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A study on profile of fishing community of a village in Karnataka

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Abstract: A profilistic study on the socio-economic status of the fisherman community of a village in Dharwad district was conducted during 2007. A total sample of respondents was 57 families and head of the family was considered as respondent for collection of the data in addition to the head of the fisherman co-operative society. Pre-tested interview schedule was used for collection of the information from fisherman community. The results of the study revealed that the male population constituted around 52.33 percent indicating the dominance of males in the fisheries sector. Amongst the total fishermen's only 13.84 percent were found to be literate. 45.78 percent of the population fall under the age group of less than 20 years and the total earning population constituted around 56.60 percent. The dominance of male population was evident in all the categories giving an indication that fishing and related activities are the domain of males. On further examination, it was found that smoking, betel nut chewing and consumption of liquor were the common habits of adult fisherman community. As the major occupation was fishing, majority of the population were engaged in fishing activity and 56.14 percent were under the income group of ` < 30,000. The study indicated that the general socio-economic status of the fisherman community could be improved by the adoption of improved fishing and fish farming methods and by imparting education.

Keywords: Co-operative society, fisherman community, profile, socio-economic condition

Introduction

Fish and fisheries is an important sector in most of the developing and developed countries of the world from the stand point of income and employment generation. The role of fisheries in Indian economy is gaining momentum as a result of introduction of advanced techniques to increase the yield per unit area of water and due to its role in earning foreign exchange. Apart from this, the twin problems of unemployment and malnourishment at the rural sphere in India can be simultaneously addressed to by proper and planned utilization of available local resources through involvement of local people (Datta and Kundu, 2007). India is having one of the largest fresh and marine water resources, stands second and seventh in the world, in total fish production from fresh and marine waters respectively. However, there appears to be a good scope to enhance fish production by several folds from the present 3.72 million tonnes. India has more than 1.6 million hectares of fresh water resources, out of which only 0.6 million hectares are being utilized for fish culture (Jhingran, 1975). Karnataka alone possesses nearly 0.52 million hectares of fresh water resources, of which only 0.15 million hectares are under fish cultivation. Though Karnataka has one of the largest water spread area, its contribution is 8 percent to the total Indian fish production. This gives an indication that there are several technical and socio-economic constraints coming in the way of increasing fish production. Several fish production groups / co-operatives are best with untoward socio-economic and socio-cultural features (Rahim and Padhy, 1994) and in many cases there are illiterate / semi-literate, indigent fisherman who lack the knowledge of latest fishery technologies and proper attitude towards fishery development (Chakrabarthy *et al*., 2005). This is further strengthened by lack of institutional support and finance that hinder their smooth performance. These co-operatives are supposed to play an important role not only for the development of fishery but also for the amelioration of the status of fishing community. The prospects of fishing enterprise depend in a critical way on the attitude, capability and expectation of the fisher folk associated with the co-operatives. (Capistrano *et al*., 1997). Proper management policy involves appropriate choice of inputs that can have a major impact on employment in fishery which intern influences the economy of the concerned locality (Heady, 2000).

The total inland fisherman population of India was estimated around nine lakh people in 2007. There is dearth of ss2ystematic data on the socio-economic status of these fishermen population. It has been felt that there is urgent need to carryout systematic study on fisherman population and formulation of schemes to help them to improve the overall status. Unlike marine fisherman, the inland fisherman population are scattered throughout the country and their dependence on fisheries varies. Hence local surveys need to be conducted to understand the extent of dependence on fisheries and thereby devising a policy approach to suit the local needs.

The fishermen were classified into full time, part time and occasional, depending on the number of fishing days they undertake in a year (Anon, 1982). Out of the total 845 members of fishermen in Dharwad district 608, 150 and 87 were classified as full time, part time and occasional fishermen respectively. Though the fishermen families are distributed throughout the district, the Mugad village has a good number of families fully dependent on fishing. Hence, an attempt was made to conduct a study on the socio-economic status of the fishermen community of this village at the micro-level.

Material and methods

Pre-tested interview schedule was used for the collection of information after conducting a preliminary survey to suit the

local conditions. The data were collected directly from the fishermen families through personal discussions and interviews regarding the various aspects of the socio-economic conditions like age composition, employment and occupational structure, habits, fishing intensity, income distribution and assets. Simple percentages were calculated and tabular analysis was made for arriving at the results.

The present study was undertaken in Mugad village of Dharwad district in the year 2007 covering a total fishermen population of 172, coming under 57 families. The village is located at about 20 km away from Dharwad city and is endowed with perennial tank of 38 hectares of water spread area.

Results and discussion

The general picture pertaining to the social status of the fishermen community is presented in Table 1. The study revealed that male population constituted a higher percentage (52.33%) than the female population (47.67%). Among total fishermen only 13.84 percent are literate indicating that literacy is one of the factor deterrents in progress. Out of the literate population majority were males (90.91%) and the rest were females indicating the least importance given to the girl child.

The study points out that even though 45.78 percent of population falls under age group of less than 20 years and only 10.74 percent of the populations were found to attend the schools. Hence there exists ample scope to establish a non formal education centre to educate the fisherman and fisherwoman in order to enable them to adopt advanced techniques of fish culture and also to find other subsidiary avenues to enhance their income. 32.56 percent of the population was under 21 and 40 years of age followed by people above 41 years (21.66%).

Table 1. Social status of the fishermen of Mugad village (Figures expressed in percentage)

Total population	172
Number of families	57
Percentage of male population	52.33
Percentage of female population	47.67
Percentage of literate population	13.84
Percentage of literate males	90.91
Percentage of literate females	9.09
Age composition	
Up to 20 years	45.78
21-40 years	32.56
41 years and above	21.66
Percentage of male working members	30.19
Percentage of female working members	26.41
Percentage of families owning radio	40.74
Land owners or tenants	29.63
Families adopted family welfare measures	63.15
Family Head with drinking habits (Liquor)	84.21
Smoking	75.43
Betel-nut chewing	100
Number of persons per family	
2-4	43.85
5-7	45.61
8-10	8.77
11-13	1.75

The total fisherman working population constituted 56.60 percent of the total population, out of which 30.19 percent were males and 26.41 percent were females. Fishing provides main employment to male population and occasionally they worked in agriculture. While women folk are employed as agricultural laborers on most of the days and occasionally they take part in the marketing of fish and net making. A few families (29.63%) practice agriculture in land owned by them and grow mainly paddy. The dependent population of 44.40 percent comes under the age group of less than 20 years and more than 41 years. Part of the group consists of female population who help in household work. In general, the children neither attended the schools nor motivated to attend schools by the parents but the male population of 6 to 8 years age is utilized to look after the cattle or their manpower is just wasted.

The investigation revealed as depicted in Table 1, smoking, betel-nut chewing and use of liquor were the common habits among all adult fishermen and fisherwomen. Although economic and social restrictions were imposed on the use of liquor, 84.21 percent of family heads take liquor regularly and remaining population take liquor occasionally along with smoking habit. The pan chewing habit is found to be regular among adult fisherman.

The attitude of inland fisherman community towards cultural and social activities is tested by measuring their level of interest in reading news papers, listening to radio, watching television programmes and attending other socio-cultural programmes. An investigation into the social participation of the fishermen, revealed several important facts of their social behaviors and is presented in Table-2. It was found that 69.18 percent of the population listened to radio programmes regularly and 26.16 percent occasionally. Only a small portion of the population (4.65%) never listened to radio. With regard to specific programmes like *krishiranga*, it was found that 37.04 percent, 44.44 percent and 18.52 percent of people listened to the programmes respectively. Beegum, (2006) has observed that 16.02 percent of the fisherman population listened to radio, while 7.97 percent watch TV programmes. Since all the families are located in single colony, there is very good interaction among them about agricultural and fishery programmes broadcast by the All India Radio and the recently launched Krishi Community Radio

Table 2. Social participation of fishermen (Figures expressed in percentage)

	Regular	Occasional	Never
Listening to Radio/ TV programmes	69.18	26.16	4.65
Listening to Krishiranga/ FM 90.4 programmes	37.04	44.44	18.52
Reading News papers	14.53	29.06	56.39
Attending the meetings of cooperative society	95.93	4.06	Nil

(KCR) FM 90.4 by UAS, Dharwad which is exclusively meant for broadcasting programmes in regional language on agriculture and allied sciences. The programmes broadcaste by krishi community radio (KCR) is increasingly becoming popular as evinced by a recent study (Pattanshetti. 2010). Though only a small percentage of population (14.53%) read new papers regularly, others do take active participation in the discussions concerning political situations. Contrary to this, 61.42 per cent of the fisherman read news papers/magazines in Kerala which reflects the rate of literacy among the fisher folk of Kerala state (Beegum, 2006). All families were members of the cooperative society and were aware of the objectives and advantages of the cooperative society.

It was noticed that members are well informed about family planning methods. 63.15 per cent of families have adopted family planning measures. Majority of the families use contraceptive measures. When specifically asked about their opinion on family planning measures, it was learnt that fisherman families are motivated to adopt family planning measures by the health department. Beegum (2006) has recorded an equal percent of (60.90%) of fisherman adopted family planning measures. However, a contrasting observation has been made by Nandeesha *et al*. (1986) that only 18.51 per cent of fisherman population had adopted family planning measures.

The general economic status of the fishermen community is presented in Table 3. As the main occupation of all the fishermen families is fishing, majority of the fishermen attended fishing for more than 15 days in a month (80.69%). They normally take rest for a day or two in a week depending on the availability of fish and work load. It was found that 14.03 per cent of fishermen attended fishing for 10-15 days. Small percentage of fishermen (5.26%) does fishing only from 5-10 days. This group earns the major portion of income from the agricultural land they own or taken on lease and attend fishing work only when they are free from farming operations or when good quantum of fish is available.

Table 3. Economic status of fishermen of Mugad village (Figures expressed in percentage)

Fishing intensity	No. of House holds	Percentage
5-10 days	3	5.26
11-15 days	8	14.03
16-20 days	21	36.84
21-25 days	25	43.85
Income group(annual)		
` <15,000	27	47.36
` 15,001-30,000	12	21.05
` 30,001-45,000	11	19.29
` 45,000 & above	7	12.28
Per capita income		
` 3000-5000	22	38.59
` 5001-8000	23	40.35
` 8001-12000	10	17.54
` 12001-above	2	3.51
Number of gears per family		
1-2 gears (2 kg)	25	43.85
3-4 gears (4 kg)	17	29.82
5-6 gears (6 kg)	10	17.55
7-8 gears (8 kg)	5	8.78
Assets		
` 15000-30000	32	56.14
` 30001-45000	13	22.80
` 45001-60000	5	8.77
` 60001-above	7	12.28

The fishing intensity depends on the availability of fish. During summer, they were busily engaged in harvesting fishes in private tanks and with the onset of monsoon they catch fishes in rivers, canals etc. The fishermen normally move in groups of 4-5 while fishing. They go up to 15-20 km in to the river from their village for fishing. On intense fishing days they make halt for 3-4 days in selected places and catch more fish.

The study shows that majority of the families come under the income group of less than ` 15000 per annum (47.36%). Those who have sources of income from both agriculture and fishing form the upper income group of the society and earn more than ` 45000 per annum (12.28%). A portion of (21.05%) families belong to the earning group of ` 15001 to ` 30000. In a study conducted on the socio economic status of fisherman community of Kerala by Beegum (2006), it was observed that 63.30 per cent of households had an income of ` 20000-` 25000 and only 3.01 percent of the households had an income of ` >50000. Similarly, 38.02 per cent of persons have a per capita income of ` 3000 to ` 5000. Almost equal percent (39.06%) of persons had a per capita income of ` 5001 to ` 8000.While only 4.40 per cent of persons had a higher per capita income of ` 12000 and above. Thus it was found that income distribution of the village is less skewed and due to the fact that the majority (45.61%) of the families is having persons between 5 to 7 members, almost all families enjoyed equal standard of living. It was found that 10.52 per cent of the families have 8-13 persons per family while 43.85 percent of the families had 2-4 persons per family.

The total value of all the property owned by the family was taken into consideration for calculating the asset value. Most of the families have moderately good houses with tiled roofs and mud walls. In some cases two to three families are housed under a single roof. Out of 57 families, 56.14 per cent of families have the assets below ` 30,000. The asset value of thirteen households (22.80%) fall between ` 30001-45,000 and 8.77 percent of families own the asset value ranging from ` 45001-60,000. Remaining 12.28 per cent (7 house holds) of the families own assets above ` 60, 001. Families owning agricultural land had the higher asset value than others. The assets of fishermen families consist of house, fishing gears, agricultural land, house-hold articles, cattle, sheep, poultry etc.

The type and number of gears owned by the families has direct impact on the income earned by each individual. The number of gears owned by the family was found to vary with

the number of fishermen attending fishing work. Nearly 43.85% of families own 1-2 gears and 29.82 per cent of families own 3-4gears. Remaining families own more than four gears. Most commonly used gears by all the fishermen are cast nets and gill nets of varying mesh sizes. Most of them make their own nets. As these two nets are not specific to any individual species, they catch all varieties of fish.

The fish caught by the fisherman are brought and sold in Dharwad fish market. The marketing strategy is like any other agricultural commodities i.e., the fisherman sell fish to wholesalers when fish is caught in abundance. Otherwise the women folk in the household take the responsibility of marketing fish in the local markets. It is observed that the fisher folk move in group to dispose off their catch in the local market. The fisherman don't get premium price for their catch due to reluctance of transporters to carry fish to the market as a result the quality of the fish would have been deteriorated by the time the fish reaches the fish market and the fish is sold at throwaway price.

The present study indicates that there is ample scope to increase the income of fisheries co-operative societies and intern the income of fisher folk provided they adopt improved fishing and fish culture practices on scientific basis. The social and educational status of the fisher folk could also be improved by educating them in various aspects.

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