

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN FISHERY ACTIVITIES A CASE STUDY OF TUTICORIN DISTRICT, TAMILNADU

J. Nalatham

Associate Professor of Economics, M.V.M.Govt. Arts College for Women, Dindigul

Abstract

Fishing has been considered as a primary livelihood option from time immemorial. People living in coastal areas depend on fishing for their livelihood. Fisheries play a predominant strategic role in the economic activity of our country by its contribution to national income, food and employment. Women play a significant role in the pre and post harvest operations in capture fisheries. Their role in household management is far higher than the women of other sectors. In Tamil Nadu women engage themselves in seaweed collection in addition to the traditional jobs of fish curing, marketing, net making and prawn peeling. The socio-economic structure of small scale fisheries in India is very complex and there are many factors which influence the participation of women in fishery relative activities. To understand these factors, a case study was carried out in Tuticorin district of Tamil Nadu. Prawn peeling, fish curing, drying, marketing and net making are the major areas of women's participation. The fish trading women face severe competition not only from the men folk who use two-wheelers in domestic marketing but also from the agents of export companies resulting in the non-availability of quality fishes which commands high demand and price.

Keywords: *fishing, economic activity, national income, small scale fisheries, foreign exchange, family enterprise*

Introduction

Fishing has been considered as a primary livelihood option from time immemorial. People living in coastal areas depend on fishing for their livelihood. Fisheries play a predominant strategic role in the economic activity of our country by its contribution to national income, food and employment. Healthy population is the greatest asset to a nation and the health of the people primarily depends on the food available to them. Fishery sector serves as an important foreign exchange earner contributing to food and nutritional security.

Fisher folk communities exist all along India's coastal line. In this community, fish production is carried as a family enterprise. There are about 764868 fishermen families in India and a total of 357404 fisher folk inhabiting the coastal villages. Women play a significant role in the pre and post harvest operations in capture fisheries. Their role in household management is far higher than the women of other sectors. In Tamil Nadu women engage themselves in seaweed collection in addition to the traditional jobs of fish

curing, marketing, net making and prawn feeling. The socio-economic structure of small scale fisheries in India is very complex and there are many factors which influence the participation of women in fishery relative activities. To understand these factors, a case study was carried out in Tuticorin district of Tamil Nadu.

Objectives of the Study

The present study is based on the following objectives.

1. To study the role of women in fishery activities.
2. To study the problem of women in their fishery activities.
3. To provide solution on the basis of findings.

Materials and Methods

Tuticorin is one of the maritime districts in Tamil Nadu. In Tuticorin District, there are 21 fishing villages, out of these 21 villages, 5 villages were selected on the basis of random sampling method. 150 fisherwomen were selected on the basis of random sampling method, from the selected villages. Field survey method was adopted for data collection. Field survey was administered through well structured interview schedule.

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic profile of sample fisherwomen (Table:1)

Parameters	No. of fisherwomen	Percentage
Age		
Below 30	20	13.33
31 - 40	60	40.00
41 - 50	45	30.00
Above 50	25	16.67
Total	150	100.00
Education		
Illiterates	55	36.67
Primary Education	45	30.00
Higher Education	30	20.00
Higher Secondary	20	13.33
Degree and above	NIL	NIL
Total	150	100.00
Type of Family		
Nuclear	10	6.67
Joint Family	140	93.33
Total	150	100
Size of Family		
Less than Four	71	47.33
More than Four	79	52.67
Total	150	100.00
Monthly Income from Fishery Activities		
Below Rs.4000	75	50
Rs.4001 - 6000	50	33.33
Rs.6001 - 8000	15	10.00
Above Rs.8000	10	6.67
Total	150	100.00

Source: Primary Data.

From the Table 1, it is inferred that, 40 percent of the sample fisherwomen are in the age group of 31-40, 36.67 percent of the sample fisherwomen are illiterates, 93.33 percent of the sample fisherwomen are in the joint system of family, in 52.67 percent of sample fisherwomen's families there are more than four members and 50 percent of the sample fisherwomen are earning below Rs.4000 per month.

Area of participation of women

Prawn peeling, fish curing, drying, marketing and net making are the major areas of women's participation.

Prawn peeling

Peeled prawn is an important item of foreign exchange. Prawn peeling is a seasonal activity, related with prawn fishery season. Peeling does not require any special skill. Peeling is carried out under the supervision of the agents who distribute weighed quantity of prawn among the women. In the sample selected 23.33 per cent of the women are found to be participated in prawn peeling.

Curing drying and trading of fish

Curing, drying and trading of fish are the other activities carried out by women. Curing of fish practiced on the seashore with the help of a few women. Marine fisher women are also engaged in trading of fresh fish and dry fish as vendors. The participation of women in curing and drying and in trading is 20 and 30 per cent respectively.

Net making and repairing

Net making is a leisure time activity. Net mending is done by men during their leisure. The cotton and silk threads have been replaced by nylon yarn and braiding of nylon net for boats is the most important activity. The net making by women is reported to be decreasing with the introduction of nylon net factories. Women are also indulging in repairing the net 6.67 per cent of women are engaged in this activity.

Processing plant workers

Another area, in which the fisher folk are working, is processing plant. In the processing plants fishes are processed and tinned. Fishes are exported from these processing, plants to various countries. In this activity, 20 per cent of fisher women are engaged.

Table 2 Fisherwomen engaged in fishery activities

Activity	No. of Fisher Women	Percentage
Prawn Peeling	35	23.33
Drying and curing	30	20.00
Fish Trading	45	30.00
Net making and repairing	10	6.67
Processing Plant workers	30	20
Total	150	100

Source: Primary Data

Problems faced by fisher Women

From the study the following problems of fisherwomen were identified.

1. Since most of the fishes marketed by women fish vendors are low value fishes, the intrinsic problems like back of infrastructure, and basic amenities invariably affect the marketing of low value fishes.
2. Low Value fishes are mainly preferred by a narrow spectrum of low and middle income consumers and the demand often fluctuated with reason and availability. So the women fish traders are facing problems in selling of fishes.
3. The fish trading women face severe competition not only from the men folk who use two-wheelers in domestic marketing but also from the agents of export companies resulting in the non-availability of quality fishes which commands high demand and price.
4. Heavy expenses involved in storing of fishing and bringing the fishes to local market is an important problem faced by women fish vendors.
5. Women fish traders are facing financial problems. They are exploited by the exorbitant rate of money lenders.
6. Family burden also affect the women fisher folk.

Suggestions

Fisher women co-operative society can provide credit to fisher women at reasonable rate of interest.

Infrastructure and transport facilities may be improved.

Empowerment of fisher folk should be assured through education and gender equality, which gains significance in the context of ever changing technological options in marine fisheries.

Several Mari culture technologies ensure enough technologies ensure enough scope for accommodating women in large numbers women empowerment and the community development through combined effort of men and women folk require a holistic approach.

References

1. Gaurav Dutt and Ashwan Mahajan - 'Indian Economy' S.Chand and company Ltd., New Delhi 2010
2. Asthaletha.S , Ramachandran.C Sheela Immanuel, Diwan.A.D and R.Sathiadhas - Changing roles of fisher women of India - Issues and perspectives' Proceedings of International conference on women in Fisheries 2002 Mumbai PP.21 - 38.
3. Swathi lakshmi.P.S - "Livelihood and level of aspiration of coastal fisher folk of Tamil Nadu" Indian Journal of Social Research Vol.52 (1) (Jan-March 2011) PP 31 - 54.
4. Statistical Hand Book of Tuticorin District - 2010
5. Marine Fishery Census 2010
6. Balakrishnan.S - "Women Employment in Fishnet Industries-A study" - Southern Economist volume 46. NO.(23,24) April 1 to 15, 2008.
7. Krishna Srinath - "Role of women in small scale Fisheries - A case study" Marine Fisheries Information service No.72 April, May, June 1987.