

Gender and Information Preference among the Artisanal Fishers in Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined gender and information preference among the artisanal fishers in Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. Stratified sampling technique was used to select two hundred and fifteen respondents (80%) from a list of 269 registered artisanal fishers in two landing sites – Wadata and North Bank in lower River Benue while structured questionnaire was administered to the fishers to collect information on socio-economics characteristics, fishing licence, weed encroachment, endangered fish species as well as post-harvest techniques. The data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentages and Chi square ($p < 0.05$). The results showed that majority of the fishers were males (96.3%) and preferred information on weed encroachment (98.2%), fishing license (97.4%), and endangered species (96.0%) while females preferred, post harvest/ fish preservation techniques (14.3%). There was significant relationship between gender and post harvest ($\chi^2 = 0.000$). The study therefore recommended that while formulating fisheries policy gender preference should be given priority to achieve efficient utilization of information dissemination.

Keywords:

Artisanal fishers,
fishing, gender,
information, preference

Introduction

Gender describes the socially determined attribute of men and women. It refers to the physical and biological difference between men and women. Gender is a useful socioeconomic variable to analyse roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and incentives of people involved in agriculture (Mafimisebi, 2007). Gender differential is the description in character of being male or female as ascribed by culture and society. The term gender does not only connote sex, it is culturally ascribed as a role performed by either of the sexes (Ogunniyi, *et al.*, 2012). Gender is defined as the set of characteristics, roles and behaviour patterns that socially and culturally distinguish women from men in the society. Gender characteristics change over time and differ from one culture to another. Concept of gender refers to the roles and characteristics of women and men and the relations of power between them (Mabundza, *et al* 2014). Fishing as a profession is not only traditional or inherited business but also involves other social economic factors such as low capital involvement to start, involvement of less skill, ready market for fish and easy accessibility to start the business (Ogunremi, *et al.*, 2015).

Information has emerged as one of the topmost resources needed for successful economic activities in combination with labour, capital, knowledge, and infrastructures. Fisher folk that derive their livelihood in artisanal fishery are among those in need of high quality information to take informed decision on how to work smartly and intelligently (Ifejika, 2016). Food sufficiency through transformed agricultural programmes as advocated by the government can only be achieved when the producers in various segments of agriculture receive the right information at the right time on input supply, modern

production methods, storage and marketing (Ogunremi *et al.*, 2017). Information can only be useful when it has practical approach, concrete, able to help solve existing problems and provide alternative means of achieving aims and objectives that will result to maximum productivity. Information preference is a deliberate attempt by individuals to benefit maximally among equals or same professional group. Since the aim of different information sources is to reach all categories of fishers then the question is, do all fishers classified in terms of gender require same information on fishing? Therefore, this study was centred on gender and information preference among fishers in Markurdi, Benue State.

Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in Makurdi, Benue State which has a landmass of about 32,518 km². It lies between longitudes 7°47' and 10° East and latitudes 6°25' and 8° North and shares boundaries with Nassarawa State to the North, Taraba to the East, Cross River to the South, Enugu to the South West and Kogi to the West. It also shares a common boundary with the Republic of Cameroon on the South Eastern stretch. The list and addresses of 269 registered artisanal fishers were obtained from Agricultural Development Programme (ADP). The sampling area were stratified into two landing sites – Wadata and North Bank in Makurdi, random sampling technique was used to select 80% (215) of the artisanal fishers from the list. A structured questionnaire and interview scheduled were used to obtain information from the respondents (Ogunremi, *et al.*, 2017b). Data from the study were analysed using the descriptive statistic such as frequency counts and percentages and inferential statistics. Chi square and regression analysis were used to test relationships between the variables at $p < 0.05$.

Results

Results from the study showed that male and female fishers in the study area were 96.28% and 3.72% ,respectively. This implies that fishers are dominated by males. Traditionally, fishing is the major occupation in the study area, also there are fishers that are not from that locality who travelled from far distance and this could account for the wide gap of gender inequality compared to other studies on gender among fishers. Many male artisanal fishers were married (73.4%) and not educated (58.9), while 62.5% of their female counterparts were married and 62.5% were not educated. Also in terms of business funding, both male and female respondents indicated personal savings as their sources, 93.7% and 75.0% respectively while bank was the least.

Table 1: Information preferred by the respondents

S/NO	INFORMATION	PREFERRED		NOT PREFERRED	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
1.	Fishing methods	18 (94.7)	1 (5.3)	189 (96.4)	7 (3.6)
2.	Fishing input	19 (9.5)	2 (9.5)	188 (96.9)	6 (3.1)
3.	Fishing License	74 (97.4)	2 (2.6)	133 (95.7)	6 (4.3)
4.	Fishing safety	42 (95.5)	2 (4.5)	165 (96.5)	6 (3.5)
5.	Post-harvest / Fish preservation	30 (83.7)	5 (14.3)	177 (98.3)	3 (1.7)
6.	Fishing regulation	72 (93.5)	5 (6.5)	135 (97.8)	3 (2.2)
7.	Pollution of water body	65 (97.0)	2 (3.0)	142 (95.9)	6 (4.1)
8.	Weathers influence	58 (92.1)	5 (7.9)	149 (98.0)	3 (2.0)
9.	Personal hygiene	33 (94.3)	2 (5.7)	174 (96.7)	6 (3.3)
10.	Weed encroachment	56 (98.2)	1 (1.8)	151 (95.6)	7 (4.4)
11.	Endangered species	112 (96.6)	4(3.4)	95 (96.0)	4 (4.0)

Source: Field survey 2017

Indicated in Table 2 below is the relationship between gender and information preference by fishers. Gender was significantly related to post-harvest/fish preservation ($p < 0.05$).

Table 2: Relationship between gender and information preferred by the fishers

S/NO	VARIABLES			PF	REMARK
		χ^2 Value	DF		
1.	Fishing methods	0.138	1	0.710	NS
2.	Fishing input	2.188	1	0.139	NS
3.	Fishing license	0.389	1	0.533	NS
4.	Fishing safety	0.105	1	0.746	NS
5.	Post-harvest /Fish preservation	13.025	1	0.000	S
6.	Fishing regulation	2.574	1	0.109	NS
7.	Pollution of water body	0.147	1	0.701	NS
8.	Weathers influence	4.420	1	0.036	NS
9.	Personal hygiene	0.464	1	0.496	NS
10.	Weed encroachment	0.837	1	0.360	NS
11.	Endangered species	0.837	1	0.819	NS

Table 1 indicated that most of the male fishers preferred information on weed encroachment (98.2%), fishing license (97.4%), pollution of water body (97.0) and endangered species (96.6%), while female preferred information on post harvest/fish processing (14.3%). Table 3 shows that the joint effect of gender, age, marital status, household size, educational background, years of fishing, monthly income, secondary occupation and business funding to information preference was significant. The test of the composite contribution was tested at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Table 3: Regression analysis showing the joint contribution of gender, marital status, household size, educational background, years of fishing to information preference, monthly income, secondary occupation and business funding

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate			
.318	.101	.052	2.5385			
A N O V A						
Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	147.152	11	13.377	2.076	.024	Sig.
Residual	1308.150	203	6.444			
Total	1455.302	214				

Discussion

The crucial engagement of women in natural resources-based occupation such as fisheries in the rural communities has long been accepted but not recognized and not valued as much as men's contributions (Obetta *et al.*, 2007). However, fish production is customarily considered as masculine venture, women role in fish-related activities though supportive, is imperative and indispensable (Cliffe *et al.*, 2011a). However, their role is repeatedly being ignored and relegated, consequent of primordial systems of social setting that is prevalent in the rural areas of many developing countries like Nigeria (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2011). The implication is that for effective information dissemination to the artisanal fishers in the study area, printed materials would not be effective as majority of the male and female respondents were not educated and married, there could be various forms of support from spouses and children in the profession.

High preference of information on weed encroachment was an indication that the fishers were conscious of the problem constituted by weed to fishing gear, problem of easy movement to the fishing ground either through the use of paddle or outboard engine. Information on fishing license became necessary as the Federal Government through the Federal Department of fisheries is making efforts to manage open water bodies through licensing. Such information would allow fishers to have access to water bodies for continuity. Information on pollution of water body could be a priority for fishers because catches of fishers is dependent on the environment where fishes live. When fishers are not guided properly their activities such as leaking out board engines, discharging of effluents into the water bodies, use of explosives and chemicals for killing fish would all reduce fish stock through mortality. In most recent times, some fish species are difficult to catch in some water bodies. Information on such endangered species is very important so that they are excluded from target fish species which will allow for adequate recruitment into the stock over a period of time. However, female information preference on post-harvest/fish preservation was an indication that women are mostly fish processors rather than fishers.

Although fishing is done on a continuous basis in riverine communities in Nigeria, it is noticeable that bumper harvest occurs mostly during dry seasons. To ensure the availability of fish throughout the year it is essential to preserve fish in appreciable quantities in good condition until it is dispensed off by female (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2011). Women play crucial roles in fisheries; their main activities are processing and marketing of fish products (Paris and Chi, 2005). This assertion therefore confirmed the reason why female fishers preferred information mostly on post harvest. More importantly, fish is highly susceptible

to deterioration without any preservation or processing measures and therefore to prevent this wastage information preference by female fishers became imperative.

Gender was significantly related to post-harvest/fish preservation, the reason for the relationship was based on the major role played by women as fish processors when compared with their male counterparts in the fishing profession.

Conclusion and recommendations

Majority of the fishers in the study area were male and preferred information mostly on weed encroachment, fishing license, and endangered species while for females, post harvest/ fish preservation. It can be concluded that information on fishing are appreciated by males while females specifically give priority to information on post harvest/fish processing. The study therefore recommends that:

- (i) The government through her agencies, ministries and Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) should be well equipped and motivated to reach out to female fishers that are fish processors in order to train them on modern fish processing technologies.
- (ii) Fishers should also be informed appropriately when the need arises on various things that can boost their production which will invariably increase protein supply to the populace.
- (iii) Fishers through organized societies can liaise with government at Federal or State levels on information related to fishing.

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