

# **OCCUPATIONAL PRACTICES AND PROBLEMS OF RURAL ARTISANAL FISHERFOLKS IN OYAN DAM AREA OF OGUN STATE.**

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

Artisanal Fish Societies constitutes one of the poorest societies in the developing world. Attempts to harness the potentials of such societies have often failed due to the enormity of the problem of poverty. This study was conducted in four major fishing villages namely: Abule titun, Apojola, Imala Odo and Ibaro in order to investigate the occupational practices and the problems of rural artisanal fisherfolks in Oyam's Dam, area of Ogun State. Eighty respondents were randomly selected among the artisanal fisher folks for interview using interview guide. The findings revealed that 43.8% of the fisherfolks are within active age range of 31-40 years while 30% are within 21-30 years range. Also 31% had no formal education indicating a relatively high level of illiteracy among the fisherfolks while majority of the respondents practice fishing activities using paddle and canoe. It was similarly discovered from the study that the most pressing problems of the fisherfolks is the lack of basic social amenities like electricity, potable water, access roads, hospital and markets. It is therefore recommended that basic social infrastructures be provided for the artisanal fishing communities in order to improve their social welfare, standard of living and the capacity to have a sustainable fishing occupation in the interest of food security and poverty alleviation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Artisanal fishery sector constitutes the most important sector, which accounts for the major fish supply in the developing world.

However attempts to harness the full potentials in here in this sector have often failed due to the enormity of poverty which constantly put the fisherfolks on the brinks of economic stagnation and incapacitation.

The assessment of FAO (1991) shows that out of the 1.9 million people engaged in either full time, part time and seasonal fishermen/women about 98% belong to the artisanal sector. Artisanal sector fisheries is characterized with low technology, lack of modern equipment, low fund to expand etc. and thus makes the bulk of the fisherfolks operation labour intensive with little or no opportunities to expand. These problems however in most cases often results in fish farmers being forced to seek for additional income in non fishing activities

To stem the problem of poverty the sector is occasioned by intensive labour with gear and vessels often owner operated, assembled with minimal assistances.

According to Smith (1979) catches most often does not enter the large markets but sold at dispersed points of landing while a large part of the catch is family consumed.

The resource poor artisanal fisherfolks more often than not do not have any choice than to rely on the middlemen and women who constitute the link between production and distribution

of fish resources to consumers. This phenomenon, which put the fisherfolks under perpetual exploitation and stagnation.

Hoakonsen (1990) observed that African artisanal fishermen predominantly belong to a handful of ethnic groups. The principal ones include the Wolof, Ibibio, Nyominka, Fantegal (of Senegal), Adan, Ewe, Ijaw and Ilaje, who basically come from Senegal, Ghana and Nigeria.

Majority of these fishermen which constitutes half a million canoe fisherfolks in west Africa fishes occasionally either on subsistence level or to supplement income from other source such as agricultural activities.

Larsson (1984) observed that majority of the artisanal fishermen and women are characterized by utilization of low cost craft, usually one-three men/canoe, while lack of market for their products, lack of inputs credit facilities and other social amenities and vital infrastructures.

The aim of this study therefore is to investigate the occupational practices and problems of rural artisanal fisherfolks in Oyan dam area of Ogun State. It specifically addresses the following areas.

- ❖ Investigating the demographic characteristics of the rural artisanal fisherfolks in the Oyan dam area.
- ❖ Examine the various occupational practices of the people
- ❖ Identify the problems facing the rural artisanal fisherfolks
- ❖ Proffer solutions to the identified problems and making recommendations aimed at improving their skills and promoting their productivity and efficiency.

## METHODOLOGY

This research study was conducted in Oyan Dam Lake Area of Ogun State and specifically Abule Titun, Apojola, Imala-odo and Ibaro villages.

Oyan River is a major tributary to the West of Ogun River. It is located 07° 58'N and 03° 02'E with a catchments area of 1610km<sup>2</sup>. The dam is situated some twenty kilometers North West of Ogun-Osun River Basin Development authority (OORBDA) Alabata, Abeokuta. The dam, which was constructed in 1979, and commissioned in 1983 consists of an earth filled lake, which covers an area of 40km<sup>2</sup>. The reservoir has a length of 27km with a maximum width of 67km.

The dam was primarily built to provide hydroelectric power, and provide water for domestic and industrial uses around Abeokuta and Lagos environs. It also meant to supply water for irrigated project of about 3,000 ha. And to provide fishing ground for the adjoining communities. Activities fishing are the main activity of the people around the lake area and the predominant fish families include *Cichlidae*, *Bagridae*, *Mormyridae*, *Hepsetidae*, *Characidae* and *Schibeidae*.

The gear used includes gill net, hooks and line, bamboo traps and crafts are dug out canoes and paddle, outboard motors and calabashes.

Eighty questionnaires were used to solicit information from 80 artisanal fisherfolks using random sampling technique. The data collected was suggested to analysis using simple descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution and percentages.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 80 respondents were involved in the study Demographic characteristics of respondents.

**Table 1: Frequency distribution of respondent based on Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	23	28.8
Male	57	71.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The result obtained from table 1 shows that majority (71.2%) of respondents interviewed in this study were male while few (28.8%) were female. This implies that small-scale inland fishing is still predominantly done by men in the study area.

**Table 2: Frequency distribution respondents based on age.**

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
21-30	24	30.0
31-40	35	43.8
41-50	17	21.2
51-60	2	2.5
Above 60	2	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The results from the table 2 show that (30%) of respondents are between the age range of 21-30 while 43.8% of the respondent fall within age range of 31-40 years. And 21-30 age ranges has 30%. All these shows that majority of the people fall within active age range are young thus they go about their business without any problem that goes along with old age.

**Table 3: Frequency distribution of respondents based on level of education.**

Level of education	Frequency	Percentage
Non formal education	25	31.2
Adult education	9	11.2
Primary education	27	33.8
Incomplete secondary education	11	13.8
Complete secondary education	6	7.5
Tertiary education	2	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 3 shows that one third (33.8%) of the respondents had primary education while 31.2% had no formal education meaning that one out of every three artisanal fisherfolks in Oyan has completed primary education does help in promoting extension programs that new innovations would be adopted with less difficulty since they have knowledge of formal education thus form early majority of adoption process because they will decoding extension message easily.

**Table 4: Frequency distribution of respondents according to household size.**

Household size	Frequency	Percentage
1-3	18	22.5
4-6	12	52.5
7-9	20	25.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The household size data are revealed in table 4. The second group ranging from 4-6 numbers has the highest percentage of 52.5% followed by 7-9 number of third groups of 25%, while 22.5% of the respondents had the least household size of 1-3 members. These imply that majority (75%) of the artisanal fisherfolks in Oyan Dam area do not keep large members in their homes.

**Table 5: Frequency distribution of respondents according to fishing experience.**

Fishing experience	Frequency	Percentage
1-5	20	25.0
6-10	43	53.7
Above 10 years	17	21.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 5 above shows the fishing experience of the fisherfolks. It revealed that more than half (53.7%) of the respondents had 6-10 years of fishing experience while a quarter (25%) of them have 1-5 years while one fifth (21.3%) had been fishing for more than 10 years. This fishing occupation is a mean of livelihood to sustain life through job creation.

**Table 6: Frequency distribution of respondents based on crafts.**

Crafts	Frequency	Percentage
Paddle and canoe	78	97.5
Outboard engine	2	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 6 shows that majority (97.5%) of the respondents make use of paddle and canoes while few (2.5%) make use of outboard engine. This shows that majority of the fisherfolks are artisanal fishermen using simple technologies with dugout canoes and simple engine of outboard engine.

**Table 7: Frequency distribution of respondent on Tribe.**

Tribe	Frequency	Percentage
Yoruba	26	32.5
Hausa	31	38.7
Igbo	1	1.25
Gwari	13	16.3
Idoma	2	2.5
Igala	2	2.5
Gara	5	6.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The Table 7 shows that more than one third (38.7%) of the respondents were Hausa, while Yoruba's are just about one third of the artisanal fisherfolks. Idoma and Igala share 2.5% of

the respondents. These show that African artisanal fishermen predominantly belong to a handful of ethnic such as Wolof, Lebou, Nyominka, fante Gal Adan, Ewe, Ijaw and Ilaje (branch of Yoruba) according to (Haakonsen, 1990).

**Table 8: Frequency distribution of respondent based on type of fishing.**

Type of fishing	Frequency	Percentage
Full time	54	67.5
Part time	26	32.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 8 shows that 67.5% of the fisherfolks engaged in full time fishing while remaining one third (32.5%) taking fish as part time job. This is line with (Smith 1979) which says that the fishing activity is often part-time and household income was being supplemented by those taking fish farming as part-time.

**Table 9: Frequency distribution of respondents on cost of crafts.**

Cost of craft	Frequency	Percentage
1100-2000	7	8.75
2100-3000	1	1.25
3100-4000	1	1.25
4100-5000	39	48.75
5100-6000	30	37.5
6100-7000	2	2.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 9 shows that (48.75%) of the fisherfolks bought their crafts between the price range of #4,100 to #5,000 while 37.5% of the fisherfolks bought that price range of #5,100 - #6,000. The crafts they bought at #1,000 are the calabash type while the cost of canoes ranges from #2,100 - #7,000 based on their quality.

**Table 10: Frequency distribution of respondent on type of fishing.**

Type of fishing gears	Frequency	Percentage
Cast net	46	57.5
Seine net	11	13.7
Drag net	9	11.3
Hook and line	2	2.5
Long line	3	3.8
Trap	9	11.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 10 shows that more than half (57.5%) of the respondents made use of cast net while (13.8%) of respondent used seine net and 11.3% of the respondents made use of drag net and trap was 11.2% of respondents.

## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Finding reveal that majority (71.2%) of rural artisanal fisherfolks are male and only (28.8%) are female fisherfolks. It further shows that (43.8%) are in their active age (31-40 years). One third (33.8%) of the fisherfolks had primary education while (31.2%) of them had no formal education. More than half (52.5%) of the respondents had 4-6 household members.

More than half (53.8%) of the respondents had 6-10 years fishing experience while one quarter (25%) of them had 1-5 years and one fifth (21.3%) had more than ten (10) years fishing experience. Majority (97.5%) of the respondents used paddle and canoe as their craft while few (2.5%) used outboard engines. More than half (57.5%) of the respondents use cast net while (11.2%) of them employed trap as fishing gears.

The most pressing problems encountered by the respondents are lack of electricity, portable water, motorable roads, hospitals and markets.

Based on this finding, it can also be concluded that the rural artisanal fisherfolks are still very poor, and still used crude methods in their fishing practices.

This is probably due to lack of money to afford modern crafts and fishing gears.

They also faced with a lot of problems, which are essentially social amenities and infrastructure in nature. All these indicate that these rural artisanal fisherfolks had being neglected by the government at local and state levels.

## RECOMMENDATION

The study has revealed that people of the study area are predominantly depended on fishing activities for a living. However opportunities equally abound for participation in crop agriculture, which could be practice side by side with fishing.

However, for these rural fisherfolks to be able to break from the doldrums of perpetual poverty and improve their productivity, government should create enabling environment necessary to empower the fisherfolks. This could be done through possible improvement in infrastructure and transport system. This will go a long way to alleviate the problem of marketing or distribution of fish to consumers. Secondly, credit facilities should be advanced to the fisherfolks in order to be able to procure the essential inputs needed in their business.

Thirdly, fisherfolks should be assisted to organize themselves into viable cooperative societies by first of all identifying their pre-existing traditional associations or group, which could be fine-tuned to formal cooperative societies. This is to enable them enjoy economics of scale, freedom from exploitation by the middle men, bulk purchasing of gear and craft at low cost and availing themselves with varieties of skills and specialization at their disposal in terms of fish processing, distribution and marketing.

If the above recommendations are carried out by governments then we will have achieved much and equally made a major headway in transforming the life of the hitherto poor artisanal fishermen and women to a better pedestal.

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