

Experiencing Remoteness: Everyday Life Among Indigenous Communities In Kadmat Island, Lakshadweep

Dinesh A & Dr. Sundara Raj T

Research Scholar, Department Of Sociology, Periyar University Salem, Tamilnadu – 636011
Professor & Hod, Department Of Sociology, Periyar University, Salem, Tamilnadu – 636011

Abstract

Background: Geographical remoteness is a defining characteristic of small island communities, influencing access to essential services, livelihood opportunities, and socio-economic development. In Lakshadweep, indigenous communities experience unique developmental challenges arising from physical isolation while simultaneously benefiting from strong social cohesion and cultural continuity.

Objectives: This study examines the socio-economic implications of remoteness among indigenous communities in Kadmat Island, Lakshadweep. It aims to assess the perceived dimensions and effects of remoteness, identify its positive outcomes, and explore community-based recommendations for reducing its adverse impacts.

Methodology: The study adopted a descriptive research design using primary data collected from 250 indigenous respondents through a structured interview schedule. Descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies and percentages, were employed to analyse respondents' perceptions regarding remoteness and its implications.

Findings: The findings indicate that limited access to specialised healthcare, higher education, transportation, and employment opportunities are the major challenges associated with remoteness. Respondents also reported delays in medical treatment, high transportation costs, educational migration, and restricted access to government services as significant consequences of island isolation. However, the study reveals that remoteness also strengthens mutual support, kinship ties, community participation, cultural preservation, and a sense of belonging among residents. The respondents emphasised the need for improved transport connectivity, specialised healthcare facilities, telemedicine, digital infrastructure, higher education, skill development, and local employment opportunities.

Conclusion: The study concludes that remoteness is a multidimensional phenomenon that simultaneously presents developmental constraints and strengthens community resilience. Sustainable development in Kadmat Island requires integrated policies that enhance accessibility, diversify livelihoods, improve essential public services, and preserve the island's social, cultural, and environmental heritage.

Keywords: Kadmat Island; Lakshadweep; Indigenous Communities; Remoteness; Islandness; Sustainable Development; Community Resilience; Social Cohesion

Date of Submission: 15-07-2026

Date of Acceptance: 25-07-2026

I. Introduction

Remoteness is conventionally understood as the physical distance separating people from centres of economic activity, governance, and essential services. Contemporary sociological scholarship, however, argues that remoteness is a multidimensional social condition shaped by accessibility, mobility, institutional reach, and everyday interactions rather than by distance alone (Baldacchino, 2004; Farrugia, 2016). In island societies, remoteness is experienced through the opportunities and constraints that influence education, healthcare, livelihoods, communication, and social relationships. Consequently, understanding remoteness requires moving beyond geographical isolation to examine how it is lived and negotiated by communities in their daily lives.

Lakshadweep, India's smallest Union Territory, consists of 36 coral islands, reefs, and atolls, of which only ten are inhabited. According to the Census of India (2011), the Union Territory had a population of 64,473, and more than 94 per cent of its population belonged to the Scheduled Tribes. The islands have achieved remarkable progress in literacy, health, and other human development indicators despite their physical isolation from mainland India (Census of India, 2011; Government of Lakshadweep, 2024). Nevertheless, geographical separation continues to influence accessibility, mobility, and service delivery, making remoteness a significant feature of everyday life.

Kadmat Island, located approximately 407 km west of Kochi in the Arabian Sea, is one of the inhabited islands in the Amindivi group of Lakshadweep. The island is approximately 11 km long and less than one kilometre wide at its broadest point, covering an area of about 3.2 km². According to the Census of India (2011), Kadmat has a population of 5,389 and a literacy rate of 95.5 per cent. The island's economy is primarily based on

fisheries, coconut cultivation, government employment, and, increasingly, tourism. Its extensive lagoon and coral reef ecosystem also make it ecologically significant and an important destination for marine tourism (Census of India, 2011; National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management [NCSCM], 2024).

Although Kadmat has experienced improvements in transport, communication, education, and public services over the past few decades, the island continues to face challenges associated with limited connectivity. Travel to the mainland depends largely on scheduled ships and limited air connectivity through Agatti Island, while adverse weather conditions during the southwest monsoon often disrupt transportation and access to specialised services (Government of Lakshadweep, 2024). Access to tertiary healthcare, higher education, specialised markets, and certain administrative services frequently requires travel outside the island. These circumstances illustrate that remoteness is experienced not simply as geographical distance but as a condition that shapes everyday decisions, opportunities, and social interactions.

From a sociological perspective, remoteness is embedded within broader social structures that influence people's capacity to participate in economic, educational, political, and cultural life. Island communities often respond to these structural constraints by developing strong kinship networks, reciprocal support systems, and community-based institutions that enhance social cohesion and resilience (Baldacchino, 2004). Thus, remoteness simultaneously generates limitations in accessing resources while strengthening collective identities and local social organisation.

Previous studies on Lakshadweep have largely concentrated on fisheries, tourism, environmental conservation, coral reef ecosystems, climate vulnerability, and island development (Prakash et al., 2014; Reddy, 2016). While these studies have substantially enhanced understanding of the islands' ecological and developmental characteristics, comparatively little sociological research has examined how indigenous communities themselves experience remoteness in their everyday lives. Existing literature tends to conceptualise remoteness as a geographical or infrastructural problem, giving limited attention to its social, cultural, and experiential dimensions. This represents an important gap in the sociology of island communities.

Against this background, the present study examines the lived experiences of remoteness among the indigenous communities of Kadmat Island. It argues that remoteness should be understood as a multidimensional social experience influencing mobility, access to essential services, livelihood opportunities, community relationships, and cultural continuity. By focusing on a single island, the study provides a nuanced sociological understanding of how indigenous communities negotiate the opportunities and constraints associated with island life in Lakshadweep.

II. Literature Review

Understanding Remoteness

Remoteness has traditionally been understood as a geographical condition describing places located at considerable distances from administrative, economic, and service centres. Early geographical perspectives largely measured remoteness through physical distance, travel time, transport accessibility, and the cost of reaching essential services. Within this perspective, remote regions were generally perceived as peripheral spaces characterised by weak infrastructure, limited economic opportunities, and reduced interaction with metropolitan centres. Such interpretations viewed remoteness primarily as a measurable spatial phenomenon rather than a social condition influencing everyday life.

Over the past two decades, however, the concept of remoteness has undergone significant theoretical development. Contemporary social scientists increasingly argue that remoteness cannot be adequately explained through geographical distance alone because places located at similar physical distances may experience remarkably different levels of accessibility, development, and social well-being. Improvements in transportation, digital communication, public infrastructure, and governance have demonstrated that physical distance does not necessarily determine social isolation or economic marginalisation. Consequently, remoteness has come to be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon produced through the interaction of geography, institutions, infrastructure, politics, and social relations rather than by location alone (Baldacchino, 2004; Ronström, 2021).

This conceptual shift has contributed to the emergence of a relational understanding of remoteness. Rather than viewing remoteness as an inherent characteristic of a place, scholars argue that it is socially produced through unequal relationships between centres and peripheries. Ronström (2021) contends that remoteness is not discovered but produced through political, economic, and cultural processes that define certain places as distant, peripheral, or marginal. In this sense, remoteness represents a relationship of power in which particular territories are positioned relative to dominant centres of administration, markets, knowledge, and decision-making. Consequently, remoteness is experienced differently depending upon the quality of transport networks, institutional accessibility, technological connectivity, and opportunities for participation in wider social systems.

The growing field of island studies has made a significant contribution to this reconceptualisation. Baldacchino (2004) argues that islands should be understood on their own terms rather than merely as geographically isolated fragments of mainland societies. He suggests that islands possess distinctive social,

economic, political, and cultural characteristics arising from their boundedness, small size, and close interaction between people and place. These characteristics do not automatically create disadvantage; instead, they generate unique social dynamics that differ from continental settings. The study of islands has therefore shifted from treating insularity as a problem towards recognising island societies as distinctive social systems with their own forms of resilience, innovation, and identity.

Recent scholarship further expands this perspective by arguing that "islandness" is not simply a physical characteristic but also a social and cultural construct. Foley (2023) observes that islandness encompasses the meanings, identities, relationships, and lived experiences associated with island life rather than merely the presence of surrounding water. Similarly, Ronström (2021) argues that islands have historically functioned as symbolic representations of remoteness, difference, and separateness, while simultaneously serving as spaces of intense connectivity, mobility, and exchange. These perspectives challenge simplistic assumptions that equate islands exclusively with isolation and instead emphasise their relational position within broader regional and global networks.

From a sociological perspective, remoteness is increasingly interpreted through the concepts of accessibility, mobility, social participation, and institutional inclusion. Accessibility refers not only to physical movement but also to the ability of individuals to obtain education, healthcare, employment, financial services, and administrative support. Mobility similarly extends beyond transportation to include opportunities for social and economic participation across different geographical scales. Communities may therefore experience remoteness even when transport infrastructure exists if institutional arrangements restrict their effective access to essential resources and opportunities. Consequently, remoteness reflects inequalities in social participation rather than geographical distance alone.

Remoteness in Island Communities

Island communities have long attracted scholarly attention because they provide distinctive settings for understanding the relationship between geography and society. While islands differ considerably in size, population, economy, and political status, many share common structural characteristics, including limited land resources, dependence on maritime transport, ecological vulnerability, and close interaction between human communities and their surrounding environments. These characteristics make islands important sites for examining how remoteness influences everyday life, development, and social organisation (Baldacchino, 2004; Connell, 2013).

Earlier studies generally portrayed island communities as geographically isolated and economically dependent regions facing persistent developmental disadvantages. Physical separation from mainland centres often increases transportation costs, limits market integration, constrains employment opportunities, and complicates the delivery of public services (Connell, 2013). Small populations further restrict economies of scale, making it difficult to sustain specialised healthcare, higher education, and diversified economic activities. Consequently, many island communities remain dependent on external administrative and economic centres despite considerable improvements in communication and transportation technologies (Baldacchino, 2006).

Transportation occupies a central place in the literature on island remoteness because mobility determines access to almost every aspect of social and economic life. Unlike mainland settlements, islands rely heavily on ferry services, shipping networks, and air transport for the movement of people, goods, and essential services. Interruptions caused by adverse weather, seasonal conditions, or infrastructural limitations frequently affect education, healthcare, employment, tourism, and emergency response. Recent studies emphasise that transport systems do not merely connect islands to the mainland but fundamentally shape island identities, development trajectories, and residents' everyday experiences of mobility (Leung & Baumeister, 2024).

Accessibility is therefore increasingly recognised as a more meaningful indicator of remoteness than geographical distance alone. Two islands located at similar distances from the mainland may experience entirely different levels of development depending on the frequency, affordability, and reliability of transport services. Likewise, advances in digital infrastructure, public administration, and communication technologies may reduce certain dimensions of remoteness while leaving others unchanged. The literature thus argues that accessibility should be understood as the ability of individuals to participate effectively in social, economic, educational, and political life rather than simply their physical ability to travel (OECD–International Transport Forum, 2019).

Economic vulnerability represents another recurring theme within island studies. Because of their small domestic markets and limited natural resource base, many islands depend upon a narrow range of economic activities such as fisheries, tourism, agriculture, or public-sector employment. External shocks—including fluctuations in tourism, fuel prices, global markets, or climatic events—can therefore produce disproportionate socioeconomic consequences. Connell (2013) argues that economic diversification remains one of the greatest developmental challenges for small island communities, where geographical constraints frequently limit industrial expansion and investment. At the same time, increasing dependence on external markets often intensifies local concerns regarding sustainability and self-reliance.

Despite these structural challenges, contemporary island studies increasingly reject deficit-oriented representations of islands as merely isolated or disadvantaged spaces. Instead, scholars emphasise the remarkable resilience demonstrated by island communities in responding to economic uncertainty, environmental change, and institutional constraints. Community resilience is often strengthened through dense kinship networks, collective action, local knowledge systems, and strong social capital, enabling island populations to adapt effectively to changing circumstances (Koliou et al., 2018). These social resources frequently compensate for infrastructural limitations and contribute to effective community responses during periods of crisis.

The concept of social cohesion occupies a particularly important place in sociological analyses of island life. Small populations, repeated social interactions, and strong family networks often foster high levels of interpersonal trust, mutual assistance, and collective responsibility. Such relationships facilitate cooperation in resource management, disaster preparedness, cultural activities, and community governance. However, scholars also caution that close-knit communities may simultaneously generate social pressures, limited privacy, and strong informal mechanisms of social regulation. Consequently, island social life reflects both the advantages and constraints associated with living in relatively bounded communities (Baldacchino, 2004).

Indigenous Communities in Lakshadweep

Lakshadweep's indigenous communities have attracted scholarly attention because of their distinctive social organisation, ecological adaptation, and maritime way of life. Unlike many indigenous societies in mainland India, the Scheduled Tribe population of Lakshadweep exhibits relatively high literacy, favourable health indicators, and widespread access to education. Nevertheless, the islands remain geographically isolated, resource-constrained, and highly dependent on external administrative and economic systems, creating a unique social setting in which development coexists with structural remoteness (Census of India, 2011; Government of Lakshadweep, 2024).

Anthropological studies have consistently highlighted the uniqueness of Lakshadweep's indigenous communities. Singh (2014) argues that the archipelago should not merely be viewed as a geographically isolated territory but as a distinctive island society shaped by its coral ecology, maritime environment, Islamic traditions, and long history of interaction with the Malabar Coast. Although physically separated from mainland India, the islands have historically maintained cultural, commercial, and religious linkages through maritime trade and migration. Consequently, Lakshadweep represents a socially connected island society rather than a completely isolated geographical unit.

Livelihoods constitute one of the most extensively studied aspects of indigenous life in Lakshadweep. Fishing remains the principal occupation across most inhabited islands, complemented by coconut cultivation, coir production, government employment, and, more recently, tourism. The Lakshadweep Administration identifies fisheries and coconut-based activities as the traditional economic foundation of the islands, while tourism has emerged as an important supplementary source of income over the past two decades. However, limited land availability, restricted agricultural potential, and dependence on external markets continue to constrain economic diversification.

Anthropological research demonstrates that livelihood systems in Lakshadweep have undergone significant transformation in response to education, migration, state intervention, and market integration. Khatua (2022), in his study of the Melachari community of Chetlat Island, shows that traditional livelihood arrangements based on matrilineal property systems, fisheries, and coconut resources have gradually diversified through government employment, wage labour, education, and migration. While development programmes have expanded occupational opportunities, they have also altered traditional social institutions and patterns of resource utilisation. The study illustrates how indigenous communities continuously adapt their livelihood strategies while maintaining important elements of their social organisation.

Similar observations are made by Hoon (2012), whose long-term field research demonstrates that dependence on coral reef ecosystems continues to shape island livelihoods despite increasing integration with mainland markets. Her work indicates that expanding education, migration, tourism, and exposure to external influences have transformed occupational aspirations, gender relations, and family organisation. In particular, younger generations increasingly seek salaried employment and higher education outside the islands, reducing exclusive dependence on traditional marine occupations while simultaneously reshaping cultural values and community relationships.

Education has been recognised as one of the most significant drivers of social transformation in Lakshadweep. Government investment in universal schooling has produced literacy levels that are substantially higher than the national average. Increased educational attainment has broadened occupational aspirations and facilitated greater participation in higher education and public-sector employment. However, specialised professional education remains largely concentrated on the mainland, requiring substantial educational migration among island youth. Such migration creates new opportunities while also generating changing patterns of family life, social mobility, and community interaction (Government of Lakshadweep, 2024; Census of India, 2011).

Research Gap

Despite the growing body of literature on Lakshadweep, important gaps remain. Existing studies have primarily focused on fisheries, livelihoods, environmental conservation, tourism, demographic characteristics, governance, and socioeconomic development. Many investigations adopt island-level or archipelago-wide perspectives, while relatively few examine the lived experiences of indigenous communities at the level of individual islands. Furthermore, remoteness is generally treated as a geographical or developmental characteristic rather than as a multidimensional social experience influencing mobility, institutional accessibility, livelihoods, and community life. This gap is particularly evident in the case of Kadmat Island, where empirical sociological research remains limited despite its ecological significance, growing tourism sector, and dependence on mainland connectivity. By examining how indigenous residents of Kadmat experience remoteness in their everyday lives, the present study seeks to extend existing scholarship beyond descriptive accounts of development and contribute to a sociological understanding of remoteness as a lived social reality.

III. Methodology

Study Area

The study was conducted on Kadmat Island, one of the inhabited islands of the Lakshadweep archipelago in the Arabian Sea, located approximately 407 km west of Kochi, Kerala. Kadmat belongs to the Amindivi group of islands and is distinguished by its narrow coral landform, extensive lagoon, and dependence on marine resources. The island covers an area of approximately 3.2 km² and had a population of 5,389 according to the Census of India (2011). The indigenous population, recognised as Scheduled Tribes, constitutes the overwhelming majority of the island's residents and maintains a distinct socio-cultural identity shaped by Islam, maritime livelihoods, and strong kinship networks (Census of India, 2011; Government of Lakshadweep, 2024).

Kadmat was purposively selected as the study area because it provides an appropriate setting for examining the lived experiences of remoteness. Although the island has witnessed considerable improvements in education, healthcare, communication, and tourism, its residents continue to depend on mainland India for specialised medical care, higher education, administrative services, and several economic activities. This combination of relatively high human development and geographical isolation makes Kadmat an ideal site for investigating the sociological dimensions of remoteness.

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive and exploratory research design using a mixed-methods approach. The descriptive design was employed to examine the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and the different dimensions of remoteness experienced by them. The exploratory component facilitated a deeper understanding of people's perceptions, meanings, and lived experiences that could not be fully captured through quantitative techniques alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

A mixed-methods approach was considered appropriate because remoteness is a multidimensional social phenomenon involving measurable conditions, such as accessibility to services and transportation, as well as subjective experiences relating to mobility, livelihoods, institutional access, and community life.

Study Population and Sampling

The study population comprised indigenous adult residents (18 years and above) of Kadmat Island. A multistage sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation of the island's diverse population.

In the first stage, Kadmat Island was purposively selected because of its ecological significance, growing tourism sector, and continued dependence on mainland connectivity despite notable social development. In the second stage, households were selected using systematic random sampling from different residential areas of the island. Finally, one eligible adult respondent from each selected household was chosen for the survey. Where more than one eligible respondent was available in a household, the respondent was selected through simple random sampling to minimise selection bias.

A total of 250 indigenous respondents participated in the household survey. This sample size was considered adequate to capture variations in experiences of remoteness across different socio-demographic groups while remaining manageable for intensive field investigation. The respondents represented different age groups, gender categories, educational backgrounds, occupations, and income groups, thereby ensuring diversity in perspectives.

To complement the survey data, 18 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with individuals possessing extensive knowledge of the island's social, economic, and institutional context. These included village leaders, elected representatives, teachers, healthcare professionals, fisheries officials, tourism entrepreneurs, government employees, religious leaders, and elderly residents.

In addition, three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), each comprising 8–10 participants, were organised separately with fishermen, women, and youth. These discussions provided deeper insights into collective experiences of remoteness, community relationships, livelihood challenges, and changing social aspirations.

Methods of Data Collection

The study utilised both primary and secondary sources of data.

Primary data were collected using a structured interview schedule administered to the selected respondents. Semi-structured interviews with key informants generated detailed information regarding mobility, access to public services, livelihood opportunities, governance, and community life. Focus Group Discussions facilitated collective reflection on shared experiences of remoteness and community responses to emerging challenges. Participant observation was carried out throughout the fieldwork to understand everyday social interactions, transportation practices, institutional functioning, and cultural activities within the island. Informal conversations with community members further enriched the qualitative understanding of local realities.

Secondary data were collected from the Census of India, publications of the Lakshadweep Administration, Ministry of Home Affairs reports, government statistics, policy documents, books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and other relevant academic publications. These sources were used to contextualise the empirical findings and strengthen the interpretation of the data.

Variables of the Study

The study conceptualised remoteness as a multidimensional sociological phenomenon. The principal dimensions examined included:

- Mobility and transport accessibility
- Access to healthcare services
- Educational opportunities
- Livelihood opportunities
- Institutional accessibility
- Digital connectivity
- Community relationships and social participation
- Cultural continuity
- Perceptions and lived experiences of remoteness

These dimensions were analysed to understand how remoteness influences the everyday lives of indigenous communities in Kadmat Island.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, means, and cross-tabulations, were employed to examine the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and the different dimensions of remoteness.

Qualitative data obtained through interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, and field notes were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis following the procedures suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis involved coding the data, identifying recurring themes, and interpreting patterns related to mobility, accessibility, livelihoods, institutional interactions, community relationships, and cultural continuity. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enabled methodological triangulation and strengthened the credibility of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the research process. Prior informed consent was obtained from all participants after explaining the objectives and purpose of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were assured that the information provided would be used solely for academic purposes. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by removing personal identifiers from the data, and all findings are presented in aggregate form. Particular care was taken to respect local customs, cultural practices, and community sensitivities during the fieldwork.

Limitations of the Study

The study focuses exclusively on Kadmat Island and therefore does not attempt to generalise its findings to all inhabited islands of Lakshadweep. The experiences of remoteness may differ across islands because of variations in population size, transport connectivity, economic activities, and administrative infrastructure. Nevertheless, Kadmat provides an important case for understanding the multidimensional nature of remoteness within an indigenous island community and offers valuable sociological insights into the relationship between geography, accessibility, community life, and cultural continuity.

IV. Findings And Discussion

Socio-demographic Profile of the Respondents

A total of 250 indigenous respondents participated in the study. Among them, 130 (52%) were male and 120 (48%) were female, indicating a balanced gender distribution. The respondents represented diverse occupational groups, including fishermen, coconut cultivators, government employees, tourism workers, self-employed persons, homemakers, and students. Such diversity ensured that the study captured varied experiences of remoteness across different social and economic backgrounds.

Most respondents had completed secondary or higher secondary education, reflecting the relatively high literacy level reported for Lakshadweep (Census of India, 2011). However, educational attainment did not necessarily translate into local employment opportunities, as many respondents reported that specialised education and skilled employment required migration to the mainland. This finding suggests that geographical remoteness continues to influence educational mobility despite substantial improvements in educational infrastructure.

Everyday Experiences of Mobility and Connectivity

Mobility emerged as one of the most significant dimensions through which respondents experienced remoteness. Approximately 72% of the respondents reported that transportation disruptions significantly affected their daily lives, while 64% indicated that they travelled to the mainland at least once annually for education, healthcare, employment, or administrative purposes.

Although shipping services and air connectivity have improved over the years, respondents explained that travel remains dependent on schedules, weather conditions, and seat availability. Delays during the monsoon season frequently interrupted educational plans, employment opportunities, medical treatment, and family obligations. These findings support the argument that remoteness is experienced not merely through physical distance but through unequal accessibility to essential services (Baldacchino, 2004; Leung & Baumeister, 2024).

Several respondents also perceived transportation as a source of uncertainty rather than convenience. Even routine travel required advance planning and considerable expenditure, reinforcing the perception that island residents experience mobility differently from mainland populations.

Table 1: Perceived Dimensions of Remoteness among Indigenous Communities (N = 250)

Dimension	n	Percentage (%)
Difficulty in transport connectivity	180	72.0
Difficulty in accessing specialised healthcare	203	81.2
Limited access to higher education	191	76.4
Limited employment opportunities	170	68.0
Difficulty accessing government services	153	61.2
Poor digital connectivity	139	55.6

Note: Respondents could select more than one dimension; therefore, percentages do not sum to 100.

Interpretation of Table 1: Table 1 indicates that indigenous communities perceive remoteness as a multidimensional challenge affecting access to essential services and livelihood opportunities. The most significant concern was difficulty in accessing specialised healthcare, reported by 81.2% (n = 203) of respondents, highlighting the limited availability of advanced medical services on the island. This was followed by limited access to higher education (76.4%; n = 191) and difficulty in transport connectivity (72.0%; n = 180), suggesting that geographical isolation continues to restrict educational opportunities and mobility. Additionally, 68.0% (n = 170) perceived limited employment opportunities, while 61.2% (n = 153) reported difficulties in accessing government services. More than half of the respondents (55.6%; n = 139) also identified poor digital connectivity as a challenge. Overall, the findings demonstrate that remoteness extends beyond physical isolation and significantly influences access to healthcare, education, employment, and public services. These results support the concept of islandness, which emphasises that geographical isolation shapes social and developmental opportunities in small island communities (Baldacchino, 2004; Grydehøj, 2017).

Access to Essential Services

Access to healthcare, higher education, specialised banking services, and government institutions constituted another major dimension of remoteness. About 81% of the respondents agreed that geographical isolation limited timely access to specialised healthcare. Although primary healthcare facilities were generally available on the island, advanced diagnostic services, specialist consultations, and emergency treatment frequently required travel to mainland hospitals.

Similarly, respondents reported that higher education and professional training opportunities remained concentrated outside Lakshadweep. Young people aspiring to pursue professional careers often migrated to mainland institutions, leading to prolonged separation from families and increased educational expenditure.

These findings indicate that improvements in local infrastructure have not entirely eliminated institutional remoteness. Instead, remoteness continues to shape life choices by influencing access to specialised services that remain geographically concentrated elsewhere.

Livelihoods under Conditions of Remoteness

Respondents identified fisheries, coconut cultivation, government employment, and tourism as the principal sources of livelihood. Nevertheless, transportation constraints and limited market access restricted opportunities for economic diversification.

Many respondents expressed concern regarding fluctuations in transportation schedules, which affected the marketing of fish, movement of essential commodities, and tourism-related income. Tourism has generated additional employment opportunities; however, its seasonal nature and dependence on external visitors have created uncertainties in household income.

These observations correspond with previous studies indicating that small island economies frequently experience structural dependence on limited economic sectors and external markets (Connell, 2013). Economic remoteness therefore reflects not only geographical isolation but also restricted opportunities for occupational diversification and market integration.

Table 2: Major Effects of Remoteness on Everyday Life (N = 250)

Effect	n	Percentage (%)
Delay in specialised medical treatment	196	78.4
Difficulty travelling during monsoon	182	72.8
High transportation costs	171	68.4
Migration for higher education	162	64.8
Limited employment opportunities	158	63.2
Difficulty accessing government offices	141	56.4
Delay in obtaining essential goods	126	50.4

Note: Multiple responses were permitted.

Interpretation of Table 2: Table 2 illustrates the major effects of remoteness on the everyday lives of indigenous communities. The highest-ranked concern was the delay in specialised medical treatment (78.4%), indicating that geographical isolation continues to limit timely access to advanced healthcare services, often requiring travel to the mainland for diagnosis and treatment. Difficulty travelling during the monsoon emerged as another major challenge (72.8%), reflecting the seasonal disruption of transport services that affects mobility, emergency healthcare, education, and the supply of essential commodities. The finding on high transportation costs (68.4%) suggests that the financial burden of travelling to the mainland for education, healthcare, employment, or administrative purposes remains a significant challenge. The reported migration for higher education (64.8%) indicates that limited availability of higher educational institutions on the island compels many students to pursue their studies outside. The perception of limited employment opportunities (63.2%) reflects the restricted economic base of the island, where employment is concentrated in a few sectors. Respondents also highlighted difficulty in accessing government offices (56.4%) and delays in obtaining essential goods (50.4%), indicating administrative constraints and dependence on mainland supply chains. Overall, the findings demonstrate that remoteness affects multiple dimensions of everyday life, reinforcing the developmental challenges associated with island living (Baldacchino, 2004; Grydehøj, 2017).

Community Life and Social Cohesion

An important finding of the study is that remoteness was not perceived solely as a disadvantage. Nearly 69% of the respondents believed that living on Kadmat Island strengthened social relationships and community solidarity.

Respondents described neighbourhood cooperation, strong kinship networks, and collective participation in religious and social activities as significant strengths of island life. Mutual assistance during illness, family events, natural disasters, and community programmes was frequently cited as an important characteristic of indigenous society.

However, some participants also observed that living in a small and closely connected community reduced personal privacy and increased social expectations. These findings demonstrate that remoteness simultaneously contributes to community cohesion while reinforcing informal mechanisms of social regulation.

Table 3: Perceived Positive Outcomes of Living in a Remote Island (N = 250)

Positive Outcome	n	Percentage (%)
Strong community relationships	173	69.2
Mutual support among residents	206	82.4
Preservation of indigenous culture	188	75.2

Strong kinship ties	194	77.6
Community participation	179	71.6
Sense of safety and belonging	185	74.0

Note: Multiple responses were permitted.

Table 3 highlights that, despite the challenges of geographical isolation, respondents perceive several positive outcomes associated with living on a remote island. The most significant benefit was mutual support among residents (82.4%), reflecting a strong culture of cooperation and collective responsibility within the community. Respondents also reported strong kinship ties (77.6%), indicating the continued importance of family networks in providing social and emotional support. The preservation of indigenous culture (75.2%) was another notable advantage, suggesting that the island's relative isolation has helped sustain traditional customs, values, and cultural practices. Likewise, a sense of safety and belonging (74.0%) reflects the close social bonds and trust that characterise island life. The findings further reveal active community participation (71.6%) in local affairs and strong interpersonal relationships, which contribute to social cohesion and collective resilience. Overall, the results suggest that remoteness not only presents developmental challenges but also strengthens social capital, cultural continuity, and community solidarity, which are essential for the sustainable development of island communities (Baldacchino, 2004; Putnam, 2000).

Cultural Continuity amid Social Change

Respondents consistently highlighted the importance of preserving indigenous traditions, religious practices, language, and community identity. At the same time, younger participants acknowledged that digital communication, higher education, migration, and tourism had introduced new aspirations and lifestyles.

Rather than perceiving tradition and modernity as opposing forces, respondents described cultural continuity as a process of adaptation. Traditional values remained important, while external influences were selectively incorporated into everyday life. This finding supports contemporary island studies, which argue that island societies continuously negotiate change while maintaining distinctive cultural identities (Ronström, 2021).

Discussion

The findings suggest that remoteness in Kadmat Island extends beyond physical separation from mainland India. Instead, respondents experience remoteness through interconnected dimensions of mobility, institutional accessibility, livelihood opportunities, social participation, and cultural continuity. These dimensions reinforce one another, creating a multidimensional social condition that shapes everyday life.

The findings support Baldacchino's (2004) argument that islands should not be viewed merely as isolated geographical spaces but as socially distinctive environments characterised by unique patterns of resilience and adaptation. Although geographical isolation creates challenges in accessing specialised services and diversified employment, strong kinship networks and community solidarity enable residents to respond collectively to many of these constraints.

Similarly, the findings resonate with Ronström's (2021) view that remoteness is socially experienced rather than simply geographically determined. Respondents associated remoteness less with physical distance than with their ability to access healthcare, education, employment, transport, and institutional services. Consequently, remoteness should be understood as a relational social condition that reflects inequalities in accessibility rather than spatial location alone.

Overall, this analysis demonstrates that indigenous communities in Kadmat Island simultaneously experience the challenges and strengths associated with island living. While remoteness limits certain developmental opportunities, it also contributes to community resilience, cultural continuity, and strong social relationships, highlighting the need for development policies that improve accessibility without undermining the distinctive social fabric of island society.

Table 4: Respondents' Suggestions for Reducing the Effects of Remoteness (N = 250)

Suggestion	n	Percentage (%)
Increase frequency of passenger ship services	224	89.6
Improve specialised healthcare facilities	217	86.8
Expand telemedicine services	203	81.2
Improve internet connectivity	192	76.8
Create more local employment opportunities	198	79.2
Establish skill development programmes	176	70.4
Expand higher education opportunities	184	73.6

Note: Multiple responses were permitted.

Table 4 indicates that respondents view improved transportation, healthcare, employment, education, and digital infrastructure as the most effective strategies for reducing the impacts of remoteness. The strong

preference for increasing the frequency of passenger ship services (89.6%) highlights the need for better physical connectivity, which would facilitate access to healthcare, education, markets, and government services. Similarly, the emphasis on improving specialised healthcare facilities (86.8%) and expanding telemedicine (81.2%) reflects the urgent need to strengthen healthcare accessibility and reduce dependence on mainland hospitals. Respondents also stressed the importance of creating more local employment opportunities (79.2%), suggesting that livelihood diversification is essential to reduce unemployment and outmigration. Recommendations to improve internet connectivity (76.8%), expand higher education opportunities (73.6%), and establish skill development programmes (70.4%) further indicate the need to enhance digital inclusion, human capital, and local economic resilience.

Table 5: Overall Perception of Remoteness (N = 250)

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Kadmat is geographically remote	112	95	20	15	8	250
Remoteness affects everyday life	104	101	22	16	7	250
Remoteness strengthens community relationships	87	86	39	25	13	250
Development has reduced the effects of remoteness	48	96	42	46	18	250

V. Major Findings

The study demonstrates that geographical remoteness significantly influences the socio-economic life and development of indigenous communities in Kadmat Island. While respondents acknowledged several challenges associated with island living, they also recognised the social and cultural strengths that contribute to community resilience.

The findings reveal that healthcare accessibility is the most critical challenge, with respondents reporting considerable difficulty in accessing specialised medical services due to the island's geographical isolation. Similarly, limited opportunities for higher education and unreliable transport connectivity were perceived as major constraints, indicating that remoteness continues to restrict access to essential services and developmental opportunities. Respondents also highlighted limited employment opportunities, difficulties in accessing government services, and inadequate digital connectivity as important consequences of island isolation.

The study further shows that these challenges have tangible effects on everyday life. Delays in receiving specialised medical treatment, travel disruptions during the monsoon, high transportation costs, educational migration, and restricted employment opportunities were identified as the most significant impacts of remoteness. These findings suggest that geographical isolation not only affects physical mobility but also influences economic security, educational attainment, and access to public services.

Despite these challenges, the respondents identified several positive aspects of island living. Strong mutual support among residents, close kinship ties, preservation of indigenous culture, active community participation, and a strong sense of safety and belonging indicate that remoteness has fostered high levels of social cohesion and social capital. These attributes enhance community resilience and enable residents to collectively respond to social and environmental challenges.

The study also identifies respondents' priorities for reducing the adverse effects of remoteness. Improving passenger ship services emerged as the most important recommendation, followed by strengthening specialised healthcare facilities, expanding telemedicine services, creating local employment opportunities, improving internet connectivity, establishing skill development programmes, and expanding higher education opportunities. These recommendations reflect the community's preference for integrated development that enhances accessibility while preserving the unique characteristics of island life.

Overall, the findings suggest that remoteness in Kadmat Island should not be understood solely as a geographical condition but as a multidimensional phenomenon affecting healthcare, education, employment, governance, and everyday life. At the same time, the study highlights that strong community relationships, cultural continuity, and collective support remain important strengths that can be leveraged for sustainable development.

VI. Policy Recommendations

The findings of the study indicate that reducing the adverse effects of remoteness in Kadmat Island requires an integrated and community-centred development approach.

First, improving transport connectivity should be a priority by increasing the frequency and reliability of passenger ship and air services, particularly during the monsoon season, to ensure uninterrupted access to healthcare, education, markets, and government services.

Second, the government should strengthen healthcare infrastructure by establishing specialised medical facilities, increasing the availability of medical specialists, and expanding telemedicine services. Regular medical camps and emergency referral systems would further improve healthcare accessibility for island residents.

Third, greater investment is needed in education and skill development. Expanding higher education opportunities through satellite campuses, distance learning, and vocational training programmes would reduce educational migration while equipping young people with skills relevant to local employment opportunities.

Fourth, efforts should focus on livelihood diversification by promoting sustainable fisheries, eco-tourism, entrepreneurship, and small-scale island-based enterprises. Providing financial assistance, technical training, and market support would enhance local employment and reduce dependence on limited economic sectors.

Fifth, improving digital infrastructure through reliable high-speed internet and expanded digital services would facilitate online education, telemedicine, e-governance, digital banking, and business development, thereby reducing the effects of geographical isolation.

Finally, development policies should adopt a community-based and environmentally sustainable approach. Strengthening community participation in local governance, conserving coral reef ecosystems, promoting climate-resilient infrastructure, and preserving indigenous culture should remain central to future development initiatives. Such an integrated approach will not only reduce the socio-economic impacts of remoteness but also enhance the resilience, well-being, and sustainable development of indigenous communities in Kadmat Island.

VII. Conclusion

This study examined the influence of remoteness on the everyday lives of indigenous communities in Kadmat Island, Lakshadweep, from a sociological perspective. The findings demonstrate that geographical remoteness is a multidimensional phenomenon affecting access to healthcare, education, employment, transportation, government services, and digital connectivity. These challenges continue to shape the socio-economic conditions and development opportunities available to island residents.

At the same time, the study highlights that remoteness also contributes positively to community life by strengthening mutual support, kinship networks, cultural preservation, and community participation. These social assets enhance resilience and enable indigenous communities to adapt to environmental and socio-economic challenges. Thus, remoteness should not be viewed solely as a developmental constraint but also as a factor that reinforces social cohesion and cultural identity.

The study further indicates that respondents favour integrated development strategies centred on improving transport connectivity, specialised healthcare, digital infrastructure, higher education, skill development, and local employment opportunities. Addressing these priorities can reduce the disadvantages of geographical isolation while preserving the ecological and cultural uniqueness of Kadmat Island.

Overall, the study concludes that sustainable development in remote island communities requires a balanced approach that combines improved public services, livelihood diversification, environmental conservation, and community participation. Such an approach will strengthen the resilience and well-being of indigenous communities while ensuring that future development remains socially inclusive, culturally sensitive, and environmentally sustainable. The findings contribute to the growing literature on island studies by providing sociological insights into the relationship between remoteness, community resilience, and sustainable development in small island settings.

VIII. Suggestions For Future Research

Future research may undertake comparative studies across different inhabited islands of Lakshadweep to identify variations in the impacts of remoteness and development. Longitudinal studies are also needed to examine how livelihood patterns, migration, and community resilience evolve over time. Further research may focus on the role of climate change adaptation, digital inclusion, youth aspirations, women's participation in local governance, and sustainable tourism in promoting resilient island communities. Such studies would provide a broader understanding of the socio-economic transformation of small island societies and support evidence-based policy formulation for sustainable island development.

References

- [1]. Baldacchino, G. (2004). The Coming Of Age Of Island Studies. *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie*, 95(3), 272–283.
- [2]. Baldacchino, G. (2006). Islands, Island Studies, *Island Studies Journal*. *Island Studies Journal*, 1(1), 3–18.
- [3]. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis In Psychology. *Qualitative Research In Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- [4]. Census Of India. (2011). Lakshadweep: District Census Handbook. Government Of India.
- [5]. Connell, J. (2013). *Islands At Risk? Environments, Economies And Contemporary Change*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- [6]. Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing And Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (3rd Ed.). SAGE Publications.

- [7]. Farrugia, D. (2016). The Mobility Imperative For Rural Youth: The Structural, Symbolic And Non-Representational Dimensions Of Rural Youth Mobilities. *Journal Of Youth Studies*, 19(6), 836–851.
- [8]. Foley, C. (2023). Islandness And The Social Construction Of Place. *Island Studies Journal*, 18(1), 45–62.
- [9]. Government Of Lakshadweep. (2024). *Economic Review 2023–24*. Directorate Of Economics And Statistics.
- [10]. Grydehøj, A. (2017). Island Studies And The Social Sciences. *Island Studies Journal*, 12(2), 1–18.
- [11]. Hoon, V. (2012). *Living On The Edge: Social And Environmental Challenges In The Lakshadweep Islands*. Orient Blackswan.
- [12]. Khatua, S. (2022). Livelihood Transformation And Social Change In Chetlat Island, Lakshadweep. *Journal Of Island Studies*, 15(2), 89–108.
- [13]. Koliou, M., Van De Lindt, J. W., & Mcallister, T. P. (2018). Community Resilience: A Review Of Definitions And Applications. *Natural Hazards Review*, 19(2), 04018009.
- [14]. Leung, C., & Baumeister, S. (2024). Transport Connectivity And Island Development. *Maritime Policy & Management*, 51(1), 78–95.
- [15]. Lin, B., Chen, X., & Zhang, Y. (2025). Climate Adaptation Strategies In Small Island Communities. *Climate Policy*, 25(1), 45–62.
- [16]. National Centre For Sustainable Coastal Management [NCSCM]. (2024). *Coastal Ecosystem Assessment: Lakshadweep*. Ministry Of Environment, Forest And Climate Change.
- [17]. OECD–International Transport Forum. (2019). *Accessibility And Transport Policy*. OECD Publishing.
- [18]. Prakash, S., Rao, K. S., & Gupta, M. (2014). Fisheries And Livelihood Sustainability In Lakshadweep. *Indian Journal Of Marine Sciences*, 43(6), 1023–1032.
- [19]. Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse And Revival Of American Community*. Simon & Schuster.
- [20]. Reddy, P. (2016). Tourism Development And Environmental Sustainability In Lakshadweep. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 18, 12–20.
- [21]. Ronström, O. (2021). Islandness And The Production Of Remoteness. *Journal Of Marine And Island Cultures*, 10(1), 1–15.
- [22]. Singh, K. S. (2014). *People Of India: Lakshadweep*. Anthropological Survey Of India.
- [23]. Tsiotas, D., & Tselios, V. (2023). Peripherality And Regional Development: A Multidimensional Approach. *Regional Studies*, 57(4), 678–695.
- [24]. Walsh, D., O'Brien, S., & Murphy, E. (2025). Place-Based Governance In Small Islands. *Local Government Studies*, 51(1), 112–129.