

Association Between Profile Characteristics and the Level of Aspiration of Women Dry Fish Wholesalers

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Over the last two centuries, women's role in fisheries has been predominantly in the fish processing and marketing sectors. Processing is clearly the sub sector where women are most involved in fisheries, demonstrating a small majority of the workforce at 53 per cent but within an average of 11 to 75 per cent. However women are mostly 40 to 60 per cent of the workforce, with only Greece (11%) having markedly less than 40 per cent female involvement. (Elliot, 2002). Women's involvement in the management and administration element of the sector is, at 39 per cent perhaps higher than might have been expected in what has notoriously been a male dominated preserve. However, this does not necessarily mean that women have made inroads into the senior management roles, and anecdotal evidence suggests that indeed women are generally not represented at the higher levels.

While fishermen dominate the capture fisheries scenario by involving in active fishing and sea going, the fisherwomen's contribution after the fishing operation itself cannot be underestimated. Besides helping in post-fishing activities like unloading, sorting, net drying, net repairing the women are responsible for distribution and marketing of the catch. Unfortunately such useful contributions by women in fish production and related activities are usually not recognised as being economically productive. (FAO, 2006)

Studies have shown that, in India, involvement of the fisherwomen in the post-harvest activities in the marine fisheries sector is very high and substantial.

The studies conducted by Khader et.al (2005) on the roles of fisherwomen in the coastal states of

Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Kerala reveal that in Kerala, women workforce (45%) are dominating the peeling work in prawn peeling sheds, in Tamilnadu 51 per cent of the workforce engage in fish trading and 32 per cent in fish curing/drying/net making. In Karnataka 44 per cent and 34 per cent of its fisherwomen are engaged in beach work and small scale fish trading respectively. Andhra Pradesh employs 32 per cent in fish curing /drying/net making and 27 per cent in processing plant works.

Socio-cultural values and norms also exert considerable influence on the fisherwomen's role in decision-making. Generally, there are two types of decision-making in the family: relating to home management and relating to occupation and production (Anbarasan, 1985). Fisherwomen play a significant role as home managers and exercise an important influence over the control and management of the household budget. Firth (1943) in his classical study on Malay fishermen in Kelantan noted that women often act as bankers and financial managers to their husbands. It is customary for the fishermen to surrender their incomes or daily earnings to their wives, holding back only a small amount of money for their pocket expenses.

Thus, spending and saving decisions are left entirely to the women. As far as savings and credit are concerned, women decide on how much and how to save. During lean fishing seasons or if borrowings are needed for certain purposes, the responsibility of raising the loan or credit and its repayments rests with the women. Wholesale business of dry fish forms one major area where, fisherwomen are actively involved. Here the managerial roles of the fisherwomen as manager in

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business as well as income earner is well pronounced. Generally speaking, there are two categories of factors influencing the role and status of women in small-scale fisheries or “fisherwomen” for short: group factors and individual factors (Anbarasan, 1985). The group factors include: economy and technology, family's economic position and wealth, socio-cultural and traditional values, and social and political involvements. Individual factors, on the other hand, include age, marital status, educational level, and employment status. The individual factors play a major role in deciding the fisherwomen's level of aspiration. Aspiration is the desired future state of well being of an individual.

Against this background, the present study was undertaken with the objective of studying the profile characteristics and their association with the level of aspiration of women dry fish wholesalers.

METHODOLOGY

Bundur harbour of Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka was selected as the study area. It is the major landing centre in this district. Wholesalers in dry fish are an important stakeholder category in this district. For the present study, it was decided to take a sample of 32 fisherwomen from Bundur harbour, Dakshina Kannada district for the study. The sampling method followed for the study was multi-stage random sampling.

A well structured interview schedule was constructed for the study, and the data collection was done by personally interviewing the respondents. A total of 10 independent variables such as age, education, occupation, family type, annual income, material possession, social participation, occupational experience, communication behaviour and economic motivation and one dependant variable level of aspiration were taken for the study. 3 dependant variables such as the level of awareness of the respondents about the developmental programmes, level of participation and level of aspiration were used for the present study. The independent variables were measured based on standardised measurement procedures used by previous authors and the dependant variables such as level of awareness and level of participation by the scoring procedure of (Lekshmi, 1995) and level of aspiration was measured by the scoring procedure of (Jansi, 1991).

The data was statistically analysed using suitable statistical tools such as mean and standard deviation and chi-square test. Percentage analysis was used to make simple comparisons.

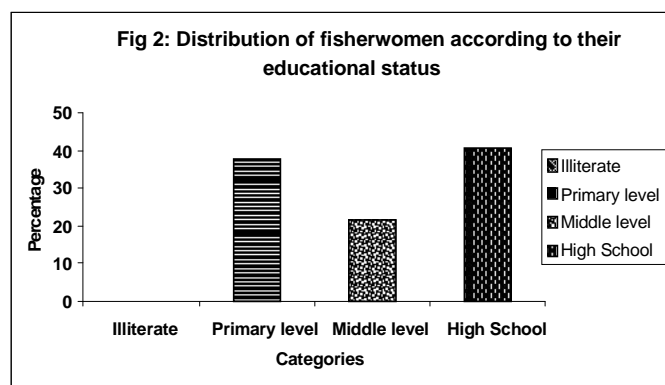
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It could be observed from Figure 1, that majority of the women wholesale dry fish sellers (87.50 percent) were old ie above 45 years of age, and only a meagre proportion (12.50 percent) were middle aged ie between 35 and 45 years of age and none of the respondents were young ie below 35 years of age.

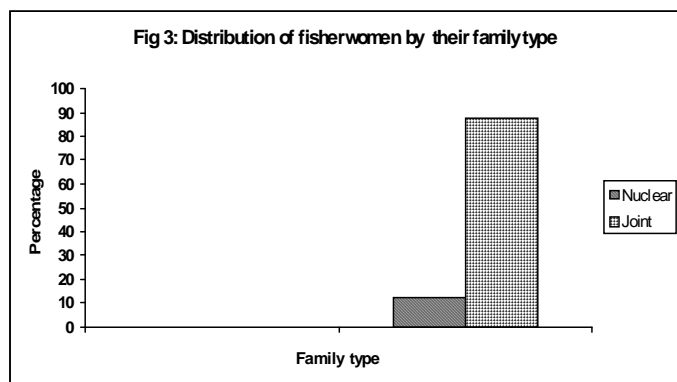
Studies conducted by Sathiadhas et.al (2003) reveal that majority of the fish vendors were in the age group of 40-60. Cultural and social factors bar young and unmarried women from participating in fish vending activities. The studies conducted by DFID (2003) in Tamilnadu revealed that, women in the post-harvest sector are either middle-aged or old. Young or unmarried women do not get involved in marketing fish.



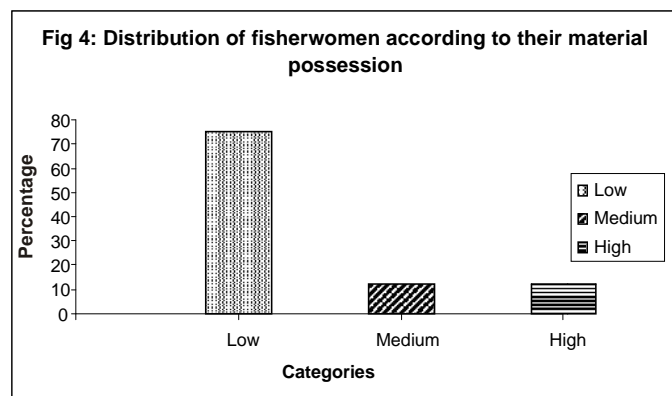
As far as the educational status of the fisherwomen were concerned, it was observed that, majority (40.62 percent) of the fisherwomen had undergone high school level of education, followed by 37.51 percent who had undergone primary level of education and 21.87 percent had undergone middle school level of education. (Figure 2).



As could be observed from figure 3, cent percent of the respondents (100.00 percent) had wholesale of dry fish as their primary occupation.



A cursory look at figure 4 revealed that, 87.50 percent of the respondents had a joint family system and only 12.50 per cent had a nuclear family. This finding differs from the finding of ICM (2003) in coastal Orissa, wherein it was observed that the nuclearisation of fisher families was becoming more common.

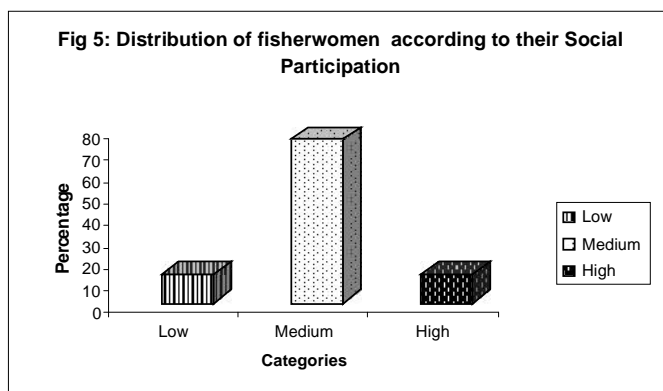


It was observed during the course of the study that, the maximum business of wholesale of dry fish was during the months of March, April and May. During these months the average monthly income was found to be Rs.20,000. The season of medium level of business was observed to be during the months of September, October, November and December, January and February. The lean season of wholesale of dry fish was found to be during June, July and August. Thus the wholesalers were engaged for 9 months in business in a year. During the on-season, the women are engaged for 6 hours/ day (6 A.M to 12 Noon) in business and during the off season they were found to be engaged for only 1 hour in business.

The average monthly income was found to be Rs. 6442.

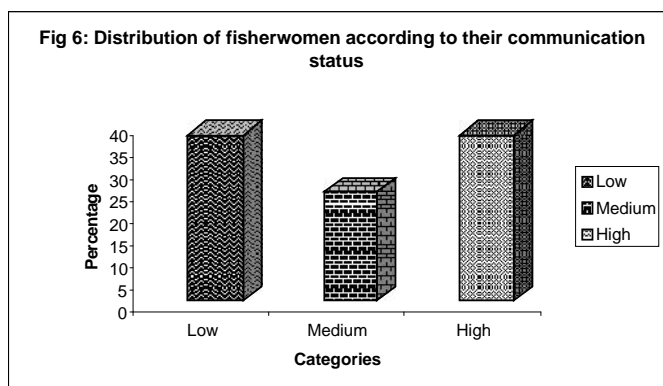
During the off-season, the women were observed to be engaged in unloading fishes from Dhonis. The wages received by them per hour was Rs. 50 and they were engaged for 2 hours of work/ day in unloading activity during the off-season.

As far as the material possession of the fisherwomen was concerned, it could be observed that majority (75.00 per cent) had a low level of material possession and an equal proportion of the respondents (12.50 percent) had a medium and high level of material possession. Majority of the respondents (75.00 percent) had a medium level of Social participation. Participation of women’s groups in fisherwomen co-operatives and self-help groups are vital for enriching their knowledge base and income and honing their skills in fishery based economically viable activities.

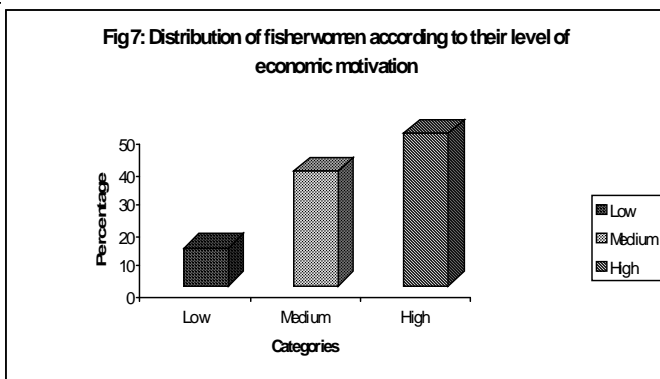


A study of the occupational experience revealed that an equal number of respondents had a low and high level of occupational experience and only 25 percent had medium level of occupational experience.

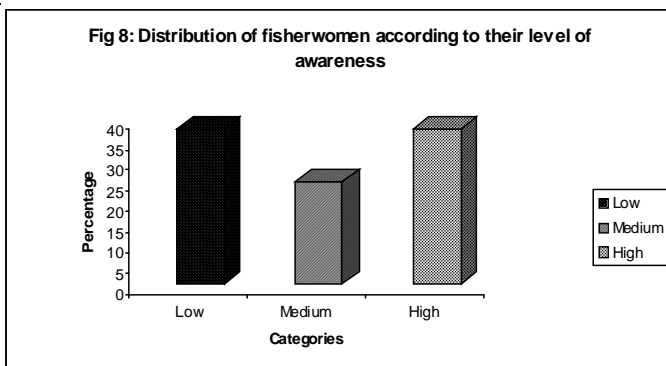
Majority of the respondents (62.50 percent) had a low level of communication status. The fisherwomen did not subscribe to, nor read any local fisheries magazines such as moghaveera and meenavali.



It was observed during the study (fig 7), that half the total number of respondents had a high level of economic motivation (50.00 percent) followed by 37.50 percent having a medium level of economic motivation and only 12.50 percent had a low level of economic motivation. Studies by ICM (2003) revealed that even when a man is the titular head of the household, women are the de facto managers of the household economy because they contribute more to the family earnings or at least more consistently through out the year. They pay school fees and medical expenses and contribute in other family matters. In general, women in fishing communities have to rely on themselves As a result, they engage in various economic and income generating activities either personally or in association with other women, seasonally or full-time to supplement incomes. Proceeds from the sale of fish provide women with cash to buy other ingredients. (FAO, 2006)

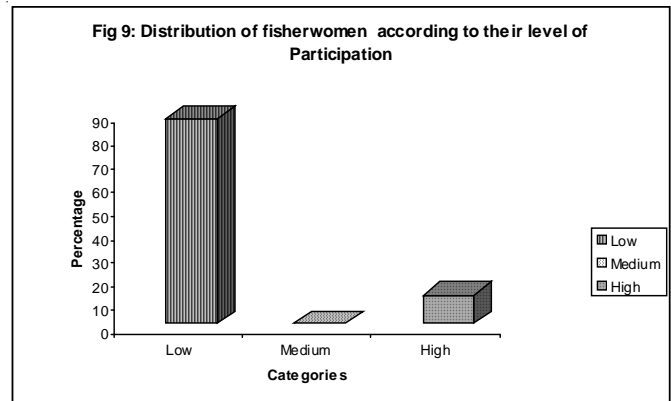


The level of awareness of the participants regarding the developmental programmes for the fisher folk implemented by the State Fisheries Department were found to be equally distributed (37.50 per cent) in the low and high categories.(fig 8)

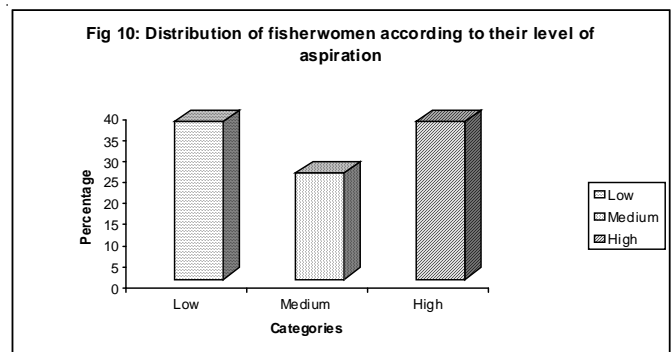


A number of developmental programmes are being implemented by the State Fisheries Department , such as construction of fish markets for each Panchayat, assistance to fish marketing, loans to fisheries co-operatives, housing schemes and group insurance

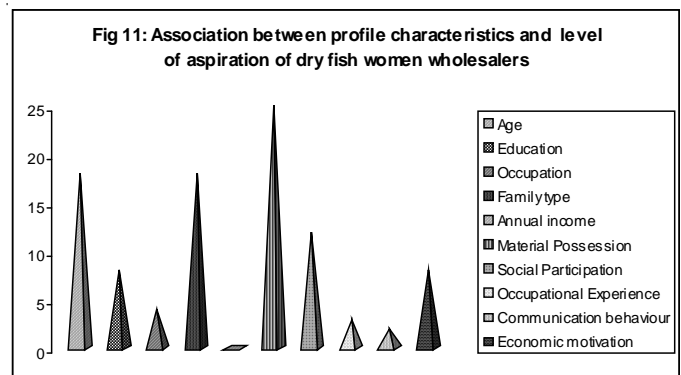
schemes. It was observed during the study that lack of concerted extensive and intensive extension efforts on the part of the State Fisheries have contributed to the low level of awareness and participation on the part of the fisherwomen. The participation of the respondents in the developmental programmes for the fisher folk implemented by the State Fisheries Department, were found to be low since, majority of the respondents (87.50 per cent) belonged to the low level of participation. (fig 9)



It could be observed from the study (fig 10) that, an equal proportion of the respondents (37.50 percent) had a low as well as high level of aspiration and only 25.00 percent of the respondents had a medium level of aspiration.



The association between the profile characteristics and the level of aspiration of the fisherwomen was studied and the results are presented in Figure 11.



It could be observed that variables such as age, family type, material possession and social participation had a positive and high association with the level of aspiration of women dry fish wholesalers. The findings imply that the fisherwomen's level of aspiration was affected by age, family type, material possession and social participation. Other profile characteristics such as education, occupation, annual income, occupational experience, communication behaviour and economic motivation were not having a significant association with their level of aspiration.

CONCLUSION

Fisherwomen in wholesale business of dry fish play an integral role in regulating market prices and have pronounced roles accentuated from being mere labourers engaged in post harvest activities and petty fish traders to that of managerial roles in wholesale business. However, their level of awareness and participation in developmental programmes intended for their welfare is still low. Extensive and intensive extension efforts are required for effective creation of awareness among women and improve their levels of participation in developmental schemes. Differential extension training programmes for fisherwomen of different age groups and family types have to be organised. The social participation

of the women in different organisations such as mahila mandals, fisherwomen self-help groups have to be enhanced and strengthened through various awareness campaigns and group based training programmes.

The basic objective of involving women in fisheries development is to make them equal partners to men. That will enable them to participate productively and self-reliantly to improve their family's nutritional and living standards. They need appropriate knowledge, adequate skills, and appropriate technologies to contribute socially and economically to their community's welfare. These needs should be provided directly to them and not through the men, as was done before.

The approach is warranted in the form of providing formal education, adult literacy classes, training and extension services related to their economic and social needs; education in child care, sanitation, and nutrition; introducing improved technologies and methods to ease their burden and increase their efficiency; developing opportunities for more income-generating activities and equitable access to credit; and encouraging women to be active in community activities, decision-making, and in all stages of project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. These support activities should be directed to women in fishing communities through fisheries projects.