up fishing as their new profession create serious pressure on the lives and livelihoods of traditional Hindu fishing communities. The newcomers are either self-employed or searching for employment as fishing laborers. The *Jaladas* sincerely believe that it is difficult for them to adjust to other occupations, as they have been involved in fishing for a long time. The majority of them have a socio-psychological barrier to switching occupations. Rashid (2017) mentioned that fishers usually receive loans from moneylenders, like *Aratdar* (wholesaler) / *Paiker* (middleman who gives advance payment, mostly representative of wholesaler)

/ *Dadandar* (advance payment giver), at high interest rates and generally on the condition that the borrower would be obliged to hand over all catches to the moneylenders.

Investment of the private sector in fishing villages has increased. Rashid (2016) also revealed that Production Service Network (PSN), Bangladesh Limited of Sangu Gas Plant constructed a three-storied building at North Salimpur fishing village, Chittagong district in 2011 under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The major objectives were to utilize it as a cyclone shelter, school, and health center. Dish-line connection with television and payment-based internet facilities were ensured in this village. Moreover, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) enhances a bit of concentration for small-scale fisherfolk, such as the issue of identity cards for each fisherman, healthcare facilities (e.g., vaccination for children, childbearing women, and family planning), and safety net support, especially 86 kilograms of rice grains for fishermen during the 65-day fishing ban (Rashid et al., 2023). The existing study will identify investments (e.g., penetration from the state, NGOs, the private sector, and other sources) and their effect on social capital. None of the previous studies addressed it in such a holistic way. Addressing all these issues in an inclusive manner is a new contribution and an area of exploration of the present study. Based on the objective, this study has also planned to examine the influence of multiple investments on traditional social institutions, production organizations, harmonization, leadership, power structure, and voices of such native communities. It will assess whether erosion of sense of belonging to the community has taken shape or whether solidarity among them is being built. From the literature review, the present study assumes that the social capital of *Jaladas* communities is transformed by the entrance and influence of attributing factors (i.e., diversified investments), herein, independent variables. These have crelationships with visible and invisible changes among features of social capital. The conceptual framework is depicted in Figure 1.

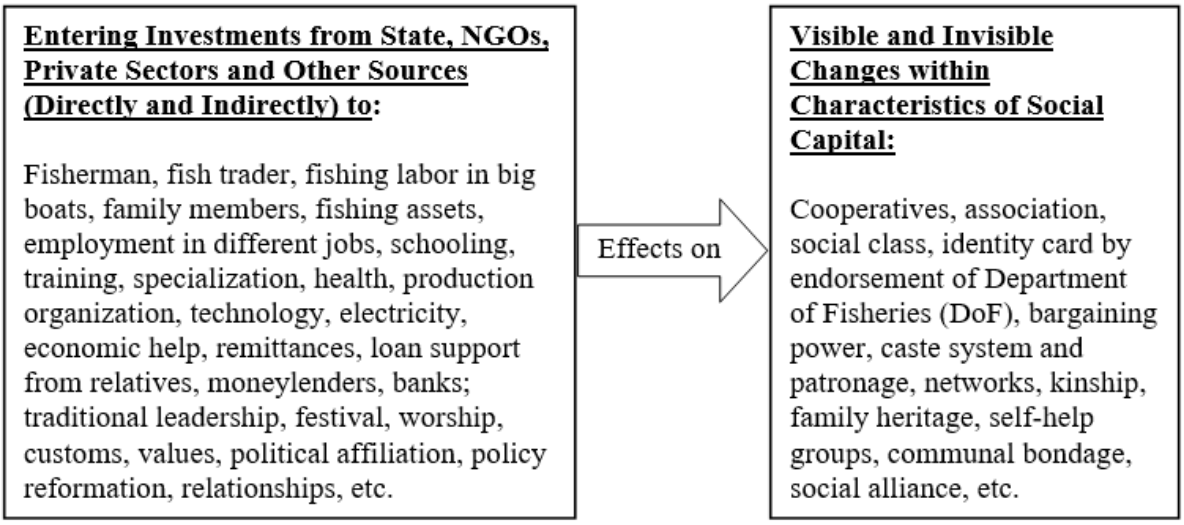

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

2. Methods

Azman et al. (2021) and Rashid et al. (2020) urged considering the purpose of research for selecting a method. Akanda (2023) suggested that qualitative methods are often appropriate when the researcher wants to understand how individuals or communities perceive a particular issue. By aligning with the suggestion of Akanda (2023) and the objectives, this study is phenomenological and exploratory; hence, it mainly applied the qualitative method. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was adopted to conform to the study objectives.

2.1 Study Informants

The author and two social workers (one male and one female) organized two FGDs consisting of 14 participants (7 males and 7 females) (Annex 1). This study was conducted in two fishing villages of Bangladesh. North Salimpur Fishing Village is in 10 No. Salimpur Union Parishad (UP), Sitakunda, Chittagong. On the other hand, South Dhurung Fishing Village is located in 2 No. South Dhurung Union Parishad (UP), Kutubdia, Cox's Bazar. Van and Angehrn

(2017) advised that a small group is more effective and informative. A total of 6 to 12 participants are ideal in one FGD to avoid data burden. A total of 7 participants attended one FGD, which was relatively adequate and manageable for obtaining information.

2.2 Informant Selection Procedure

Cypress (2017) indicated that qualitative research is process-oriented rather than post-evaluation. Inquiry (constructive) during fieldwork is more fruitful than post-verification. A step-by-step procedure was followed by the author. For instance, building relationships with community members, setting criteria for inclusion and exclusion of participants (i.e., minimum 18 years old, Hindu fishing family, mentally sound, living in the same fishing village, voluntary willingness, written consent paper), discussion between cross-persons, and involvement of a knowledgeable person. Maximum variation was ensured to select FGD participants in terms of age, education, marital status, and occupation (i.e., fishers, fishing laborers, homemakers, and representation of different professions by females.

2.3 Data Collection

Fieldwork was conducted from August 2020 to February 2021. Salehin (2020) stated that the skills and experience of the moderator are required for quality findings from one FGD. The moderator initiates the discussion on a specific topic but cannot express any personal judgment. The moderator needs to have capacities for time management, asking, listening, and thinking. Discussion of participants must be balanced and inclusive. On top of that, the author conducted an FGD where participant engagement lasted one hour. *Jaladas* are culturally sensitive. Therefore, the author was very cautious to pick word(s) in alignment with their cultural aspects. Participants were asked broader and then narrowed-down questions to obtain frank and truthful answers. Issues and concerns of investment flows, awareness building, education, health services, caste identity, language & dress-up, religious rituals, power relations, traditional social institutions, social cohesion, collective voice & actions, and link with elements of social capital were consulted. A tape recorder was the main tool for data collection. In addition, one note-taker wrote in detail.

2.4 Data Analysis

Regarding qualitative data analysis, Kerrigan (2014) believed that it is an initiative to interpret data content and text by defining themes and systematic classification. ATLAS.ti (8 Windows Version) software was used for analyzing FGD findings. The coding process was helpful for interpreting different types of text. It also helped to identify themes. Verbatim quotes of FGD participants were aligned with respective codes. Analyzing relevant data generated themes. Ensuring the flexibility and accessibility of data was a key aim of thematic analysis.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were followed at each stage, i.e., from data collection to publication by the author. FGD participants attended voluntarily. The author clearly explained the purpose of this academic publication to the participants and confirmed that they would maintain the privacy of all data and comments. Respondents were assured that nobody could identify who participated. Sensitive and leading questions were avoided during facilitation. Existing studies interpreted fieldwork findings from different perspectives. Therefore, the author agreed to be bias-free during data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Participants were encouraged to speak spontaneously without any shyness or hesitation. The author did not disclose the name of any participant, which may cause possible harm(s) to them. Results and directions of other relevant literature were properly acknowledged in this paper. The author had no personal interest and did not work in the study village.

3. Findings

3.1 Informant Details

A total of 7 males and 7 females were purposively selected as participants in FGDs. Age of majority participants (57.14%) is between 25 and 40 years. Out of 7 female participants, 57.14% are engaged in fish selling, 28.57% are homemakers, and 14.29% are shopkeepers. Among male participants, 85.71% are fishermen, and 14.29% work as fishing laborers on big boats. 64.29% of total participants are illiterate. 21.43% studied in class four and five. The rest (14.28%) are above class five.

3.2 Investment in Two Villages

A summary of different types of investments that have entered straightly in two fishing villages is specified in Table 1.

Table 1. Investments from State, NGOs, Private Sector and Others in Two Fishing Villages

In North Salimpur Fishing Village	In South Dhurung Fishing Village
From State Agencies: 1) Registered identity card for each fisherman 2) Healthcare facilities (e.g., vaccination for children, childbearing women, and family planning) 3) Safety net supports 4) Electricity in fishing village; payment based on uses 5) One-kilometer brick road beside fishing village in 2015 by LGSP-2	**From State Agencies:** 1) Registered identity card for each fisherman 2) *Asrayan* (rehabilitation) project for 30 poor families 3) Installation of six deep tube-well by Union Parishad (UP) 4) Providing ring-slab latrines by Union Parishad (UP) 5) Healthcare facilities (e.g., vaccination for children, and childbearing women) 6) Safety net supports 7) Loans from Government Project
From NGOs: 1) Loan outstanding of ASA as on 31 August 2020: Taka 2,000,000/-. Interest- 24% (declining method) 2) Loan outstanding of BRAC as on 31 August 2020: Taka 250,000/-. Interest- 24% (declining method) 3) Loan outstanding of CODEC as on 31 August 2020: Taka 1,851,433/-. Interest- 24% (declining method) 4) Loan outstanding of SDI as on 31 August 2020: Taka 712,650/-. Interest- 24% (declining method) 5) Loan outstanding of VERC as on 31 August 2020: Taka 1,200,000/-. Interest- 24% (declining method) 6) Facilitation of socio-political empowerment programs by CODEC (awareness building, health & sanitation, education, promoting of life-skills, vocational activities, trainings, human rights-based approach, community-driven advocacy) through financial and technical support of different donor agencies	**From NGOs:** 1) Loan outstanding of BRAC as on 10 September 2020: Taka 350,000/-. Interest- 24% (declining method) 2) Loan outstanding of COAST Trust as on 31 August 2020: Taka 260,000/-. Interest- 24% (declining method) 3) Loan outstanding of Grameen Bank as on 13 September 2020: Taka 339,295/-. Interest- 10% 4) Non-Formal Primary Education for children (i.e., 04 to 06 years) by BRAC 5) Health & Nutrition, support for Income Generating Activities (IGAs) by COAST Trust in 2010; funded by CARE Bangladesh 6) Providing medicines and water purifying machines, de-watering of salt-water, and satellite clinic from own fund of COAST Trust after cyclone Roanu in 2016
In North Salimpur Fishing Village	**In South Dhurung Fishing Village**
From Private Sector: 1) Construction of a three-storied building in 2011 by Sangu Gas Plant under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund 2) Dish-line connection with television; monthly Taka 200/- per connection 3) Internet facilities; payment based on uses	**From Private Sector:** 1) Internet facilities; payment based on uses
From Other Sources: 1) Blanket distribution by A. K. Khan Group of Industries, Chittagong 2) Donation for different worships by local elites	-

Source: Fieldwork, August 2020 to February 2021

3.3 Awareness on Education

Education increases the competencies of human beings to attach meaningfully with paradigms of the world. Interviews were examined to determine how community people benefited from education, their aspirations, and major hindrances to access to quality education. Regarding education, one fisherman of North Salimpur (FGD participant 1) told:

> Our fathers were not aware about education. Surrounded people neglected us due to illiteracy. CODEC (DANIDA-supported Bangladeshi NGO) started work in our village from 1985. Almost, 1,153 children finished education (Pre-primary to Class Five) as on today. This organization provides scholarship, books

and learning materials, co-curriculum activities, and vocational training.

Jaladas are scared because of rude behavior from capital expansionists and are seriously worried about the profession of their future cohorts. One fisherman of North Salimpur (FGD participant 3) dreamed:

> Fishing occupation of *Jaladas* will be, somehow, extinct due to investment of lured businessmen. They are musclemen and never consider our plights. We realize that education will be one of best ways for emancipation of our upcoming generations.

One female of South Dhurung (FGD participant 13) lamentedly described about deprivation from government services due to geographical remoteness, and the involvement of the majority of dropped-out children in hazardous occupations. According to her:

> Children are interested in going to school. School has a cleaner environment, friends, and a playground than home. Limited services from government institutions, economic hardships of family, and unawareness of parents disrupt hopes of children.

In short, it is identified that dropout of children from Primary and High School is alarming in South Dhurung Fishing Village. Malnutrition of children, economic hardship, unawareness of parents, opportunity costs, long-term (nearly nine months of each year for fishing) absenteeism of father from family, and lack of social security are significant reasons for dropout from schools.

3.4 Realization About Health

About donation of private sector under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and health provision, one female of North Salimpur (FGD participant 4) remarked:

> We advocated with the authorities to construct it. It provides health services. Moreover, government-led health workers visit our village monthly. All children are vaccinated. Females are more conscious about family planning. Most girls and females have praiseworthy knowledge about water-borne diseases, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, menstruation management.

Stromme Foundation, Norway, UNESCO, UNICEF, and other donors supported the health and nutrition of people in North Salimpur Fishing Village. In contrast, Upazila Health Complex is eight kilometers away from South Dhurung Fishing Village. Generally, all transport is off after 10:30 P.M. Female-friendly vehicles are not available; and inconvenient for a pregnant female. Insufficient doctors, the nuisance of local brokers and cheated person(s), bribes, and purchasing medicines from private pharmacies create many difficulties for poor people. Three females of a fishing village died because of child delivery-related complications within the last three years. Unfortunately, early marriage, predominantly among girls, is a serious issue. One fisherman of South Dhurung (FGD participant 10) talked about early marriage and the costs of health services. According to him:

> Unawareness among parents and social insecurity are major reasons for the early marriage of adolescent girls. It leads to health risks among girls. Government arranged vaccination for all children at free of cost. Fee of one MBBS doctor is Taka 300/- to 400/-. Poverty is one of major hindering factors for our health services.

3.5 Caste Identity

Jaladas are a lower caste in Hinduism. Existing studies find that old people and young fishermen are proud to identify themselves as *the Jalada* caste. In a few cases, educated youths of North Salimpur Fishing Village hesitate to tell the occupation of their father and grandfather. Formal education uplifts their social status and generates an identity crisis. One fishing laborer of South Dhurung (FGD participant 9) described the fish-loving and ecological knowledge of *Jaladas*, and worship. According to him:

> We are birth-attributed fishers with distinct caste identity. Fishing is not only our livelihood but also our lives. I worship the deity Ganga before going to mid-sea fishing. It increases my psychic and emotional strength during fishing at sea.

In a nutshell, the improvement of formal education in North Salimpur Fishing Village created an identity crisis among some educated youths. People of South Dhurung Fishing Village have a commendable birth-ascribed caste identity. It distinguishes the attributes of social capital.

3.6 Language and Dress-Up

People of the two study villages use the Chittagonian dialect, but the vocal sounds of individuals of South Dhurung Fishing Village are very hard to understand. Educated youths of North Salimpur Fishing Village try to speak a plain dialect during conversations with outsiders/formal discussions. People of both villages have their own special dress, which is not used even by other castes of Hindus. Like, a special garland (i.e., made by dry basil stems) is worn by males and females. One female of North Salimpur (FGD participant 6) commented:

> Youths are modern to choose cloths. Adolescents and youths usually follow Indian Actors/Actresses for haircuts. TV channels, especially Indian ones, movies, and the internet influence their choice of clothes.

In short, South Dhurung Fishing Village has no electricity and television. They are far behind in modern amenities. Behavior and dress of people, especially adolescents & youths, of North Salimpur Fishing Village are quite different because of formal education, extensive mingling with Muslim communities, media, and the internet.

3.7 Religious Rituals

The author finds that dwellers of both study villages have beliefs in the Goddesses. It is a spiritual supremacy; principally, surrender to nature. One fisherman of North Salimpur (FGD participant 3) told:

> We still emphasize more on Monosha Puja (worship) and Ganga Puja. The Goddess Monosha eternally makes her appearance as a poisonous snake. She is a benevolent Goddess for protection from the risk of snakebite. Our livelihood is dependent on water. Thus, Monosha Puja enhances our mental strength; in such a way that 'Ma Monosha (i.e., Mother Monosha)' will keep us safe. Ganga Puja is also closely related to our livelihood.

One female from North Salimpur (FGD participant 6) talked about some aspects of community-based religious rituals. She mentioned:

> We do not observe Durga Puja from 2017 in our village. It is not due to financial insolvency, but due to intra-conflicts and a rivalry attitude. Kirtan and Puthi Pat (script of poetic tales and fairy religious stories of ancient Bengal) were performed in religious rituals. Nowadays, youths prefer the latest Hindi and English songs.

One female from South Dhurung (FGD participant 14) stated that all religious festivals are observed in their village. According to her:

> We arrange all community-level rituals on a small scale due to lack of money. People of our village are financially poor, but heart of ours is big. We observe respective Pujas under the guidance of *Sardars* (traditional leaders), and rituals really create coherence among ourselves.

In summary, people of both study villages have faith in the Goddess. But the emergence of a new economic position among non-fishing groups, rivalry attitude, access to information, and joining different virtual platforms and media outlets have direct and indirect effects to observe religious rituals contrarily in contrast between the two villages.

3.8 Power Relations

Power relations denote the relationship by which a person has socially built power over another. It has a linkage with power structure. One fisherman of North Salimpur (FGD participant 2) acknowledged:

> NGO and community-based organizations developed our leadership capacities. It helps to enhance, to some extent, bargaining power. Moreover, accessibility of our people in political parties, linkage with sub-district and district-level leaders, and formal education assist to develop relationship with the local power structure.

One female from the above fishing village (FGD participant 7) narrated her views differently. According to her:

> We had good bonds among neighbors and strong social ties. We were very united to solve our problems, even for small issues; though the attitude of a few community members gradually turns into individualistic thinking. Some rich people exploit poor fishermen by giving loans at very high interest rates.

People of South Dhurung are underestimated and seriously neglected & tortured by vested Muslims. One fisherman of this village (FGD participant 11) recounted:

> Muslims encroached on our lands. They have chained the freedom of the fishing community and severely interfere in our decision-making and inner matters. International Crimes Tribunal, Bangladesh, executed capital punishment (by hanging) of Abdul Kader Mollah (a convicted criminal of the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971) on 12 December 2013. A few Muslims (extremists and always against, in mind, the independence of Bangladesh) attacked our village and destroyed the temple. Our community became very afraid. Actually, we were socio-politically weak to confront those criminals. We are still scrawny because of our religious minority. Nevertheless, we are helpful to each other.

In brief, the bargaining power of the people of South Dhurung Fishing Village is low. Oppression by some Muslims, religious minority, and extreme poverty are major causes of it. Their psychosocial condition is strained due to these adverse factors. Notably, their social bonding is still strong, though struggling with many odd situations.

3.9 Traditional Social Institutions (Samaj, Sardar, and Salish)

These three Bengali words are recognized as very traditional social institutions in Bangladeshi rural communities. There was one *Samaj* (a samaj is comprised of the members of a patrilineal group who have continuous residence. It is, in a sense of confederation of one or more kin groups whose leadership has been entrusted by common consent to one or more individuals) before 2003 in North Salimpur Fishing Village. The number of *Samaj* is three in 2020. Conventionally, the oldest and capable son of the existing *Sardar* (traditional leader) becomes the new *Sardar* in the *Jaladas* community. One fisherman of North Salimpur (FGD participant 2) raised concern:

> Selection process of new *Sardar* has been changed in last 10 to 12 years. Money, relationship with local political party members & tyrants, and social power influence to select *Sardar*. One influential person formed new *Samaj* in 2018 by consisting 35 households. He breaks our tradition and becomes *Sardar*.

One female of same village (FGD participant 5) seriously blamed the activities of a few *Sardars*. She identified:

> K. R. Ship-Breaking Yard was forcefully constructed in 2010 beside our fishing village. We seriously protested against ship-breaking yard. Regrettably, few *Sardars* of ours were convinced by taking money from proprietor of ship-breaking yard.

By tradition, a *Sardar* was a very powerful person to preside over the *Salish* (an informal court where problems are mitigated). Then, the Union Parishad (UP), the lowest tier of local government in Bangladesh, police station, and court were gradually engaged to solve such problems. Now conflicts are resolved via local touts and at places of political parties.

The roles of traditional social institutions are vibrant in South Dhurung Fishing Village. All *Sardars* are from poor families. They are active in mitigating conflicts among people of *Samaj*, helping in matrimonial discussions, funerals of the dead, arranging religious rituals, internal meetings to save each other from vested Muslims, and providing financial support. One fisherman of this village (FGD participant 11) told:

> We respect each other. We, especially youths, obey all decisions of *Sardars* and their judgements. Basically, we are socio-culturally & politically insecure and vulnerable; that's why we always try to be united. Caste-based unity is our worthy asset, and a strong sense of community ownership.

One female of the aforesaid village (FGD participant 12) described how an incident, i.e., a quarrel and injury that occurred on 25 January 2021, was solved by *Sardars* rather than an external party. She said:

> Unfortunately, our two neighbors were involved in a quarrel, and it ended by little injury. One culprit, a

> Muslim member of the Union Parishad (UP), insisted that both families to go in police station for filing case and demanded a bribe from them. Nobody trusted him. *Sardars* mitigated it and charged an amount of compensation from the perpetrator.

In concise, vibrations of kinship, social alliance, and inherent solidarity have been ruined in North Salimpur Fishing Village. The emergence of personal interest, ill-minded intermediaries to the police station and court, and mistrust of vested traditional leaders are major reasons to be plainly dysfunctional of traditional institutions. On the other hand, these are alive in South Dhurung Fishing Village.

3.10 Collective Voice and Actions

Interviews provide mixed findings about collective voice and actions in North Salimpur Fishing Village. A fisherman (FGD participant 3) reported:

> CODEC provided many trainings like leadership development, management of people's organization, legal awareness, community-driven advocacy, sanitation, disaster management, etc. It helped us work collectively for the development of our village. Now, all families use sanitary latrines. A total of 30 women of our village formed one *samity* (association) in 2016 by giving a subscription of Taka 10/- daily. It is functioning as a self-help group. We advocated for an identity card for each fisherman. On 9 June 2019, we protested (by gathering 3,000 Hindu fishermen) for compensation during a 65-day embargo on fishing. The government accepted our demands. Unfortunately, nowadays, people have become more individualistic rather than focused on the collective welfare of the fishing community.

Traditional *Jaladas* have their own kinship, mutual trust, and social bonds. External donor-supported project few times mismatches its intrinsic characteristics. One fisherman of South Dhurung (FGD participant 8) regrettably explained:

> Government-led 'Empowerment of Coastal Fishing Communities for Livelihood Security (ECFC)' project worked from 2000 to 2005 in our village. Project personnel selected leaders of the Village Development Committee (VDC) wrongly and were involved in financial corruption. It created conflicts among us sometimes.

One female from South Dhurung (FGD participant 13) appreciated the social network and job placement, and voluntary activities of community people, especially youths. She told:

> Social network plays a key role in recruiting community people as fishing labor in big boats and securing jobs, especially for girls and females at garments factories in Chittagong City. They even arrange accommodation in the city for incumbents.

4. Discussion

On the basis of the study objective, findings are critically explained to find out homogeneity and discordance with past studies. Existing studies prove that investment of foreign donors, through NGO, predominantly in education programs (i.e., for adults and children) plays an important role in enhancing awareness and insight among people of North Salimpur Fishing Village. But children of South Dhurung Fishing Village are underprivileged in education. Alam (1996) found some cultural superstitions and social taboos of *Jaladas* in Chittagong, Bangladesh. They commonly believed that if parents arranged the marriage of their daughters before adolescence, then parents would go to heaven after death. This study finds that such superstitions have been removed from North Salimpur Fishing Village because of education, awareness-raising, access to electronic media, life skills, and the positive influence of other factors. Health education, services, and responsiveness are also comparatively better. Children in both study villages are vaccinated through government initiatives, but institutional provisions and death of mother for child delivery related complications are awful in South Dhurung Fishing Village.

Bagnasco (2003) anticipated that interactive social capital might be sluggish in the community due to changes in the real-world economy. Collective actions are event-based and contextual in North Salimpur Fishing Village. Unfortunately, a few vested people were encouraged to build a ship-breaking yard and did not contemplate on interest of their own people. It is too early for this study to conclude about the level of social alliance and collective actions

in the aforementioned village. But it is clearly evident that positive relationships among kinship, communal bonds, fostering of caste, mutual trust, and patronage have diminished. Anticipation of Bagnasco (2003) is tracked for this fishing village. Attributes and fragrance of social capital have decreased. On the other hand, community identity and cohesion are very strong in South Dhurung Fishing Village. People live in clusters with robust ties of integration derived from lower-caste perception and protection from oppression by Muslims. Social network helps for securing jobs of own people in different informal and formal sectors.

Sen (1979) revealed that caste in Hinduism in India outlines what status they will enjoy. Educated youths of North Salimpur treat fishing as a very low-status occupation. They want to do white-color jobs. In some cases, they hesitate and hide the occupation of their father and grandfather during discussions with others. It is their identity crisis. Interestingly, higher-caste Hindus do not like such behavior. In South Dhurung Fishing Village, social belonging, alliance, dignity, identity, and kinship are important. Habib (1992) revealed that family members of *Jaladas* wear *lungi* (like a sarong), *sari*, *dhoti,* and shirt. However, in times of work, they only wear *genzi* and a five-cubit napkin (*gamsa*). In North Salimpur Fishing Village, most of the youth wear jeans, and fishermen wear short pants during fishing due to the availability of garment products at cheap price.

Dwellers of both study villages have full faith in the Goddesses. *Jaladas* observe particular worship related to their livelihood. In the changing pattern of religious ritual observance, people of North Salimpur Fishing Village incline to alienation and gradually bypass roots of origin. They are more accustomed to Hindi and English songs rather than *Kirtan* and *Puthi Pat* in religious ceremonies. In contrast, people of South Dhurung Fishing Village are cordially nursing own culture and keeping their nativity in cultural practices, and do not change their roots. Bertocci (1970) distinguished between extra-village (outside) and intra-village (inside the village) relations. *Samaj* had been viewed as an instance of extra-village relation. The present study finds that this old social institution becomes factually, in many respects, dysfunctional in North Salimpur Fishing Village. A new *Samaj* has been formed because of intra-conflicts, domination of powerful groups, and connectivity with political parties. Findings of existing studies are quite parallel with Jaladas (2012), where the author described about weak of native organizations of low-caste Hindus comprising *Jaladas* and sweepers due to the reign and capitalist thought.

Field findings show that the role of *Sardar* in North Salimpur Fishing Village has sharply decreased. The new economic position of non-fisher groups, their domination of the traditional power structure, keeps poor fishermen in favor by providing loans; strong influence of local political leaders and linkage with political hooligans are major causes to weak and unacceptance their activities. Some community problems are solved by the presence (visible or invisible) of local political leaders. Existing studies confirm that the roles of *Salishkars* (arbiters) have weakened, naturally, due to the weakening of *Samaj* and *Sardar*. Local political parties, Union Parishad (UP), police stations, and court take place more and more for arbitration and legal verdicts. In South Dhurung Fishing Village, the economic condition of the families of *Sardars* is deteriorating day by day. The financial condition of *Sardars* is the same as that of other families in the village. They represent poor fishing families. Their caste-based social harmonization is solid. Deb and Haque (2017) reported that poor *Jaladas* of Cox's Bazar are birth-ascribed fishermen and have good social interconnection. Their urged is parallel with the findings of the present study. This study also finds that the roles of *Salish* and *Salishkars* are more effective and accepted within South Dhurung Fishing Village.

Jentoft et. al. (2011) revealed that poor fishers are defenseless and have no bargaining power. Findings of existing studies assure that the bargaining power of people and fishermen in North Salimpur Fishing Village has moderately increased. Foreign employment, access to education, social mobility, affiliation with a political party, and the growth of relative standards are key contributing factors to enhance bargaining power. Unfortunately, bargaining power and social dignity of fishermen in South Dhurung Fishing Village are limited due to extreme poverty, religious minority status, and oppression by some vested Muslims for a long time. These adverse factors contribute to putting them in a psychosocially weak position. The claims of Jentoft et al. (2011) are the same and also different for the two study villages. Interestingly, the current study finds that people of North Salimpur Fishing Village become united for financial issues, but people of South Dhurung Fishing Village are always united, especially on communal and social issues.

5. Conclusion

The entrance of different investments (e.g., human, financial, physical, technological) by respective actors has negative and positive effects on the social capital of *Jaladas* communities. Negative effects are higher. Donor-driven support significantly improves human development, especially in the areas of education, health and sanitation,

awareness building, leadership development, and self-employment in one study village (i.e., North Salimpur Fishing Village). At the same time, community belonging, harmonization, cultural roots, cooperation, caste identity and the functionality of traditional institutions have decayed because of the formation of new economic and control groups, political affiliation, media, power exercise, individualistic thinking, and the pedagogy of so-called modernization. Indigenous caste-based social capital has been threatened and endangered. In South Dhurung Fishing Village, *Jaladas* are trapped in structural poverty. But they foster and exercise the essentials of social capital for survival and protecting themselves from external difficulties.

Conflict of Interest

The author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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Annex 1. FGD Participants

Respondent	Age	Sex	Education	Occupation	Fishing Village
1	57	Male	Illiterate	Fisherman	North Salimpur
2	57	Male	Class Seven	Fisherman	North Salimpur
3	40	Male	Illiterate	Fisherman	North Salimpur
4	36	Female	Illiterate	Fish selling	North Salimpur
5	32	Female	Class Ten	Shopkeeper	North Salimpur
6	48	Female	Class Five	Fish selling	North Salimpur
7	37	Female	Illiterate	Fish selling	North Salimpur
8	50	Male	Illiterate	Fisherman	South Dhurung
9	56	Male	Illiterate	Fishing labor of big boat	South Dhurung
10	30	Male	Illiterate	Fisherman	South Dhurung
11	51	Male	Class Four	Fisherman	South Dhurung
12	28	Female	Illiterate	Homemaker	South Dhurung
13	38	Female	Illiterate	Fish selling	South Dhurung
14	25	Female	Class Five	Homemaker	South Dhurung