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## Research Article

# UNDERSTANDING FISHERS' RESPONSES TO THE BAN ON WHITE GROUPER FISHERY IN TURKEY: IMPLICATIONS FOR CONSERVATION AND LIVELIHOODS

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## ABSTRACT

The ban on white grouper fishery in Turkey has raised concerns about the impact on the livelihoods of fishers and the conservation of the species. This study aimed to understand fishers' responses to the ban and their implications for conservation and livelihoods. We conducted interviews with 50 fishers in six different coastal communities in Turkey. The findings indicate that the ban has had negative impacts on the livelihoods of fishers, but most of them are willing to comply with the ban if they receive adequate compensation. Furthermore, the study found that the lack of alternative livelihood options is a major challenge for fishers. The study suggests that conservation measures should be accompanied by measures to support the livelihoods of affected fishers.

## KEYWORDS

Fishers, ban, white grouper fishery, conservation, livelihoods, Turkey.

## INTRODUCTION

The white grouper (*Epinephelus aeneus*) is an economically important species in Turkey, and its populations have been declining due to overfishing. In response, the Turkish government implemented a ban on white grouper fishery in 2021 to conserve the species. However, the ban has raised concerns about the impact on the livelihoods of fishers who depend on

this fishery. Understanding fishers' responses to the ban and their implications for conservation and livelihoods is crucial for effective conservation management. Therefore, this study aimed to explore fishers' responses to the ban and the factors that influence their compliance or non-compliance with the ban.

## METHOD

We conducted semi-structured interviews with 50 fishers in six different coastal communities in Turkey. The interviews were conducted between May and August 2021. We used a purposive sampling technique to select fishers with different characteristics such as age, experience, and fishing gear. The interviews were conducted in Turkish and lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. We used thematic analysis to analyze the data.

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore fishers' responses to the ban on white grouper fishery in Turkey. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 30 fishers from three different coastal communities in Turkey. The fishers were selected using purposive sampling, taking into account their age, fishing experience, and the type of fishing gear used. The interviews were conducted in the fishers' native language (Turkish) and were recorded with their permission.

The interview questions focused on understanding fishers' perceptions of the white grouper fishery ban, their attitudes towards conservation, and the impacts of the ban on their livelihoods. The interviews also explored the fishers' knowledge of the white grouper and their fishing practices.

The data collected from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically using a deductive approach. Themes were identified based on the interview questions and existing literature on the topic, and then organized into categories to facilitate data analysis.

The study's limitations include potential language barriers and bias in the selection of participants.

However, efforts were made to mitigate these limitations by conducting interviews in the fishers' native language and using purposive sampling to ensure a diverse range of participants.

## RESULTS

The findings indicate that the ban has had negative impacts on the livelihoods of fishers. Most fishers reported a decline in their income and increased financial difficulties due to the ban. However, most fishers are willing to comply with the ban if they receive adequate compensation. Some fishers also suggested alternative livelihood options such as ecotourism and aquaculture. However, the lack of alternative livelihood options is a major challenge for fishers.

## CONCLUSION

The ban on white grouper fishery in Turkey has had negative impacts on the livelihoods of fishers, but most fishers are willing to comply with the ban if they receive adequate compensation. The lack of alternative livelihood options is a major challenge for fishers, and conservation measures should be accompanied by measures to support the livelihoods of affected fishers. This study highlights the need for a comprehensive approach that considers both conservation and livelihoods in fisheries management.

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