



CHILDREN INVOLVEMENT IN ARTISANAL FISHING: A CASE STUDY OF LAGOS LAGOON, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Children involvement in artisanal fishing was investigated between 2013 and 2014 to assess the percentage number of children involved in fishing on Lagos Lagoon, their roles, contribution and the effects of the activities on their livelihood. Structured and unstructured questionnaires were conducted by the researchers. Data collected were collated and analyzed using frequency distribution and percentages. The average number of boats fishing was 70 boats while average number of people counted was 168 and 55% were children between 3 – 17 years. During the study, we recorded a female which accounted for 0.2% while male was 99.8%, 6% of which were going to school and the roles played were paddling, operating engine, bailing water, sorting fish, casting net, setting gear. Enforcing law on the fisher folks to stop involving their children may jeopardize the effort of government on fish production, therefore the best way to reduce child labour in artisanal fishing is that government should intensify the right support in terms of aids and infrastructures to fisher folks on the ways of improving fishing methods for sustainable management of the fishery to support their children education.

Keyword: Children, fishing, Lagos lagoon and government

1. INTRODUCTION

Fish is an important source of both food and income to many people in developing countries. In Africa, as much as 5% of the population, some 35million people depends wholly or partly on the fisheries sector for their livelihood (FAO, 1996). Quite a sizeable proportion of the Nigerian population depends on fishing as a source of income (Tobor, 1984). Apart from being an income earner to many Nigerians especially people in coastal, riverine and lake areas of the country, some people earn their living from fish processing and marketing while others engaged in fisheries research (Akeredolu, 1990).

The capacity of artisanal fisheries to play its triple role of a food supplier, employment provider and income earner in the Nigerian economy depends on the number of people involved in the activities. Fishing has become a way of life and the primary occupation of the coastal dwellers that depend on it for their livelihood and subsistence. A gradual decline in capture fisheries production has rapidly widened the gap between the demand and supply of fish, especially coupled with a continually growing population (Nwabueze, 2010). This has resulted in various activities which women have been active participants both in fishing and post – harvest activities, like processing, preservation and marketing (Ajayi *et al.*, 1989; Wakoma, 1991; Alamu, 2000; Shalesha & Stanley, 2000). Nwabueze (2010) reported 11.5% of fish farmers in Delta state to be women.

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Children in Nigeria are known to be engaged in the worst forms of child labour, particularly in dangerous activities in agriculture and domestic services (Adeokoya & Fashina, 2007; ILO, 2011; ITUC, 2011; U.S Department of Labor's Bureau of international labor affairs, 2011). In rural areas, most children work in agriculture, producing crops such as cassava, cocoa and tobacco (Adeokoya & Fashina, 2007; Nwabueze, 2010).

Activities of men and women have been identified in artisanal fisheries, despite the facts that Lagos State government disclosed that the state government will no longer tolerate any form of abuse on children in the state yet we do see some children on Nigerian waters especially on Lagos Lagoon every day, therefore there is need to study the activities, percentage number of children involved, age distribution, the roles played by these children, their contribution to fish production, percentage attending school and the effects on their livelihood.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study covered all the part of Lagos Lagoon. Primary data for the study were collected between the hour of 09.00 and 14.00 GMT on working days for six months (i.e. September, 2013 – February, 2014) from a cross section of fishers using structured and unstructured questionnaires. The questionnaires were conducted by the researchers, with the assistance of enumerators. Data collected were collated and analyzed using frequency distribution and percentages. Factors considered were total number of boats fishing, total number of people in the boat, total number of children in the boat, age and educational background of the children in the boat, their dialects and the children's roles in the boats and the people targeted were fishermen.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The total number of boats counted, number of people in the boats counted, number of boats with children, number of children in the boat, crew size of the children sitting in a boat are shown in table 1. The average number of boats fishing counted during the study period was 70 boats and the average number of children was 92 per month which were 55% of the population fishing during the study, 241 children were interviewed during the period, 194 children answered by themselves while parents answered for 47 children.

Table 1: Children involved in artisanal fishing

Months	Number of boats counted	Total number of people in all the boats	Number of boat with children	Total number of children in the boat	Crew size of the people sitting in a boat	Crew size of the children sitting in a boat
September,2013	60	144	56	74	3	2
October, 2013	113	270	97	152	3	2
November, 2013	46	120	41	70	3	2
December,2013	60	152	50	84	3	2
January,2014	74	172	69	88	3	2
February,2014	65	154	55	86	3	2
Average size	70	169	61	92	3	2

During the study, we recorded a female which accounted for 0.2% while male was 99.8%. Girls were assisting their mothers in fish processing and marketing, sometimes the female children stay at home to take care the younger ones. Iversen (2006) reported 86.0%, 87.2%, 86.1% and 91.3% of all children working in fishing in El Salvador, Ghana, Bangladesh and Philippines respectively to be male. The outdoor fishing jobs oblige women to leave their children alone, or put their eldest daughters, often still girls, in charge of the household. The consequences are not only economic and physical, but also emotional and psychological (Sumudra, 1995). Figure 1 shows the total number

per age, children at the age of 12 years were more in numbers followed by 9years and 10 years while 3 – 5years and 16 – 17years were not many.

Table 2 shows the age range of the children counted and Table 3 shows the role played in the boats, their local and the percentage number of children involved in each activity during the period of study. It was shown that the children were more involved in paddling and operating engine than casting net during this study. The age ranges of the children were 3- 17 (years). The age ranges are early stage of human life.

Table 2: The age range of the children counted during the study

Month	Sept., 2013	Oct., 2013	Nov., 2013	Dec., 2013	Jan., 2014	Feb., 2014
Age range (year)	3 - 14	5 -17	3-15	4 -14	4-13	2 – 14

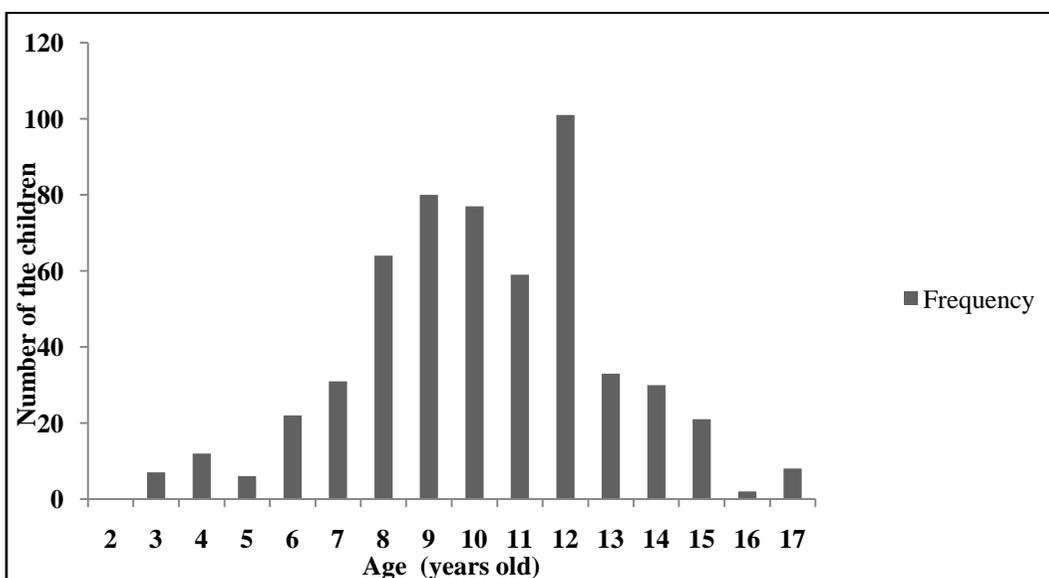


Figure 1: Total number of children at a particular age

Most of these fishermen involved their children in order to be able to meet up with their daily responsibility, while some parents that have 4 to 6 children send 1 or 2 to school and involved others that are boys in fishing to cater for the ones that are schooling because of school fees and other amenities. Some of these children on their own sometimes with or without the permission of their parents followed their neighbour to fish and collect their share while some go on their own to fish use hook and line. The 87% of the children interviewed during the study were assisting their parents to meet home needs while 9% with neighbour and 4% with friends. The children reported fishing with their parents during the study period believed they were assisting the family so they are not collecting share from the catches while the children reported fishing with their neighbour and friends do collect compensation and share from the catches but they did not disclose the percentage and what they do with the share

Table 3: The role played by the children and their age

Role	Paddling	Operating engine	Bailing water	Sorting fish	Fishing with hook and Line	Sitting down doing nothing	Casting net	Fishing crab	Setting gear (arranging net)
Children age range (year)	8 - 17	10 – 15	3 - 17	4 – 14	5 – 12	3 – 4	15	12 - 15	7 - 14
%	26	16	11	19	3	1	6	7	11

Table 4 shows the percentage of the children attending school at the period of this study and level of education was primary school. The major local dialect of 86% were Egun while the remained 14% were Ilaje and unidentified Yorubas; Majority of these fishermen lives at Makoko while others came from Bayeiku, Ikate–Elegunshi, Langbasa, Shogunro (very close to Makoko), Bariga, Oworonsoki etc. 55% of these fishermen were targeted fish only, 25% fish and shrimps and 20% crabs.

Table 4: Percentage of children attending School

Month	September, 2013	October, 2013	November, 2013	December, 2013	January, 2014	February, 2014
Children attending school (%)	10.7	8.2	9.8	16	2.9	10.9

The types of gear recorded during the study were casting nets, drift nets, hook and line, and crab traps which are part of over 50 different types of fishing gears that Nigeria, fishers use (Udolisa *et al.*, 1994). 30% of the fishermen were using motorized while others were using non – motorized but they all paddle at the point of catching. The size of the fishes caught are very small, which may be as a result of over exploitation of the area, Bravo-Ureta & Evenson (1994) noted that where there were no local alternatives to fishing, fisher folks were either forced to over-exploit fishery resources above the level that would occur if alternative livelihoods and income sources were available to them or to migrate to urban areas.

4. CONCLUSION

The artisanal fishery of the Lagos Lagoon, Lagos State holds great potentiality in terms of natural yield which could support the government strides towards employment generation, poverty alleviation, food security and supply of animal protein to the teeming Nigerian living in Lagos. It is recommended that government should intensify the right support in terms of aids and infrastructures to fisher folks on the ways of improving fishing methods for sustainable management of the fishery also to support their children education. Enforcement of law on the fisher folks to stop involving their children in fishing may jeopardize the effort of government on fish production, therefore the best way to reduce child labour in artisanal fishing is to orientate and assist the parents involved by providing education whereby parents will not spend much or need to involve a child to sponsor the other.

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