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## COPING WITH URBAN POVERTY: THE ROLE OF HOMEBASED FISHERIES IN ALLEVIATING POVERTY AMONG WOMEN IN OSUN STATE.

BY

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### Abstract

*This research study was undertaken to examine the household benefits and livelihood improvement as a result of women's roles in fishery activities. This descriptive survey employed the use of questionnaire as means of data gathering. Multistage sampling was used to select 120 respondents from the study area. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Finding shows that majority of the women fishers are still in their youthful and active productive years, and over 80% are literate and married. Majority, 80% and 85% of the women fishers engaged in fish processing and marketing respectively, and also 68.3% engaged in actual fish production. Women involvement in fishery activities has resulted in the generation of considerable level of income which is above the current minimum wage of ₦30,000 on monthly basis as well as daily income of \$2.44 per day and \$73.17 monthly which indicate that they live above global poverty line index of \$1 per day. Thus, due to the significant contributions of fishery business to the household benefits of women fishers and in order to improve their livelihood activities, there is need to provide access to physical and capital resources for business expansion and growth that will in turn result in nutritional sustainability.*

**Keywords:** Women, Small scale fisheries, Household benefits, and Livelihood improvement.

### Introduction

Women occupy a critical position in every link of the value chain in small-scale fisheries, though they are best known as processors and marketers of fish and other fishery products. The perception of the gender-segregated division of labour, that is men fishing and women processing, has shaped the generalized approach in supporting development initiatives for small-scale fisheries. This approach sees men as fishers, and women as processors and marketers of fishery products (Bene & Merten, 2008). However, this generalization has made governance of fishery sector blind to other valuable inputs of women to the sector. In fact, women roles can and should go beyond post-harvest and marketing. However, the lack of utilization of their additional

contribution has deterred women's participation in fisheries resource management and policy decision-making

(Arenas & Lentisco, 2011).

According to Olufayo, 2012, women have been reported to play diverse roles in fishery sector, they take part majorly in fishing, processing and marketing. Women according to Odili et al. (2012) spend prolong hours daily in fishing related activities for which they receive very little or no assistance from NGOs or other organizations. They are directly and vigorously involved with their capital in the coordination of the fisheries chain, from production to sale of fish. Their role is however not limited to fish processing and marketing but include participation in actual production in most types of aquaculture brackish-water or freshwater fishpond. They participate in various stages of fish farm development (planning, construction and actual operation) and in fish feed formulation. Adequate participation of women in small-scale fisheries has been perceived as a factor that will create opportunity for improving livelihood that will be of immense benefit to the household in Nigeria (Nlerum and Bagshaw, 2015).

Despite the enormous contributions of womenfolk in the fishery sector, they usually lack representation in fisheries associations and fisheries management bodies, they are usually excluded from decision-making, particularly for the type of decisions that directly affect the resource they depend on. With such a striking absence of women in decision-making bodies at all levels, it is easy to understand household livelihood improvement opportunities which this study is focused on. This study focused on the following objectives;

- i. To examine the level of women participation and roles in small scale fisheries.
- ii. To investigate how women participation in small scale fisheries has contributed to the improvement of their livelihood activities.
- iii. To determine whether women participation in small scale fisheries can enhance their household benefits.

## Methodology

Osun State is one of the land-locked states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It covers an estimated area of 8,062 square kilometers. The State runs an agrarian economy with a vast majority of the populace taking to farming. It is limited to freshwater fisheries. Pond fish culture in the area dated back to the time of the colonial masters (Olasunkanmi, 2010). Osun state, according to the state Department of fisheries is divided into six fisheries zones. Multi-stage sampling method was used in selecting the respondents used for the study. Simple random sampling method was adopted in selecting 50%, i.e. 3 out of the 6 fishery zones in the study area, after

which 40 female fish farmers were randomly selected from each of the selected zones to give a sample size of 120 respondents. Structured questionnaire were administered and data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
<b>Age (Years)</b>		
≤ 20	9	7.5
21 – 30	16	13.3
31 – 40	45	37.5
41 – 50	24	20.0
51 – 60	17	14.2
≥ 61	9	7.5
<b>Total</b>	120	100
<b>Level of Education</b>		
No formal education	21	17.5
Primary	39	32.5
Secondary	42	35.0
Tertiary	18	15.0
<b>Total</b>	120	100
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	23	19.2
Married	52	43.3
Divorced/Separated	30	25.0
Widow	15	12.5
<b>Total</b>	120	100

Source: Field survey 2021.

The above table reveals the demographic information of respondents. Age distribution shows that majority, i.e 37.5% were within 31 – 40 years, follow by 20.0% who were within 41 – 50 years, only 7.5% were below 20 years, 13.3% were within 21 – 30 years, 14.2% were within 51 – 60 years, and 7.5 % were above 61 years. This is an implication that majority of the women fishers are still in their youthful and active productive years. This corroborated Babagana and Mohammed, 2020 who affirmed that most of the women who engaged in fishery activities are very active because they are still young. Over 80% of the women fishers are literate with level of education ranging from primary to tertiary education. This will be of greater advantages to the fishery sector development especially in the area of innovation or technology adoption. This study further reveals that majority (43.3%) of the women in fishery sector are married, 25.0% are divorced/separated, and another 12.5% are widow, while only 19.2% are single. This indicates that majority of women fishers are responsible to their

household either as a support to their husband or as provider in the case of widow or divorced/separated. Thus,

they engage in fish farming as a means of survival.

**Table 2: Fish farming activities of respondents**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
<b>Mode of operation</b>		
Full time	42	35.0
Part time	78	65.0
<b>Other occupation</b>		
Agricultural occupation	42	35.0
Non-agricultural occupation	36	30.0
<b>Cultural system</b>		
Monoculture	68	56.7
Polyculture	52	43.3
<b>Tenure Arrangement</b>		
Purchase	36	30.0
Lease	69	57.5
Inheritance	15	12.5
<b>No of Ponds</b>		
1 – 3	72	60.0
4 – 6	39	32.5
7 – 9	7	5.8
10 – 12	2	1.7
<b>Species of fish cultured</b>		
Tilapia	22	18.3
Catfish	46	38.3
Both	52	43.3
<b>Years of fishing experience (Years)</b>		
≤ 5	36	30.0
6 – 10	72	60.0
11 – 15	12	10.0
<b>Fishery activities involved in</b>		
Fish production/management	82	68.3
Fish processing	96	80.0
Marketing	102	85.0
Feed preparation	12	10.0
Breeding	28	23.3

Source: Field survey 2021.

The table above reveals the farming activities of the woman fishers. This shows that majority, (65.0%) of the women fishers are on part-time bases, meaning that they engage on other businesses which is either agricultural or non-agricultural occupations. This categories of women fishers also see fish farming as a veritable venture that they can venture into as a means of diversifying their livelihood and obtaining additional income for their household benefits, while 35.0% of them engaged in fishery business on full time and solely as means of generating income. So they invest all their capital in fish farming to operate on large scale in order to generate reasonable amount of income. The study further reveals that majority (80.0% and another 85.0%) of the women in fishery business engaged in fish processing and marketing respectively. 68.3% also engaged in direct fish production which including culturing and management of fishes in an enclosures such as earthen ponds, concrete and plastic tanks e.t.c, while few of them, 10.0% engaged in feed preparation or production, and

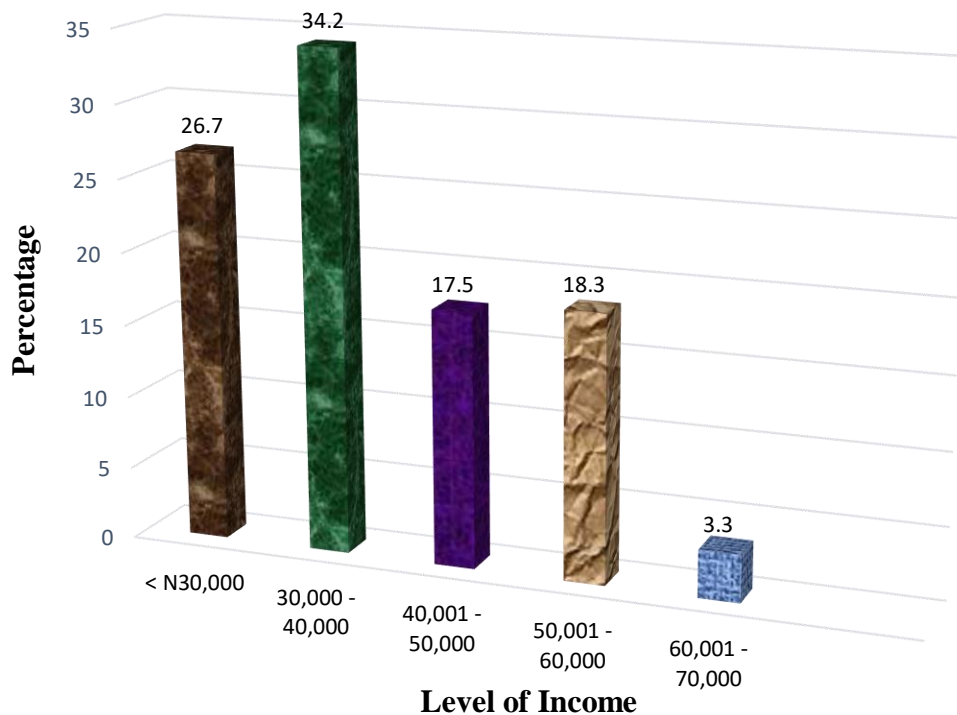
23.3% in breeding. This is supported by Cliffe and Akinrotimi, 2015 who affirmed that womenfolk engaged in processing and marketing of fishes, leaving actual fishing for men.

**Table 3: Household benefits from fish farming**

Benefit from fish farming	Frequency	Percentage %	Rank
Income generation	116	96.7	1 <sup>st</sup>
Access to proteinous food	102	85.0	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Pride	32	26.7	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Source: Field survey 2021.

**Fig 1: Monthly income from fish farming**



Source: Field survey 2021.

This above table reveals the household benefits from fish farming. This shows that income generation ranked 1<sup>st</sup> follows by household access to proteinous food, while considerable number of women fishers also derive prestige or gain recognition of being in-charge of their fishery business, which makes them contributors to the welfare of their family, this direct involvement in fishery activities has contributed to a feeling of being recognized, included and respected. Also, the study reveals in figure 1 above that only 26.7% of the women fishers earned less than ₦30,000 which is the current minimum wage for the federal staff, while majority, i.e over 70% earned between ₦30,000 and ₦70,000 on monthly basis from their fishery business. This means they earned minimum of \$2.44 per day and \$73.17 monthly which is an indicators that they lived above the global poverty line which is 1 US Dollar per day. This implies that women involvement in fishery activities is economically rewarding and could serve as means of reducing poverty and food insecurity. This is in line with

Raji and Omowumi, 2006, and Babagana and Mohammed 2020 who both confirmed that fishers cannot be regarded as poor because they have an average daily income that is above 1 US dollar which stands as global poverty index.

**Table 4: Livelihood improvement indicators**

Livelihood indicator	Frequency	Percentage %
Access to capital	68	56.7
Access to market	72	60.0
Access to infrastructure	62	51.7
Improved standard of living	78	65.0

Source: Field survey 2021.

This table reveals livelihood improvement indicators. This shows that majority (65%) of the women fishers have access to improved standard of living as a result of the financial gain which lead to food security and good health of the fisher households. Also, 60% claimed access to market, 56% have access to capital and 51.7% claimed access to infrastructure all of which serve as great advantage for business expansion and growth. Therefore, there is an indication that there will be an improvement in livelihood activities of fisher women if all these opportunity can be properly channeled to build assets in the fishery industries.

**Table 5. : Bivariate analysis of relationship between women involvement in small scale fisheries and Household benefits**

Women involvement in small scale fisheries*Household benefits	r	p	N	Decision
	0.823**	0.000	120	significant

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table reveals the analysis of relationship between women involvement in small scale fisheries and Household benefits. This shows that there is significant relationship between women involvement in small scale fisheries and Household benefits ( $r = 0.823$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), that is, the involvement of women folks in small scale fisheries has contributed to the enhancement of household benefits. This is corroborated by Nlerum and Bagshaw, 2015 who affirmed that women in the fishery business found it to be economically rewarding as well as having access to nutritious proteinous food.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study as well as that of other studies revealed that women play highly significant roles in the fishery industries. This involvement of women folks in the fishery business has resulted in some household benefits which include access to reasonable level of income that equally contributed to the welfare of the farm family, as well as building enough capital asset for business expansion and growth. Therefore, in order to

further improve the livelihood of the women fishers there is need to provide physical and capital resources as means of boosting business capacity as well as improving standard of living and nutritional sustainability of the nation.

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