

FISHING EXPERIENCE AND INFORMATION AMONG ARTISANAL FISHERS IN LOWER RIVER BENUE, MAKURDI, BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Information preference plays a major role as it determines the success that can be achieved in any chosen profession in life. It is on this basis that the study investigated fishing experience and information preference among artisanal fishers in lower river Benue, Makurdi, Benue State. The list of 269 registered artisanal fishers in two landing sites – Wadata and North Bank in Makurdi was obtained from Benue State Agricultural Development Programme (BESADP). Simple 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 artisanal fishers. Data were analyzed with descriptive statistics (frequency and percentages) while inferential analysis was done through the use of ANOVA. The results showed that majority of the artisanal fishers had more than twenty years fishing experience (41.9%), while information on endangered species (54%), fishing regulation (35.8%) and fishing license (35.3%) were mostly preferred by the artisanal fishers. Also, years of fishing experience was not significantly related to information preference, ($F(4,210) = 1.015$, $P > 0.05$) among the artisanal fishers in the study area. The study therefore recommends that information on artisanal fishing should be disseminated to all the artisanal fishers without considering number of years spent in the profession.

Keyword: Artisanal fishers, experience, fishing, information, years.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is blessed with over 14 million hectares of reservoirs, lake, ponds and major rivers capable of producing over 980,000 metric tons of fish annually (FDF 2007). Statistical surveys have shown that the demand for fish in the country exceeds supply and also, the domestic production is still very low, considering the increasing human population (Adaka *et al.*, 2015). Basically, there are two major sources of fish from the wild, which include the industrial fishery and the artisanal fishery. The industrial fishery uses highly sophisticated equipment while the later uses simple craft. The artisans fishermen dwell in rural communities where they earn their living through fishing.

Ige (2001) defined information as that which can be added to human knowledge. Afolabi (2003) advances that; information is a conveyor, a change agent, a reinforcement of ideas and opinions. Then it can be assumed that with relevant information at the disposal of artisanal fishers there is the tendency of better earnings through increased productivity. Gnanadoss and Aderounmu (2001) highlighted the information needs of artisanal fishermen on modern fishing

that would assist them to improve on fishing as crafts, gear and methods, development of feeder roads from the nearest road head, improve service facilities at the village sites, form effective fishermen organizations and trained man power. For any activity to be executed, adequate information is required. Artisanal fisher folk also require basic information on their fish capture activities. Information on weather, fish species, breeding seasons, marketing, sources of credit, modern fish capture methods, fish processing and storage are all required by fishermen in order to have satisfactory fish production (Okwu *et al.*, 2011). Information need is also described as the feeling of lacking something and wishing to fill the gap. All activities of living organisms and especially human activities always generate need for information about the changing environment and conditions of the tasks performed. The character of the human activity defines the character of information needs (Motul'skij, 2001). It has been widely reported by many researchers that most artisanal fisher folks have long years of fishing experience also the extension agents are saddled with the responsibility of disseminating

information to the artisanal fishers. The penitent question then is that why the production from artisanal fishers not improved since information is provided for their use? The main objective of the study was to investigate the fishing experience and information preference among artisanal fishers in lower river Benue in Makurdi. Specific objectives of the study are: (i) to examine the years of fishing experience of artisanal fishers (ii) identify information preference among artisanal fishers. The hypothesis tested was that there is no relationship between the years of fishing experience of artisanal fishers and information preference.

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 (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2007) 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 prominent rivers in the State are Rivers Benue and Katsina-Ala. However, there are other small rivers, streams and lakes scattered all over the state that serve as sites for intensive artisanal fish capture (Okwu *et al.*, 2001).

The population for the study comprises all artisanal fishers involved in fishing in the studied area. The list and addresses of 269 registered artisanal fishers in two landing sites – Wadata and North Bank in Makurdi was obtained from Benue State Agricultural Development Programme (BESADP). Simple 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 artisanal fishers. Data collected include artisanal fishers' years of fishing experience and information preference. Data from the study were analyzed using the following analytical tools: (a) Descriptive analysis such as frequency counts and percentages. (b) Means (c) ANOVA was used to test relationships between the variables at $P < 0.05$ significance level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of the Artisanal fishers by years of fishing

Table 1 below showed that 21(9.8%) of the respondents had 1-4 years fishing experience; 20 (9.3%) had 5-9 years fishing experience; 38(17.7%) had 10-14 years fishing experience; 46 (21.4%) had 15-19 years fishing experience while 90 (41.9%) had 20 years and above years fishing experience. It can be inferred that majority of the respondents are not new in the profession and all things being equal they were expected to be more productive since the more the experience in a profession the more the efficiency.

Information preference among Artisanal fishers

As shown in table 2, artisanal fishers indicated areas of information preference. Most of the respondents (54%) indicated information on endangered species. The other areas of information preference were fishing regulation (35.8%), fishing license (35.3%). However, fishing methods (91.2%) and fishing input (90.2%) were areas respondents would list expect information. High preference of information on endangered species means that the artisanal fishers are aware of the conservation campaign of aquatic animals by the government. Also, knowledge of fishing license is another strategy to ensure conservation of aquatic animals their by preventing extinction of fish spies. The reason why the respondents did not show interest in fishing methods and fishing input could be attributed to the years of fishing experience through which they were able to develop over time.

The mean scores from the analysis on information preference based on years of fishing are shown in table 3. Fishing experience of twenty years and above had the highest mean (19.54). Table 4 however indicated that there was no significant difference in the information preference of the artisan fishers and years of fishing experience ($F(4,210) = 1.015, P > .05$). The implication is that years of fishing experience does not determine information preference among the artisanal fishers.

CONCLUSION

Majority of the artisanal fishers had more than twenty years fishing experience while

information on endangered species, fishing regulation and fishing license were mostly preferred by them. Also, years of fishing experience was not related to information preference among the artisanal fishers in the study area. The study therefore recommends that information on artisanal fishing should be disseminated to all the artisans without minding whether they are new in the profession or not, also information that will assist in protecting the natural environment and different species of fishes to have Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) should be freely accessible to the artisanal fishers.

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Table 1: Distribution of the Artisanal fishers by years of fishing

Fishing experience	Frequency	Percentage
1-4 years	21	9.8
5-9 years	20	9.3
10-14 years	38	17.7
15-19 years	46	21.4
20+ years	90	41.9
Total	215	100.0

Source: Field survey 2016

Table 2: Information preference among Artisanal fishers

S/No.	Information	Prefered		Not Prefered	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Fishing methods	19	8.8	196	91.2
2.	Fishing input	21	9.8	194	90.2
3.	Fishing License	76	35.3	139	64.7
4.	Fishing safety	44	20.5	171	79.5
5.	Post-harvest / Fish preservation	35	16.3	180	83.7
6.	Fishing regulation	77	35.8	138	64.2
7.	Pollution of water body	67	31.2	148	68.8
8.	Weathers influence	63	29.3	152	70.7
9.	Personal hygiene	35	16.3	180	83.7
10.	Weed encroachment	57	26.5	158	73.5
11.	Endangered species	116	54.0	99	46.0

Source: Field survey 2016

Table: 3 Mean scores from the analysis on information preference based on years of fishing

Fishing experience in years	N	Mean	S.D.
1-4	21	19.0952	2.4270
5-9	20	18.7000	2.0800
10-14	38	18.6579	2.8406
15-19	46	19.0652	2.7600
20+	90	19.5444	2.5667
Total	215	19.1628	2.6078

Source: Field survey 2016

Table 4: ANOVA showing the significant differences in the information preference based on years of fishing

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Between Groups	27.614	4	6.903	1.015	.400	n.s.
Within Groups	1427.689	210	6.799			
Total	1485.302	214				

Source: Field survey 2016