

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF EMPOWERMENT OF FISHER WOMEN IN COASTAL KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

Fisherwomen contribute substantially to the Indian fisheries economy in general and to the Karnataka State's marine economy in particular. Fisherwomen form an invisible work force but they are dominant in shore based activities such as processing, vending and trading of fish. Studies have revealed that, the fisherwomen's contribution to the family income was found to be vital and indispensable for the fisher families' livelihood. The present study was conducted in three selected villages of Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka State. The findings of the study revealed that majority (76.67 per cent) of women fresh fish vendors had medium level of empowerment. The results of the Correlation co-efficient analysis revealed that, the socio personal and socio-psychological variables such as education, mass media participation, contact with extension agency and social participation showed a high and positive significant relationship with the empowerment status of the women fish vendors.

Key words : Empowerment of fisher women, Coastal Karnataka

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment in the context of women's development is a way of defining, challenging and overcoming barriers in a women's life through which she increases her ability to shape her life and environment. It is an active, multidimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. Women are vital part of the Indian economy. At present, the fisheries sector is a source of livelihood

for over a 14 million people engaged fully, partially or in subsidiary activities pertaining to the sector and earning Rs. 10,048 crores in the year 2010-2011 (Ayyappaan, 2011). In India, especially in the marine sector, there are 3.52 million marine fishermen who residing in 3202 marine fishing villages, where as fisherwomen numbered about 1.71 million (Anon, 2005). It has been estimated in India that women account for 40 per cent of the

work force in domestic marketing and 60 per cent in the export oriented fish and shellfish processing. Altogether, about half a million women are involved in harvest and post-harvest operations in the Indian fisheries sector (Bhatta and Rao, 2003 and Anon, 2010).

The seasonal nature of employment in the fisheries sector displays a distorted picture about per capita earnings of the fisherwomen and is quite correlative with their poverty status. The problem is more acute for the women stakeholders mainly due to the prevalence of wage disparities favoring men. It is a widely accepted fact that poverty has a gender bias, as 70% of the people living in abject poverty are women (Dehadrai, 2002). It is reported that women perform 2/3rd of the world's work, receive only 10% of world's income and own only one per cent of the total assets (Ashalettha *et al.* 2002). Fisherwomen must be given an appropriate technologies enabling them to make the greatest possible economic and social contribution (Khader *et al.* 2008) thereby, facilitating overall development of society. Although fisherwomen contribute in all spheres of development both at micro and macro level, it is not appropriately quantified or organized. The present study attempts to discuss the empowerment status of fisherwomen of coastal Karnataka and the characteristics which played dominant role in their present living status that could be focused for further upgrade of fisherwomen.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was taken up in Dakshina Kannada district. It consists of 21 fishing

villages located very close to the coast. The villages which had maximum number of women fish vendors were chosen for the study. The selected villages were viz., Bengare, Surathkal, and Ullala. Proportionate random sampling technique was employed to select one hundred and twenty ($40 \times 3 = 120$) respondents from the selected villages. The data were collected through personal interviews using well structured, pre-tested interview schedule and analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques such as zero order correlation and multiple regressions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A perusal of Table 1 and Fig. 1 shows that 14.16 per cent of women fish vendors had high level of empowerment, about 76.67 per cent of women fish vendors had medium level of empowerment and 9.17 per cent of the total respondents had low level empowerment status. The findings are in line with the findings of Chaturvedi (2004), Ninawe and Diwan (2005), Ojha *et al.* (2005), Sahu *et al.* (2009) and Wani (2010).

Table 1. Distribution of women fish vendor respondents according to their empowerment status

Category	Respondents	
	Fre- quency	%-age
Low empowerment level	11	09.17
Medium empowerment level	92	76.67
High empowerment level	17	14.16
Total	120	100

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Relationship between personal, socio-economic and psychological characteristics of the women fish vendors and their empowerment status :

The relationship between selected characteristics of women fish vendors and their empowerment status was found by correlation analysis computed 'r' values are presented in Table 2. The variables such as education, mass media participation, contact with extension agency, social participation, level of awareness on the beneficiary activities of the State Fisheries Department and the level of participation of fisherwomen in beneficiary activities were found to be positively significant at 0.01 level of probability.

Table 2. Correlation coefficient of characteristics of respondents with their empowerment status

Independent variables	Correlation coefficient for fisherwomen (n=120)
Age	-0.092 NS
Education	0.260 **
Occupational status	—
Annual income	0.038 NS
Family size	-0.015 NS
Family type	-0.010 NS
Occupational experience	-0.106 NS
Mass media participation	0.339 **
Contact with extension agency	0.308 **
Social participation	0.305 **
Credit orientation	0.171 NS
Economic motivation	0.004 NS
Risk orientation	0.045 NS
Self confidence	0.110 NS
Level of awareness	0.261 **
Level of participation	0.266 **

Variable occupational status had constant scoring and hence was excluded from the analysis. The zero order correlation revealed the nature of relationship that existed between the independent and dependent variables. However the multiple regression analysis was worked out the functional relationship between dependent variables, as the correlation coefficients brought out only the strength of relationship and the results are furnished in Table 3. Out of sixteen independent variables fitted in the regression equation, none of the variables had significant contribution towards the empowerment status of the women fish vendors.

Variable occupational status had constant scoring and hence was excluded from the analysis. The value of coefficient of multiple regression (R^2) was 0.248 implying that all the sixteen independent variables could explain 25% variation in the dependent variable, empowerment status. The 'F' test of statistics showed that this variation was found to be significant at 1.00 per cent level of significance.

Conclusion :

From the results of the investigation it could be conclude that majority of the women fresh fish vendors had medium level of empowerment status. Characteristics such as education, mass media participation, contact with extension agency, social participation, level of awareness on beneficiary activities of State Fisheries Department and the level of participation of fisherwomen in beneficiary activities showed a high and positive significant association with the fisherwomen empowerment status. The study further revealed that the R^2 value showed twenty five per cent of variation in the empowerment status was explained by

Table 3. Multiple regression analysis of independent variables with dependent variable fisherwomen empowerment

Independent variables	Women fish retailers (n=120)		
	Partial regression coefficient (b)	SE (b)	't' value
Age	-0.119	3.201	-1.021 NS
Education	0.027	1.001	0.235 NS
Occupational status	—	—	—
Annual income	-0.011	3.142	-0.115 NS
Family size	0.024	4.292	0.177 NS
Family type	-0.03	4.461	-0.235 NS
Occupational experience	-0.079	0.159	-0.725 NS
Mass media participation	0.193	0.83	1.903 NS
Contact with extension agency	0.146	0.873	1.314 NS
Social participation	0.176	0.79	1.514 NS
Credit orientation	-0.005	1.608	-0.045 NS
Economic motivation	-0.147	1.123	-1.161 NS
Risk orientation	-0.108	1.359	-0.809 NS
Self confidence	0.107	2.946	1.095 NS
Level of awareness	0.055	1.808	0.477 NS
Level of participation	0.143	2.004	1.329 NS

R²=0.248

a = 240.322

F = 2.282 **

** Significant at 1% level

* Significant at 5% level

NS - Non significant

sixteen independent variables in the study. The 'F' value was significant at one per cent level of probability.

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