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An Examination of Trust and Power Factors in Sustainable Fishing Supply Chains

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Abstract

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the fisheries sector, with a particular focus on sustainable fisheries supply chains. It examines the influence of bargaining power, institutional power, collective power, and trust on supply chain sustainability. Primary data were collected from 410 supply chain participants, including fishers, agents, and retailers, in Goa, India. The data were gathered through structured questionnaires and analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.

The findings reveal significant relationships among institutional power, trust, and supply chain sustainability, highlighting their strong interdependence. The study also demonstrates that collective power has a significant positive impact on the sustainability of fisheries supply chains. These findings provide valuable insights into the roles of different forms of power and trust in promoting sustainable fisheries supply chains. The results can assist policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders in designing effective governance mechanisms and evidence-based policies to enhance the long-term sustainability and resilience of fisheries supply chains.

Keywords: Marine fisheries; bargaining power; collective power; institutional power; supply chain sustainability; trust.

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1. Introduction

An assessment by the United Nations in 2015 highlighted the tremendous pressure that the marine resources have been facing due to unsustainable practices employed in the fishing sector. This led to a global consensus on the need to adopt sustainable practices in the fisheries industry. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals 2030, adopted by the General Assembly in 2015, gave special attention to these resources by designating a stand-alone goal (SDG 14) to make the oceans sustainable.

"Sylvicultura Oeconomica", a book by Hans Carl von Carlowitz published in 1713, is among the first to document this concept (Heinberg & Lerch, 2010). However, the concept gained immense attention when it was mentioned in the Brundtland Report, published by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 (Mugoni et al., 2024). Sustainability has attracted the

attention of researchers worldwide working in sustainable businesses and economies (Feizi et al., 2026; Omoloso et al., 2024). It has been studied across many fields using various approaches, and the fisheries industry is one such industry with strong relevance (Fernandes & Sukthankar, 2024). In recent years, the sustainable fishing supply and value chains have attracted the attention of many practitioners and researchers (Andreazza et al., 2026; Bouzembrak & Marvin, 2026; Feizi et al., 2026; Mawrides et al., 2025).

Researchers have highlighted the importance of pursuing sustainability in supply chains to make the fisheries sector more resilient (Grafton et al., 2023). The idea is to view the sector holistically rather than narrowly and fragmentarily (Rajeev & Bhandarkar, 2022). This has led to recognition of the role of sustainable supply chains in the broader context; however, there is a dearth of such studies in developing nations like India. Although a large body of research has been published on this topic from a Western perspective, few studies have explored this dimension in the Asian context, creating scope for further investigation. Asia, home to 85% of the world's population, plays a crucial role in advancing sustainability due to its large, rapidly growing economies.

The study examines the impact of power and trust on the sustainability of the fishing supply chain. While previous research has identified these two factors as major influences within the fishing industry, there is a notable lack of studies examining their causal relationship with sustainability in fishery supply chains. Our study addresses this gap.

2. Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Theoretical Framework

- **Supply Chain Sustainability (SCS)**

The importance of sustainability indicators differs across different stakeholder groups (Aguado et al., 2016; Tsironi, 2023). Several researchers have used theories such as resource dependency theory (Rivera-Valle & Silva, 2024), social exchange theory (Lauer, 2008), and transaction cost theory (Kuperan et al., 2008; Mustapha et al., 2022) to analyse the sustainability of fishing supply chains across different dimensions. At the same time, several authors have proposed various frameworks for defining sustainability (Evans et al., 2017; Heinberg, 2010; Sharma & Jaiswal, 2018; Vittersø et al., 2019). One of the most widely accepted frameworks is the triple bottom line approach (Liu et al., 2020). The present study draws on resource dependency theory (Abidin et al., 2023; Cho et al., 2019; Hillman & Dalziel, 2003), social exchange theory (Ahmad et al., 2023), and the triple bottom line approach (Gimenez et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2020). The study uses resource dependency theory and social exchange theory to hypothesise about power and trust relationships in the fishing supply chains. In contrast, the triple bottom line approach has been adopted to assess the sustainability of these supply chains.

- **Trust among Fishing Supply Chain Players (T)**

The impact of T on interpersonal relationships has been well examined in management research. T is a multifaceted construct and has been defined in multiple ways. According to Moorman et al. (1992), T is “the willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence”. T is also defined as the willingness of members in a buyer—supplier relationship to comply with the requirements and behaviours of others (Korsgaard et al., 2015). T is sometimes also defined as one’s willingness to take risks (Mayer et al., 1995). Long-term business relationships can be based on T and informal

transactions (Nguyen & Abwao, 2023). Embedded T could imply confidence and a positive attitude towards another in the supply chain relationship (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). Hence, it is important to explore the influence of T on behavioural dynamics in supply chains. T has served as the basis for several research studies across various domains, including supply chain management. Fischer (2013) found that T in food supply chains can be positively influenced by effective communication and positive experiences from past collaborations. Similarly, Gajdić et al. (2023) highlighted that T positively affects the effectiveness of agri-food supply chains. However, very few studies, such as Kushardanto et al. (2022), Rojas et al. (2021) and Yulinda et al. (2021), have explored T dynamics in fisheries and fishing supply chains.

- **Power in Fishing Supply Chains**

Power is the ability to get another person or entity to do something they would otherwise not do. This definition was further revised by Thomas Wartenberg, who stated that social agent A has power over social agent B if and only if A can strategically constrain B's action environment (Wartenberg & Thomas E, 1990). Several authors have emphasised that the concept of power, when adopted as an analytical tool, enables the exploration of interdependencies within networks such as supply chains (Essabbar et al., 2020; Kähkönen & Virolainen, 2011). Power is an important factor in the vertical relationships among supply chain players. Researchers in various fields have studied various forms of power over the years, such as coercive power (Yeung et al., 2009), non-coercive power (Ke & Wei, 2008), economic power, political power (Lindenmayer, 2017), bargaining power (Deep et al., 2022), among others. This study explores three key forms of power that may have a considerable influence fishing supply chains: institutional power, bargaining power, and collective power.

- **Institutional Power (IP)**

Powerful institutions, such as governing authorities and associations, are often criticised for mismanaging fisheries resources (Prodhan et al., 2023). Fisheries, a sector that is highly dependent on resources commonly owned by the public, places the onus for managing these resources primarily on institutional bodies that can influence supply chain operations through the policies and plans they draft (Rivera-Valle & Silva, 2024). As such, assessing whether their power leads to the sustainable use of fishery resources is essential.

- **Bargaining Power (BP)**

In the supply chain literature, bargaining refers to a situation in which a firm has strong power to exploit to maximise its gains at the expense of its weaker partners. BP can influence how supply chain participants benefit from markets (Dwyer & Walker, 1981). Those with limited power may have less ability to help. For instance, women may experience less BP than men in negotiations, contributing to gender inequalities (Rojas et al., 2021). In fishing supply chains, several authors have found that suppliers tend to have lower BP than buyers, thereby undermining SCS.

- **Collective Power (CP)**

Power is a multifaceted construct with both positive and negative implications. One specific dimension of this concept is CP, which can be understood from two perspectives. CP refers to the influence a group can exert over the operations and activities within a particular industry, potentially overshadowing individual capabilities. The duality of its impact can be seen in various contexts, such as empowering marginalised individuals and those with limited influence, as well as

manifesting in trade unions and professional associations. This study adopts the definition of CP articulated by Prodhan et al. (2023), emphasising its negative aspects.

2.2. Hypotheses Development

- **Relationship between Power and Trust in Fishing Supply Chains**

Power and trust, a subject of interest across several academic domains in the social sciences, are crucial for the efficient performance of supply chains and the relationships within them (Ke & Wei, 2008). Several studies have examined the interlinkages between these two aspects to identify the policy implications of such factors (Möllering, 2019). Some studies have shown that people with greater power tend to have less trust, suggesting that these two dimensions are not always directly proportional and can move in opposite directions (Möllering, 2019; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Schilke et al., 2015). Most existing literature focuses on power and trust in contexts like conflict or satisfaction, often overlooking their relationship in supply chains. Some researchers argue that power undermines cooperation and view it as the opposite of trust (Belaya et al., 2008). In comparison, some argue that power and trust are inherently contradictory in their relationship (Schilke et al., 2015). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H_1: *IP has a significant positive impact on T in fishing supply chains.*

H_2: *BP has a significant positive impact on T in fishing supply chains.*

H_3: *CP has a significant negative impact on T in fishing supply chains.*

- **Relationship between Power and Sustainability in Fishing Supply Chains**

Researchers have previously explored the impact of power on sustainability in fisheries and related industries. Power imbalances can hinder the adoption of sustainable practices, as shown by Autry & Golicic (2010) and Rivera-Valle & Silva (2024). Several authors have examined these power asymmetries (Gruchmann, 2022; Marques et al., 2022; Pomeroy et al., 2015). Therefore, power plays a complex role in shaping sustainable supply chain relationships (Cox, 1999; Gelderman & Van Weele, 2004). Very few studies have examined how institutional, collective, and BP contribute to sustainable growth in fishing supply chains. Therefore, we hypothesise as follows:

H_4: *IP has a significant positive impact on SCS.*

H_5: *BP has a significant positive impact on SCS.*

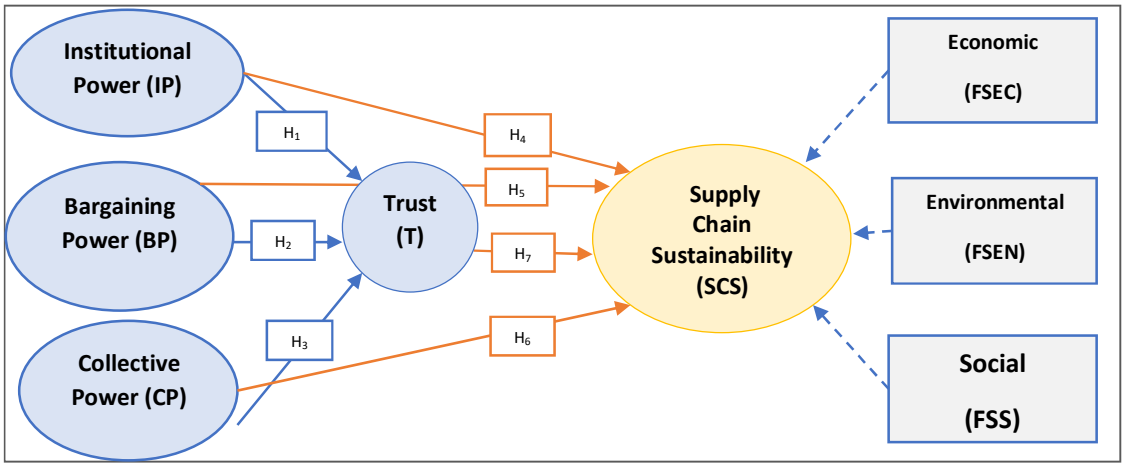
H_6: *CP has a significant negative impact on SCS.*

- **Relationship between Trust and Sustainability in Fishing Supply Chains**

Trust has been found to influence the performance of the fishing industry supply chain positively (Yulinda et al., 2021) and is a crucial factor affecting cooperation in fisheries supply chains (Hoa et al., 2021). Stakeholder trust is vital for holistic fishery sustainability assessments, and transparency and broader sustainability reporting can help build public trust in fishery management (Haas et al., 2020). Hence, 'Trust' is a variable identified by several researchers as a strong predictor of sustainability adoptions (Mora-Monge et al., 2019). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis.

H_7: *T has a significant positive impact on the SCS.*

Figure 1: Showing the Proposed Model for the study



Source: Authors' work

Based on the studies reviewed, IP, BP, CP, and T are considered reflective constructs, and SCS is a formative construct in the model.

3. Research Methodology

The study primarily focuses on the fisheries supply chain in Goa. Goa, although the smallest state, has a strategically eminent geographical location that supports fisheries activities within the state (Faria, 2019). The state's economy has been heavily dependent on the fishing industry for decades, providing livelihoods through direct and indirect employment to a considerable proportion of its population. This study has adopted a quantitative methodology based on data collected from 410 respondents (170 fishers, 70 agents and 170 fish retailers) using structured questionnaires (Nguyen & Abwao, 2023). The respondents were chosen using proportionally stratified random sampling. The data collected through the questionnaires were analysed using SmartPLS 4. Data analysis techniques such as Descriptive Statistics and Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) were utilised. PLS-SEM is a widely used approach for estimating complex statistical models without requiring distributional assumptions. Notably, it is a causal-predictive SEM method that focuses on prediction while estimating statistical models structured to provide causal insights (Hair & Sarstedt, 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2017).

4. Analysis and Discussions

4.1. Demographic Profiling

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Demographic Profile

Age (in years)	No.	%	Fishery experience (in years)	No.	%
18-40	16	3.9	Less than 15	151	36.8
41- 60	294	71.7	15-30	118	28.8
Above 60	100	24.4	More than 30	141	34.4

Source: Author's work

Table 1 shows that 71.7% of respondents are aged 41 to 60, 24.4% are aged 60 or older, and 3.9% are aged 18 to 40. In terms of experience in the fishing industry, 36.8%

have less than 15 years, 28.8% have 15-30 years, and 34.4% have over 30 years' experience. A notable aspect is that many respondents in Goa started participating in fishing-related work at a young age, demonstrating their long-term commitment and dedication to the industry. This has led some in the second age group to have 30 or more years of experience.

4.2. Relationship between Power, Trust and Fishing Supply Chain Sustainability

4.2.1. Measurement Model

Next, we examine the relationships among power, trust, and sustainability in the context of fishing supply chains using PLS-SEM. The results are presented in the following section. PLS-SEM helps examine complex relationships and allows testing of hypotheses using more robust and accurate methods. The first stage in PLS-SEM assessment involves testing the measurement model by assessing the reliability and validity of the constructs and variables used in the model. For this, we use indicators such as Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and outer loadings. Cronbach's alpha composite reliability needs to have a value of 0.7 or more, and the AVE should be at least 0.5 in order to establish the reliability of the constructs. The outer loadings of all variables used to measure each construct must be at least 0.7, as per Hair et al. (2019). The results of reliability testing are shown in Table 2 and discussed below.

Table 2: Constructs Reliability

Construct and Statements	SL	VIF	CA	CR	AVE
Bargaining Power					
BP1<- Buyers have more power to control the cost than the seller.	0.872	1.682	0.746	0.851	0.656
BP2<- Buyers are price sensitive.	0.762	1.659			
BP3<- My bargaining power is limited because of the intense competition and rivalry.	0.790	1.322			
Collective Power					
CP1<- Syndicate members exercise power during the transaction.	0.720	1.308	0.722	0.842	0.642
CP2<-Syndicate members forced to sell fish at a lower price.	0.806	1.484			
CP3<-Due to the dominance of the local leader, I did not get the expected profit.	0.870	1.572			
Institutional Power					
IP1<- The local administration (government personnel body) monitors the market.	0.932	3.524	0.877	0.924	0.802
IP2<- The local administration gives warnings whenever necessary.	0.815	1.808			
IP3 <- The local administration fines those who adopt malpractices.	0.936	3.406			
Trust					
T2<- I have confidence that the supply chain players with whom I share information will help me in the future if the need arises.	0.912	2.194	0.849	0.929	0.867
T3<- I trust the policies formulated by the authorities.	0.950	2.194			

Source: Author's Work

Note: *SL: Standardised Loadings; VIF: Variance Inflation Factor; CA: Cronbach's Alpha; CR: Composite Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Extracted*

First, we assessed the outer loadings of all items of the reflective constructs. Items with low outer loadings and negligible weights were eliminated, resulting in the removal of T1 and CP4. The retained items' outer loadings ranged from 0.720 to 0.950, indicating their strong contributions to the constructs. Next, we assessed the Composite reliability and found values ranging from 0.842 to 0.929, indicating high reliability. Next, Cronbach's alphas were assessed and found to be above the minimum required level of 0.70, ranging from 0.722 to 0.877. Next, we assessed convergent validity using AVEs, which ranged from 0.642 to 0.867 and exceeded the 0.50 threshold. Finally, we examined the variance inflation factor (VIF) values to detect multicollinearity. We found that the values were all below the threshold of 5, ranging from 1.308 to 3.524, indicating no multicollinearity issues. Accordingly, for the higher-order formative-formative construct, VIF values and outer weights for the indicators were assessed, in addition to convergent validity.

Table 3 shows the results of Fornell Larcker Criterion (FLC), which indicates that the FLC values meet the criteria as stated by Fornell & Larcker (1981). Thus, the measurement model's reliability and validity are confirmed.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity-FLC

	BP	CP	IP	T
BP	**0.810**			
CP	-0.483	**0.801**		
IP	0.146	-0.042	**0.896**	
T	0.169	-0.114	0.739	**0.931**

Source: Author's work

Note: *BP: Bargaining Power; CP: Collective Power; IP: Institutional Power; T: Trust*

4.2.2. Structural Model

This section explains the structural model's results using path coefficients, which enable testing the hypotheses.

Table 4: Path Coefficients of the direct relationships tested in the model

H	Relationships	Beta	SD	p values	Inference
H_1	IP → T	0.732	0.021	0.000	Supported
H_2	BP → T	0.028	0.041	0.489	Unsupported
H_3	CP → T	-0.070	0.050	0.163	Unsupported
H_4	IP → SCS	0.334	0.113	0.003	Supported
H_5	BP → SCS	-0.022	0.117	0.848	Unsupported
H_6	CP → SCS	0.319	0.086	0.000	Supported
H_7	T → SCS	-0.107	0.090	0.234	Unsupported

Source: Author's work

Note: *H: Hypothesis; SD: Standard Deviation; IP: Institutional Power; BP: Bargaining Power; CP: Collective Power; T: Trust; SCS: Supply Chain Sustainability*

Table 4 presents the key findings of this research. Firstly, the results indicate a positive, significant relationship between IP and T, supporting H_1. This implies that IP strongly predicts T in fishing supply chains. In contrast, BP and CP are found to be not related to T, leading to the rejection of H_2 and H_3. This implies that Bargaining and CP within fishing supply chains do not affect the T between the players in these chains. In addition, H_4 is supported with a strong link between IP and SCS. This implies that the institutional authorities can

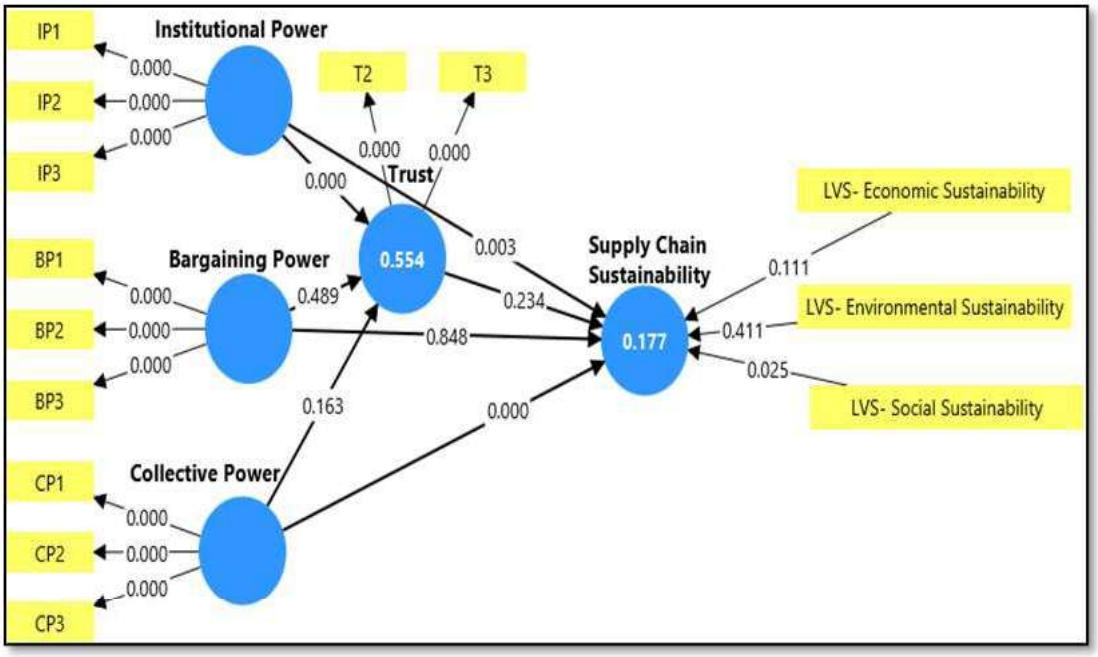
play a crucial role in implementing sustainability in fishing supply chains.

On the contrary, the results show a statistically insignificant impact of BP on SCS, leading to rejection of H_5. This can be attributed to the nature of the product being traded in the fishing sector. Due to the highly perishable nature of the product, sellers in the fishing industry often have less BP than buyers. Whereas CP and SCS show a positive and significant link, supporting H_6. While CP typically reflects negative aspects, such as syndicate dominance in the fishing industry that may exploit weaker participants, this research highlights its potential positive implications for sustainability.

Lastly, T has demonstrated an insignificant effect on SCS, leading to the rejection of H_7. While previous research emphasises the importance of T in supply chain relationships, this study suggests otherwise. Further research is needed to explore the factors influencing these dynamics. The highest standard deviation is observed in the relationship between BP and SCS (σ = 0.117), while the lowest is found between IP and T (σ = 0.021).

Assessing the structural model also involves examining the R^2 value of the endogenous construct. In this study, T, the first endogenous construct, has an R^2 value of 0.554, and SCS, the second endogenous construct, has an R^2 value of 0.117, as shown in Figure 2. R^2 indicates the variance explained by the exogenous constructs in the endogenous constructs of the model.

Figure 2: Graphical output of PLS SEM Model



Source: Author's work

5. Conclusions, Implications, Limitations and Future Scope

This study focused on revealing the key relationships between power, trust and sustainability within fishing supply chains. The study considered three major forms of power that have seldom been part of research. These included IP, BP and CP.

The findings have crucial implications for policymakers and stakeholders in the fishing industry and provide a roadmap for future policy formulation.

This study highlights the crucial role IP can play in ensuring sustainability in fishing supply chains. As such, policymakers can divert resources to strengthen IP's enforcement authority to lead Goa's fishing supply chains towards sustainability. We propose looking at the fishing industry from a broader perspective rather than solely focusing on the first level of the chain, comprising the fishers. Our study indicates that a supply chain-based ideation of the action plan to implement sustainable fisheries goals can provide a better roadmap for making the fishing industry highly sustainable. Implementation of sustainable practices in the fisheries sector is the need of the hour (Albasri & Sammut, 2022), and the recognition and due consideration of the role supply chain players play in this regard cannot be taken for granted.

This study has certain limitations. Firstly, the study's results are largely based on primary data collected from respondents; as such, there is a possibility of respondent bias. Moreover, the study focuses on the three elements of the fishing supply chain: fishers, agents and retailers. Future research could include other supply chain stakeholders to provide a broader perspective. Since this research is based on a sample drawn from the state of Goa, India, the findings have limited generalisability. Based on our findings, we suggest that the authorities encourage participation by fisheries supply chain stakeholders in organisations grounded in collective principles. This will ensure greater cooperation and reduce resistance in the supply chains, resulting in sustained growth of the fishing industry.

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The Role of the Blue Economy in Shaping India's Economic Landscape

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Abstract

The blue economy has emerged as an important concept in India, a country with a coastline of over 7,500 kilometers and rich marine biodiversity. India's marine resources are playing a vital role in the country's economic development. This sector includes important economic sectors such as fishing, maritime trade, tourism and renewable energy. The research paper presented here studies the current state of the blue economy in India, as well as examines the contribution of this sector to the country's GDP, employment, and international trade. It also analyzes the efforts made by the government to develop the country's blue economy. The paper also highlights the challenges in the development of this sector.

Key words: *Blue economy, Marine Resources, Sustainable Development, Economic Development*

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1. Introduction

The concept of the blue economy has come to light in recent times as a result of the recognition of the importance of marine resources for sustainable development in various economies around the world. The blue economy mainly includes various economic activities such as fishing, aquaculture, tourism, shipping, and renewable energy. The main objectives of the blue economy is to enhance the economic growth of the country, increase employment opportunities, and sustainably use marine resources to sustain the environment. India's blue economy is playing a significant role in the country's GDP, employment generation, and foreign trade. The government has also taken several initiatives to accelerate the development of this sector. With an extensive coastline of over 7,500 kilometers and a vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the Indian blue economy presents a multitude of opportunities and challenges. This has been investigated in the research paper presented here.

Objectives of the Study:

The present research paper is based on the following objectives.

1. To assess the current status of the Blue Economy in the country.
2. To examine the economic contribution of the Blue Economy to the economic development of India.

Sources of Data Collection:

The research presented is purely based on secondary data. Books, magazines and related websites have been used for this.

2. Review of literature:

Subhdarshani et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of implementing the Blue Economy in a way that prioritizes marine ecosystem conservation while fostering sustainable growth. They argue that Indo-Pacific governments must move beyond just agreeing on shared terminologies and should focus on harmonizing Blue Economy practices through technology and innovation. A key goal is integrating human societies with ocean ecosystems,