

**Blue Justice in Small-Scale Fisheries:  
Perspectives from the Literature and Barbados Fisherfolk**

**Justicia Azul En La Pesca En Pequeña Escala:  
Perspectivas de la Literatura y los Pescadores De Barbados**

**Justice Bleue Dans La Pêche Artisanale:  
Perspectives Tirées de la Littérature et des Pêcheurs de la Barbade**

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**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

Fisherfolk in Barbados compete with other blue economy sectors (e.g., tourism, energy, transportation, recreation and conservation) for coastal and marine goods and services. They are impacted by numerous types of acts of unfairness or violation of rights and are experiencing increasing marginalisation. They are concerned about their apparent invisibility and lack of voice in blue economy, climate change and national social protection initiatives and strategies. The extracted verses below from a poem, *Who Feels It, Knows It*, written by a woman small-scale fish processor, Sheena Giffith, is an indication of some of the injustices fisherfolk in Barbados are experiencing.

They say it's all in the name of "progress"  
But really the benefit for small-scale fisherfolk getting less and less  
Can't compete with the big boys cause we're just small fry  
So, we're sitting in pain watching our industry die  
Our livelihood built up over years and years  
Going down the drain with our hopes and tears.

Fishing communities shrinking every day  
And we fisherfolk have little or no say.  
Hotels blocking the few windows to the sea  
What will become of other fisherfolk like me?

Many fisherfolk have come to accept and live with the injustices they perceive, creatively finding ways to work around and adapt to them rather than resolve them. Fisherfolk in Barbados need blue justice. Blue justice and the blue economy are inextricably linked. The essence of the blue economy is overwhelmingly positive, especially for the Caribbean (Clegg et al. 2021) but similar to framings of sustainable development, the concept enables a wide diversity of interpretations and is at risk of being misused to implement and justify exploitative and unsustainable practices (Germond-Duret et al. 2022, p.3). Some scholars assert that as the blue economy has evolved there has been a move away from equitable benefit sharing and social equity to an increasing fixation with economic growth. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and their vulnerable and marginalised communities and ecosystems may no longer be served by the contemporary blue economy (Louey 2022).

Small-scale fisheries (SSF) and fisherfolk experience numerous injustices in the face of marine resource development and unsustainable use. Promoting blue justice as the "moral compass" to the blue economy, and attention to these injustices requires urgent attention and must be effective. This is even more critical given the increasing rates of change in both social and ecological systems as a result of climate change and other factors impacting SIDS. Blue justice is a key advocacy and rights issue that focuses specifically on fisherfolk and in simple terms means "be fair to fisherfolk". It is a relatively recent notion being conceptualised globally in scholarship to understand and address how small-scale fisherfolk can be unjustly affected by blue economy initiatives. Yet, blue justice does not have a universal definition embraced by small-scale fisherfolk globally. Historically, the local populations residing in the Baraderes-Cayemite MPA had no connection to marine megafauna other than as a species they either caught, consumed, or feared. They could not and did not understand or value these species from a conservation perspective. While the Haiti Ocean Project team had been educating these local populations on the importance of protecting all marine megafauna in their waters, it was very evident at the onset that presenting information was not enough to change the fisher mindsets. It required hands-on learning which then directly connected these individuals to the species they were maiming, killing, consuming and selling. This was accomplished through the experiential learning cycle, developed by David A. Kolb, an American educational theorist (Kolb, 2015).

Determining how in Barbados “blue justice” is understood, can be used to analyse the experiences of fisherfolk, and may be used for advocacy by fisherfolk to address injustices, is important. Creating a Barbados fisherfolk blue justice narrative would be a new contribution to knowledge. This research through a combination of systematic review and content analysis (qualitative and quantitative) of blue justice literature and focus group discussions with fisherfolk in Barbados answers two main research questions – (1) How has blue justice, particularly in small-scale fisheries been conceptualised in scholarship from 2012 to 2024, and (2) how useful is blue justice framing in the literature to the practical perspectives and advocacy of fisherfolk in Barbados?

The systematic review currently underway to analyse the content of peer-reviewed academic literature on blue justice in small-scale fisheries applies typical guidelines for systematic reviews, specifically Collaboration for Environmental Evidence (2013) guidelines, and Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for review have been developed and two publication databases - Clarivate Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection and Google Scholar have been searched with the search string blue and justice to expand the search parameters yielding a total of 453 studies (253 WoS and 200 Google Scholar). After compiling search results from the peer-reviewed literature in Excel spreadsheets, the studies were imported into Covidence (a screening and data extraction tool for conducting systematic reviews) for screening by title and abstract against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The screening process removed 30 duplicates. Of the 423 titles and abstracts screened, 336 were irrelevant to the review. 87 full text articles are to be screened and assessed for review eligibility and content analysis.

Although the systematic review is not complete, based on a 10% sample of the 87 papers selected for full text review, there are some preliminary trends that are useful for reporting at this stage. What is evident is that the concept of blue justice is complex in its framing with multiple definitions given its socio-cultural specificity and complexity. It has key multi-dimensional elements of recognitional, procedural, and distributive justice. It also intersects with many related types of justice known as satellite justice concepts. Its framing is based on human-rights based principles which are fundamental to achieving blue justice and not optional - gender equality and equity, consultation and participation, advocacy and empowerment, social responsibility (working and cooperating with others for the benefit of communities) and respect of cultures. It is people-centred making sure that it is at the core of blue economy concerns (Bennett et al. 2021, Chuenpagdee 2020).

Next steps in this research include completion of the full text screening of peer-reviewed literature, undertaking the content analysis of eligible studies and the initiation of focus groups for determining relevance of blue justice framing in scholarship to the practical perspectives and advocacy of fisherfolk in Barbados.

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