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## Socio-Economic Status of Fisher Women in Srikakulam District, AP

By

Ippili Chandra Sekhar Rao  
Research Scholar  
Department of Social Work  
Andhra University  
Visakhapatnam

&

Prof. T. SOBHASRI  
Department of Social Work  
Andhra University  
Visakhapatnam

### Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to examine the socio-economic status of fisherwomen in Srikakulam District of Andhra Pradesh, major focus was to record the family structure, marriage system and decision making capacity of fisherwomen with reference to their social status, and living standards, income levels, purposes of savings and debts with reference to economical status were studies. It is helpful to determine the social and economic stability and to check on the awareness regarding the social customs followed and habits of saving. In aggregate, six hundred fisher women were personally interviewed and data was collected with the help of an interview schedule and processed through SPSS to get results by using minimum statistics. It helped to get clear output picture about the current status of fisherwomen regarding their social and economical status and how they are leading their life in the society. Majority of the fisherwomen associated with their cast/ traditional/ hereditary based occupations to earn for their livelihood, age respect in the society, moral and financial assistance and support. Since, they are facing several issues like financial sustainability, children education, family disturbances, discrimination in the society, etc.

Keywords: Social status, economical status, fisherwomen, decision making, asset holdings.

## Introduction

India is globally ranked at 2<sup>nd</sup> position in Fish Production. Fish production stood at 13.7 million metric tonnes in 2018-19. An inland sector of fishing constitutes 65% of the total fish production. Fish and fish products are the largest group in agricultural exports in the year 2018-19<sup>1</sup>. Thus, the fisheries sector plays an important role in the boosting of the Indian economy by contributing to the national income, employment generation, and foreign exchange earnings. Fish and fishery products are recognised as the cheapest source of protein and an important source of diet for thousands of people in many parts of the world. It is estimated that more than 12 million people are directly engaged in fishing activities and about 60 million are exclusively depend on fisheries activities for livelihood in India (Rao et al. 2016)<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand Andhra Pradesh has left other States far behind in fish production. According to Economic Survey 2020, AP with 34,49,560 tonnes (28,44,610 tonnes of inland fish and 6,04,950 tonnes of marine fish) of fish production in 2017-18 fiscal topped the chart (Guru Srikanth, 2020)<sup>3</sup>.

Srikakulam district in Andhra Pradesh has 197-km coastline, the longest in the state, covering 104 villages in 11 mandals with a population of around 50,000 and the fisheries department records suggest that there are 6,211 registered fishermen in the district (The New Indian Express, 26th April 2017). Several fishery co-operatives societies have been established by these fishermen. Fisher women in coastal area of Andhra Pradesh are very active in fishing-based activities including direct fishing, fish processing and marketing. Fishing community is considered vulnerable in their socio-economic status (Galib et al. 2016)<sup>4</sup>.

Kanchi Bhargavi, et al. (2020)<sup>5</sup> stated that majority of the fisherwomen were found illiterate and a greater proportion of them involved in fish marketing as a primary occupation followed by salting and curing and pickling of fishes. With reference to their earnings more than half earned above Rs. 25,000 every month. The study revealed that the socio-economic condition of the fisherwomen in the Vizianagaram district coastal area is poor, with a high percentage of the illiteracy. Muhammad Saleem Hanif, et al. (2019)<sup>6</sup> revealed that most of the fishermen were living in poor conditions. However, most of them were dependent on tap as well as tube well water as drinking source. On the other hand, to run the fishing business, majority of them were relying on loans from nongovernment sources. This indicates fishing is a profitable business but with educating the fishermen especially in fish handling could improve their status of living as well as in generating brilliant mind towards global economy. Gunakara and Ramachandra (2016)<sup>7</sup> revealed in their study that with high socio-economic capital, the fisher women provide a substantial support to their family welfare and income. However, with increasing market share and income of the younger men retailers, the fisher women retailers are being marginalized in spite of their excellent marketing skills and comparable levels of profitability. According to Saxena et al. (2014)<sup>8</sup> limited knowledge on socio-economic conditions of fishing communities is

a great hitch for proper planning and implementation of various programmes for their improvement.

In this context the study on socio-economic status of fisherwomen in Srikakulam district is a prerequisite, in order to achieve the relevant and societal solutions. To the best of my knowledge, no studies have been conducted on the socio-economic status of the fisherwomen community in Srikakulam district so far, despite their significant involvement in the fishery sectors of the state. Therefore, the present study is carryout with an aim to investigate the socio-economic status of the fisherwomen in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. Hence, this research paper intends to study the following objectives:

1. To study the demographic profile of fisherwomen in Srikakulam district
2. To study the socio-economic status under various aspects of fisherwomen
3. To analyse the purpose of savings and debts incurred by fisherwomen households in the study area

### **Methodology**

The present study carried out in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh to study the socio-economic status of fisherwomen for which the 22 villages of 11 mandals were covered to select 600 sample fisherwomen. All these study mandals and villages are fishermen community dominated and the selected women are working age group of 20-60 years. The primary data were collected through an interview schedule where the perceptions and opinions of the fisherwomen on their socio-economic status have been considered. Collected data were fed into computer and processed by SPSS software and the output results numerically tabulated and analysed through simple statistical methods. In the part of study the researcher gathered the demographic or personal information of the sample respondents, which is presented in the following table.

**Table – 1: Demographic profile of Fisherwomen**

| Demographic variables | Demographic groups | Frequency  | Percent      |
|-----------------------|--------------------|------------|--------------|
| Age group             | 20-30 years        | 108        | 18.0         |
|                       | 31-40 years        | 296        | 49.3         |
|                       | 41-50 years        | 103        | 17.2         |
|                       | Above 50 years     | 93         | 15.5         |
| Literacy level        | Illiterate         | 293        | 48.8         |
|                       | Primary level      | 87         | 14.5         |
|                       | Secondary selve    | 126        | 21.0         |
|                       | Collage level      | 94         | 15.7         |
| Marital status        | Married            | 391        | 65.2         |
|                       | Unmarried          | 60         | 10.0         |
|                       | Divorced           | 61         | 10.2         |
|                       | Widow              | 88         | 14.7         |
| Religion              | Hindus             | 491        | 81.8         |
|                       | Non-Hindus         | 109        | 18.2         |
| Work area             | Harbor             | 183        | 30.5         |
|                       | Open Market        | 160        | 26.7         |
|                       | Street Vending     | 155        | 25.8         |
|                       | Others             | 102        | 17.0         |
| Work experience       | 0-5 years          | 74         | 12.3         |
|                       | 5-10 years         | 155        | 25.8         |
|                       | 10-15 years        | 211        | 35.2         |
|                       | More than 15 years | 160        | 26.7         |
| <b>Total</b>          |                    | <b>600</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Since the study confined to fisherwomen who are working group, the age-wise distribution shown that 49.3 percent are in the age-group of below 31-40 years, 18.0 percent are in 20-30 years age-group, 17.2 percent are in 41-50 years age-group and above 15.5 percent are in above 50 years age-group. Whereas, their education levels shows as many as 48.8 percent are Illiterates, and from the rest 14.5 percent studied up to primary level, 21.0 percent studied up to secondary level and the remaining 15.7 percent studied up to college level.

The marital status of the respondents reveals that majority group of 65.2 percent are married and the remaining 14.7 percent are widows, 10.2 percent are divorced and 10.0 percent are unmarried. According to the religious believes it is observed a predominant group of 81.2 percent respondent believe Hinduism and the remaining 18.2 percent believe Non-Hinduism.

Regarding working area of fisherwomen it is observed 30.5 percent are working at harbors, 26.7 percent are working at market yards, 25.8 percent are on street vending and 17.0 percent are performing their duties like housemaids, working in cold storages, etc. Hence, the working experience of respondents reveals that 12.3 percent have 0-5 years, 25.8 percent have 5-10 years, 35.2 percent have 10-15 years and 26.7 percent have more than 15 years of experience in their professions.

## Data analysis and discussion

**Table – 2: Social Status of Fisherwomen**

| Variables  | Family Type                 | Frequency  | Percent      |
|--|-----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Type of family   | Nuclear                     | 170        | 28.3         |
|  | Joint                       | 334        | 55.7         |
|  | Extent                      | 96         | 16.0         |
| Type of marriage                                       | Love marriage               | 223        | 37.2         |
|  | Arranged marriage           | 279        | 46.5         |
|  | Mutually consented marriage | 98         | 16.3         |
| Opinion about inter-caste marriage                     | Positive                    | 185        | 30.8         |
|  | Negative                    | 340        | 56.7         |
|  | Neutral                     | 75         | 12.5         |
| Opinion about dowry system                             | Favorable                   | 288        | 48.0         |
|  | Un-favorable                | 247        | 41.2         |
|  | Indifferent                 | 65         | 10.8         |
| Opinion on remarriage                                  | Positive                    | 312        | 52.0         |
|  | Negative                    | 288        | 48.0         |
| Family planning adoption                               | Yes                         | 329        | 54.8         |
|  | No                          | 211        | 35.2         |
|  | Not applicable              | 60         | 10.0         |
| Practicing cast/traditional/<br>hereditary occupations | Yes                         | 341        | 56.8         |
|  | No                          | 259        | 43.2         |
| Occupation of spouse                                   | Not applicable              | 209        | 34.8         |
|  | Traditional occupation      | 49         | 8.2          |
|  | Organized employee          | 150        | 25.0         |
|  | Unorganized Employee        | 192        | 32.0         |
| <b>Total</b>   |                             | <b>600</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

The social status of fisher women has been showed in the Table-2. The data reveals that 55.7 percent are living in joint families, 28.3 percent are living in nuclear families and 16.0 percent are living in extent families. The type of marriage preferred by the fisherwomen shows that 37.2 percent preferred love marriages, 46.5 percent preferred arranged marriages and 16.3 percent preferred mutually consented marriages. With reference to inter-cast marriage the data reveals 30.8 percent expressed their positive opinion, 56.7 percent expressed negative opinion and 12.5 percent did not expressed their opinion on this. Regarding dowry system 48.0 percent of the fisher women are favorable and 41.2 percent are un-favorable but 10.8 percent expressed indifferent opinion towards dowry system in the marriage. Whereas, the opinion about remarriage system in fishermen community reveal that 52.0 percent expressed their positive opinion and 48.0 percent expressed their negative opinion.

With reference to adoption of family planning by fisher women the data shows more than half (54.8%) have adopted and 35.2 percent did not adopted, but 10.0 percent are eligible because they are unmarried. Since, 56.8 percent of the fisherwomen are practicing their cast/traditional/hereditary occupations, 43.2 percent are practicing other occupations. Whereas, the occupation of fisherwoman spouse shows 32.0 percent are working in unorganized sector, 25.0 percent are working as organized employee and 8.2 percent are in traditional occupation. Moreover, 34.8 percent are not applicable because they are unmarried/ widows/ divorced.

**Table-3: Decision making capacity of fisherwomen in social activities**

| Sl. No | Statements                        | Self          | Spouse        | Parents       | In-laws       |
|--------|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1      | Children's education              | 235<br>(39.2) | 227<br>(37.8) | 71<br>(11.8)  | 67<br>(11.2)  |
| 2      | Children's depends marriage       | 243<br>(40.5) | 206<br>(34.3) | 77<br>(12.8)  | 74<br>(12.3)  |
| 3      | Property division/sale/purchase   | 234<br>(39.0) | 187<br>(31.2) | 105<br>(17.5) | 74<br>(12.3)  |
| 4      | Legal litigation/compromise       | 205<br>(34.2) | 258<br>(43.0) | 72<br>(12.0)  | 65<br>(10.8)  |
| 5      | Exercising franchise in elections | 173<br>(28.8) | 232<br>(38.7) | 103<br>(17.2) | 92<br>(15.3)  |
| 6      | Membership in political parties   | 108<br>(30.0) | 205<br>(34.2) | 101<br>(16.8) | 114<br>(19.0) |
| 7      | Membership in cultural bodies     | 167<br>(27.3) | 155<br>(25.8) | 128<br>(21.3) | 150<br>(25.0) |
| 8      | Membership in co-operatives       | 177<br>(29.5) | 213<br>(35.5) | 94<br>(15.7)  | 116<br>(19.3) |
| 9      | Purchasing of consumer durables   | 211<br>(35.2) | 241<br>(40.2) | 65<br>(10.8)  | 83<br>(13.8)  |
| 10     | Purchase of Household goods       | 198<br>(33.0) | 221<br>(36.8) | 85<br>(14.2)  | 96<br>(16.0)  |
| 11     | Household expenditure             | 271<br>(45.2) | 250<br>(41.7) | 26<br>(4.3)   | 53<br>(8.8)   |

The decision making capacity of fisherwomen in study area shows that in children education 39.2 percent said their-self, 37.8 percent said spouse, 11.8 percent said their parents and 11.8 percent said in-laws are the decisions makers. Regarding children marriage it is observed that 40.5 percent said their-self, 34.3 percent said spouse, 12.8 percent said parents and 12.3 percent said in-laws are the decision makers in their families. With reference to division/ sale/ purchase of property 39.0 percent said their-self, 31.2 percent said spouse, 17.5 percent said parents and 12.3 percent said in-laws are the decision makers.

In relation to legal litigation/compromise it is found that 34.2 percent said their-self, 43.0 percent said spouse, 12.0 percent said parents and 10.8 percent said in-laws are the decision makers. Exercising franchise in elections, 28.8 percent said their-self, 38.7 percent said spouse, 17.2 percent said parents and 15.3 percent said in-laws are the decision makers. In taking membership in political parties, 34.2 percent said spouse, 30.0 percent said their-self, 19.0 percent said in-laws and 16.8 percent said parents are the key-role players. It is mentioned that 27.8 percent said their self, 25.8 percent said spouse, 25.0 percent said in-laws and 21.3 percent said parents are the decision maker on taking a membership in cultural bodies.

In taking a membership in co-operatives the data shows that 35.5 percent said spouse, 29.5 percent said their self, 19.3 percent said in-laws and 15.7 percent said parents of the fisher women are the decision makers. It is found that out of the total respondents, 40.2 percent said their spouse, 35.2 percent said their self, 13.8 percent said in-laws and 10.8 percent said their parents are the decisions maker in purchasing of consumer durables. It is observed that 33.0 percent said their self, 36.8 percent said their spouse, 14.2 percent said their parents and 16.0 percent said their in-laws are the decision makers in purchase of household goods. Finally, with reference to household expenditure it is found that 45.2 percent said their-self, 41.7 percent said their spouse, 4.3 percent said their parents and 8.8 percent said their in-laws are the decision makers.



**Table – 4: Economic status of fisher women**

| Variables        | Groups               | Frequency | percentage |
|------------------|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Income levels    | Below Rs.10,000      | 120       | 20.0       |
|                  | Rs.10,000- Rs.15,000 | 241       | 40.2       |
|                  | Rs.15,000-Rs.20,000  | 150       | 25.0       |
|                  | Above Rs.20,000      | 89        | 14.8       |
| Living status    | Pacca                | 134       | 22.3       |
|                  | Semi-pacca           | 175       | 29.2       |
|                  | Katcha               | 113       | 18.8       |
|                  | Slab                 | 178       | 29.7       |
| Financial status | Fully Satisfied      | 254       | 42.3       |
|                  | Satisfied            | 285       | 47.5       |
|                  | Indifferent          | 61        | 10.2       |

The Table-4 represents the economic status of fisherwomen with reference to their monthly income levels, living status, and financial status. It is noticed from the data that 20.0 percent are earning below Rs.10,000, 40.2 percent are earning Rs.10,000-Rs.15,000, 25.0 percent are earning Rs.15,000-Rs.20,000 and 14.8 percent are earning above Rs.20,000 income in a month.

The living status of the fisherwomen indicates that 22.3 percent are living in Pacca houses, 29.2 percent are living in Semi-pacca houses, 18.8 percent are living in Katcha houses and 29.7 percent are living in slab houses. Hence, the perceptions of fisherwomen on their financial status reveals that 42.3 percent are fully satisfied, 47.5 percent are satisfied and least number of 10.2 percent found indifferent in their opinion.

**Table – 5: Asset holdings of Fisherwomen in the study area**

| Assets             | Frequency<br>(N = 600) | Percentage<br>(N = 600) |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Own House          | 455                    | 75.8                    |
| House site(s)      | 204                    | 34.0                    |
| Agricultural lands | 285                    | 47.5                    |
| Gold ornaments     | 292                    | 48.7                    |
| Milch animals      | 332                    | 55.3                    |
| Other animals      | 326                    | 54.3                    |
| Hens/ cocks        | 373                    | 62.2                    |
| Motor cycle/Car    | 358                    | 59.7                    |
| Bicycle            | 398                    | 66.3                    |

The Table-5 represents the asset holdings of the fisherwomen households in the study area. The data reveals 75.8 percent are having own house, 34.0 percent are having house sites, 47.5 percent are having agricultural lands, 48.7 percent are having gold ornaments, 55.3 percent are having milch animals and 54.3 percent are having other animals. Moreover, 62.2 percent of fisherwomen households are having hens /cocks, 59.7 percent are having their personal motor cycles/ cars and 66.3 percent households are having bicycles.

**Table – 6: Main purposes of savings and debts incurred fisherwomen households**

| <b>Savings and debts</b> | <b>purposes of savings &amp; debts</b> | <b>Frequency<br/>(N = 600)</b> | <b>Percentage<br/>(N = 600)</b> |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Purpose of savings       | Social Security                        | 259                            | 43.2                            |
|                          | Food Security                          | 450                            | 75.0                            |
|                          | Children Education                     | 328                            | 54.7                            |
|                          | Medical                                | 293                            | 48.8                            |
|                          | Marriage                               | 405                            | 67.5                            |
|                          | Festivals                              | 387                            | 64.5                            |
|                          | Emergencies                            | 352                            | 58.7                            |
|                          | Agriculture                            | 374                            | 62.3                            |
|                          | Asset building                         | 304                            | 50.7                            |
|                          | Self respect                           | 278                            | 46.3                            |
| Purpose of debts         | Consumption                            | 340                            | 56.7                            |
|                          | Agriculture                            | 356                            | 59.3                            |
|                          | Animal Husbandry                       | 363                            | 60.5                            |
|                          | Income generating activities           | 307                            | 51.2                            |
|                          | Asset building                         | 235                            | 39.2                            |
|                          | Meet emergencies                       | 314                            | 52.3                            |
|                          | Repay old loans                        | 288                            | 48.0                            |
|                          | Children education                     | 330                            | 55.2                            |

With reference to data presented in Table-6 the main purposes of savings expressed by fisherwomen shows, 43.2 percent for social security, 75.0 percent for food security, 54.7 percent for children education, 48.8 percent for medical expenses, 67.5 percent to meet expenses during festivals, 58.7 percent for meet emergencies. Still it shows 62.3 percent do savings for agriculture expenses, 50.7 percent saving for asset building and 46.3 percent saving for self respect in the society.

Regarding purpose of debts incurred by fisherwomen households in the study area, the data reveals 56.7 percent taken loans for consumption purpose, 59.3 percent taken loans for agriculture purposes and 60.5 percent taken loans for animal husbandry. Still the data shows 51.2 percent have taken loans for income generating activities, 39.2 percent taken for asset buildings, 52.3 percent taken for meet emergencies, 48.0 percent taken for repay of old debts and 55.2 percent taken loans for children education.

## Conclusion

With reference to social status of fisherwomen the data shows a dominated group of 55.7 percent is living in joint families, 46.5 percent preferred arranged marriages 56.7 percent expressed negative opinion on inter-cast marriage, 48.0 percent are favorable towards dowry system, 52.0 percent positive opinion towards remarriage, and 54.8 percent have been adopted family planning. With reference to their occupations it is found that 56.8 percent fisherwomen are practicing their cast/traditional/hereditary occupations, while their spouse occupation shows 32.0 percent are working in unorganized sector and 25.0 percent are working in organized sector. Whereas, decision making capacity of fisherwomen on various social activities reveals that in children education, children marriage, division/ sale/ purchase of property and taking membership in cultural bodies the fisher woman herself is the decision maker in their families. Whereas in legal litigation/compromise, exercising franchise in elections, taking membership in political parties and co-operatives, purchasing of consumer durables and household goods spouse of the fisher woman is the decision maker.



While economical status of fisherwomen households, the data indicate nearly thirty percent of households own slab houses (29.7%) and semi-pucca (29.2%) houses. Regarding living status of the fisher women, the data shows that above seventy percent (70.2%) of the fisher women are living in their own houses. It is also observed ninety percent of the houses of the fisher women are electrified. With reference to toilet facility in the houses of fisher women shows that a dominated group of fisher women are using dry latrines (44.6%) and flush toilets (31.2%) in their houses. Regarding possessing of household assets and household good of fisher women the data reveals that more than fifty percent are having these with them which indicate better position of the study group. But still it is found that a significant number of fishermen households are away from possessing of necessary goods and facilities in their houses. With reference to land holdings of the study households it is found that above sixty percent are having agriculture lands.

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