

Psychological Issues and Challenges of Women Fish Vendors

Dr. V. Hemanthkumar, Professor, Sairam Institute of Management Studies, Sairam Engineering College, Chennai

Dr. D. Rajasekar, Professor at AMET Business School, AMET deemed to be University

Dr. R. Vetriselvan, Senior Lecturer in School of Management and Commerce, DMI-St. John the Baptist University, Mangochi, Malawi.

Article Info

Volume 82

Page Number: 4920 - 4925

Publication Issue:

January-February 2020

Abstract:

Fishing is the one of the major economic activity of the human from the beginning of the civilization. Women are supporting the men in fishing activity by vending it in the market place. Nowhere in the history of human civilization men and women treated different and assigned different social status. Women were struggled to lead a life exactly on par with men in spite of their urge for equality. Majority of the women were identified as only as daughters, wives, and mothers or as family members and not as a independent individuals to shape their life by own. Hence, women are still regarded as belonging to 'the weaker section of the society and dominated by their close men's in the society'. In most countries a women's status is usually defined in relation to her father or her husband or her brothers and wards. Social traditions and cultural barriers were limits the possibilities for freedom of women movement and equal access to employment and educational opportunities throughout the world by different means. This study tries to access the human rights violations faced by the women fish vending labourers in the Tamil Nadu. The study results revealed that most of the fish vending women are violated in their market place in many aspects and denied their basic human rights. Further, it suggested to conduct more research in the areas of health aspects of fishing women to uplift their life.

Keywords: Women, Fish Vending, Human Rights.

Article History

Article Received: 18 May 2019

Revised: 14 July 2019

Accepted: 22 December 2019

Publication: 23 January 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

Women constitute more than fifty percent of the total population of India. They also constitute one-third of the labour force and majority of the women engaged in unorganized sector and traditional occupations. Fishing is one of such sector where a large number of women folk engaged in a variety of activities. Fishing is one of the oldest occupations of mankind from the civilization and still engages millions of people across the globe. In India it is estimated that more than 6 million people engaged in fisheries and about 2 million of the workforce is women. Kerala with a total terrestrial area of 38000 square kilometres has a coastal line of 550

kilometres. Kerala holds the major share of exports in this fishing sector from India. More than a million people belonging to the fishing communities live in about 222 fishing villages in the Kerala State. About 2 lakh people depend on supplementary professions like fish processing and marketing of fish for their survival. Women are considered as secondary human being in the community especially in fishing community, while men go for fishing. Most of the fishing community women were involve in fish vending and take care of the children and maintain their family. Human rights violations take place among the fish vending women at their work place and in their family sphere. Especially due to their

fishing community and fish vending business many of the buyers (men's) were treat them poor and create psychological issues to them. This study ties to access the psychological issues and challenges of women fish vendors in Kerala.

Women Roles in Fisheries

- As women workers within the fisheries units, in pre- and post fish harvest activities, including the liaison work with the fisheries and fishery agencies
- As non-fisheries sector women workers they supplement their household income by small economic activities. Artisanal, small-scale sector and in the commercial sector by supplement contribution
- The productive roles of women in fishing vendors is collecting the small seaweed and other aquatic resources, processing the fish and marketing the fish in market, catch the fish from back water, making and repairing nets and gears, baiting long lines of nets, helping in the preparation for fishing trips and in unloading and sorting the fish from the boat.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study is both qualitative cum quantitative in nature. For the major activities and issues identification case study method was adopted. Stratified random sampling method was adopted to select the sample from the study area. 450 women fish vendors from 111 villages of Kerala were selected as the study area to identify the issues and challenges faced by the women fish vendors. Here women fish vendors are the wife or wards of the fisherman's.

Fish Vending

There are many women in the study area who earn their bread by way of small and medium scale selling fish in nearby villages and in the local markets to earn small income. The vending pattern is also varies from place to place and women to women due to their poor education and less awareness about

the . Some in strategic roadside market which they have created for themselves and some engaged in house to house selling.

Procurement

Procurement of fish was not a laborious job in the past. The women simply went to the beaches and bought needed fish. But the secured mode of procurement has been overthrown by many multinational forces since the past couple of decades. Since the present beach based fish landings are very small compared with the big demands set forward by the women fish vendors they are forced to seek alternatives, therefore, nowadays women are procuring fish from a number of origins. A large number of women are depend wholesale markets and landing centres of fish. Many of the women are depending multisource for procuring fish since a single source will make interruption in vending. There are women who procure fish from both beach and landing centres, beach and wholesale market and from their own beach and all these depends upon the availability of fish in each source.

Daily Life of a Fish Vending Women

The day of women fish vendors starts very early. Usually men leave before dawn to catch the small fish, where women can get fish from the beach or back water. In the Needakara landing centre, Kollam one can see women waiting anxiously with their aluminium vessels to carry the fish which have replaced bamboo basket.

Human Rights Perspective

As per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights , created in the year 1948 as an International body of laws , was meant to protect the integrity and dignity of human beings . Those laws together with the 1979 Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women , have been pivotal in the affirmation and implementation of human rights. This will without any doubt help them overcome the many human rights violations that clearly exist in the

domestic sphere that is direct out flow from the human rights violations in their occupation sphere.

Violation of Freedom of Movement and Choice

Since the fish vending women are small scale labourers and they find it hard to mobilize funds for them, they are said to be the head load workers and they do not have money to own any transport facilities and therefore they depend on public transport. The utilization of public transport is always a problem. There are often conflicts either between the passengers and vendor women or between the conductors and women. Though the transportation facilities are provided, they do not solve the problem. They are at times not allowed to enter in the buses with their vessels; they are hindered, tortured, ridiculed and neglected. Even the attitude of fellow passengers is almost similar. This very stigma has made them for social isolation and poor self-esteem. Their equality and dignity of life are violated causing mental agony and stress. The government machinery also fails to respond to the violation of their rights. It is one of the fundamental rights of person to have a free movement and access to the public transport. But this is denied to them and they are discriminated against on account of their profession.

Influence of money lenders

The ready cash payment practice invites new middleman into the field; women borrow money at high rates of interests since it is the only means of surviving in the business. The money lenders are flourishing at the expense of women. A sizable portion of the margin goes to this group and if there were loss it would be a serve blow to the poor vender women.

Malpractices in auctioning

The centralized process in fisheries sector has also lead to other forms of exploitation. The increase in investment has marginalized the women through another subtle way. The unit owners usually borrow a portion of investment from the auctioneer on the

condition that the catches would be auctioned only through the lending auctioneer. Often the auctioneers made some informal arrangements with some of the vendors and arrange the auction in such a way to give the catch to them. Thus the common vender women in effect are deprived from the ordinary process.

Village Informants

The vender men sometimes employ some agents in the village to help them in procuring fish. They act as informers of landing and helpers in procurement. This practice helped the outside vendors for the easy procurement. When the traders rush to the beaches with the help of informers, women's chances of procurement of fish at reasonable rate comes down. Men have access to most of the technological gadgets like mobile phones, two-wheelers, boxes to carry fish etc. They are able to get quick information about the availability of fish and price rates from any coast at any time using their mobile phones. But women have no access to these facilities due to economic and cultural reasons.

Preferences in Wholesale Markets

Even in wholesale markets, the traders prefer to vend the fish to male fish venders than the women. Since the women always bargain to fetch the fish a maximum possible low price it seems a nuisance to the traders to sell the fish to the women. The repayment of amount is also a factor here. The males are in a position to circulate the money so fastly than the women and hence become the preferring class to the trade.

Lack of Basic Facilities

The physical conditions and infrastructural facilities in the fish markets are pathetic everywhere in Kerala. It is a general viewpoint that fish markets are unhygienic places. Although women comprise the major part of fish sellers in the markets, they are unjustly denied whatever little amenities provided in the market. The blatant gender discrimination is a common factor; women are allocated the dirtiest and

unnoticed corners of the markets; they are denied basic infrastructural facilities such as toilets, room for changing the dress, water pipes, pure drinking water, ice boxes or freezers and a table to keep the fish for sale.

Violence and Sexual Harassment against Fisherwomen

Violence and sexual harassment against fisherwomen are on the increase due to various domestic and social factors. Violence against women and sexual harassments are not reported due to fear of social stigma. On the other hand the cases which are reported to the police do not get serious attention or follow up and eventually the culprit escapes using political influences or threatening the victims for dire consequences.

There were several instances of violence and sexual harassment;

- In 1989 one such case was happened in the Palayam market, Thiruvananthapuram. Sharlet, a pregnant fisherwoman from Vettukadu was attacked inside the market by a porter when she refused to give him fish for free of charge. She fell down during the commotion and was brutally beaten up by him resulting in abortion and a long period of hospitalization.
- In 1997 Fazila, a union worker who resides in Perumathura, Thiruvananthapuram was arrested from the KSRTC bus stand on false charges of immoral trafficking. She was locked up in the police station and tortured for two day and night.
- In 2000 a gang of criminals stormed in to Pongumoodu market, Thiruvananthapuram threatened the shopkeepers with knives and got the shops closed. Then they abducted a fisherwoman by name Flory, who comes from Veli, took her to a remote destination and raped

This technique is used to understand the major issues faced by the women fish vendors in the study area.

$$\text{Percentage Position} = \frac{100 (R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j}$$

R_{ij} = Rank given for the i^{th} item or issue by the j^{th} individual

j = Number of issues ranked by the j^{th} individual

The percentage position of each rank thus collected was converted into scores by referring to the Garrett ranking table. The ranking was done according to the average score calculated. The ranks computed from the women fish vendors about the major issues and challenges in the study area were converted in to scores by applying Garrett scoring technique and finally the average values of the measured scores were ranked respectively.

Table 1: Problems faced by the fish vendors

S. No.	Problem	Total Score	Average Score	Rank
1.	Sexual touch/talk	29308	65.13	I
2.	Inadequate income	18553	41.23	VI
3.	Poor Health condition	22153	49.23	V
4.	Changing market	27211	60.47	II
5.	Fund management	13243	29.43	VIII
6.	Family issues	25803	57.34	III
7.	Social issues	23922	53.16	IV
8.	Poor education	9522	21.16	IX
9.	Housing issues	17154	38.12	VII
10.	Economic imbalance	8271	18.38	X

Source: Computed from field data

The results of the Garrett Ranking reveal the major issues and challenges faced by the women fish vendors in the study area. From the view of the workers economic imbalance, market issues, Family issues(support from the family members), Social issues (getting time to participate and provide

Garrett's Ranking Technique for issues

suggestion for the community development), Health condition (independently spent income to health issues), inadequate income (help to fulfill the needs at the older age) and housing issues (help to purchase small assets such as Jewells and home appliances) sexual harassments are the major issues and challenges faced by the women fish vendors in the study area ranked respectively.

The Major Issues Related to Market and Fish Vending can be summarized as follows:

- Harassment from male fish vendors, contractors and tax collectors.
- Selling fish in very unhygienic places.
- Lack of basic infrastructures like sheds and other facilities.
- Brutal exploitation by middlemen, moneylenders etc.
- Physical attacks by goondas of the market contractor.
- Rape and other forms of Sexual violence

Exposure of Women to Diseases

Women are exposed to different diseases as result of long years of vending they are exposed to back pain, head ache and uterus problems in great magnitude. The back pain and headache are due to the excessive and regular head load taking also lead to eye problems and dizziness. The long hours of sitting also causes uterus problem that more than one third of the women are suffering from. The improper timing in food taking, inadequate facilities for daily routines, unhygienic surroundings etc. make the women more valuable to a series of diseases.

Fr. Charles Leon, faculty in the department of Social Work, Loyola College of Social sciences, Trivandrum, has conducted a study on "Fisherwomen in Kerala, India". In that study he viewed that 'There are very many occupational hazards, and there is an explicit violation of their rights as human beings. They face lot of physical and psychological violence in their homes and in the market places and even while they travel to the purchasing and selling places. Though they are the

bread winners in the family they do not have any access to the resources. They often live in the deprived situation. It is to be noted that women go for fish vending only after their marriage and they are forced to go for the job, though their mothers do not want to send their children to go for fish vending. It shows that they do not have any choice in selecting their course of action or their future. This is the basic violation of their human dignified status'.

Strategies to Address the Issue

By using human rights as a guide post, social worker can help to create social welfare policies that better serve societal needs. In order to protect the human rights of fish vending women, The Universal Declaration of human Rights 1948, The Protection of Human rights ACT 1993; The National Human rights Commission Regulations 1994, Human rights Provisions in the Indian Constitution etc should be considered as the guiding principle.

SUGGESTIONS

- Steps should be taken to ensure proper housing with decent sanitation facility and privacy.
- The person in charge of the market must take care to provide proper sanitation facility and water facility at the vending site.
- There should be co-operative society in order to prevent the exploitation by the middle men.
- The saving mentality must be developed by involving their effort and contribution of money in micro credit through co-operation basis and government must provide sufficient funds making it viable at sufficient rates of interests.
- There should be conscious effort to overcome the stigma attached to the fish vending and vendor women.
- There need to be sufficient orientation for value addition to products.

3. CONCLUSION

UN declaration had celebrated the golden jubilee of its proclamation and still there are various marginalized communities behind and detained life

and minimum standard of living. They are the most unorganized sections of the population and destined to be in the same situations. The condition of fishermen community in general and the fish vending women in particular are pathetic and wretched. They are subjected to various exploitation. This women suffer oppressions. Stigma attached to them lowers their self-esteem and worth. Women in the fish vending societies are traditionally been economically active. The roles included net making, processing, storage and vending of fish. With the advent of machine made net eliminated an important source of income for them. Even as declining real income for the men forced women to seek work outside the home. Society should appreciate and should not rather look down on them. These women are economically and socially marginalized and powerless in the community. Fishing community in general and fish vending women in particular are at the mercy at the progressed society and unruly market forces. The growing disparity between this sector and others render them vulnerable to human rights may be analysed in detail and also compare with the other country peers will give more insight knowledge to the society.

REFERENCES:

1. GulathiLeela (1984), "Sara - the fish vendor"; A study of 5 poor working women in Kerala, Hindustan publishing Corporation, Delhi
2. Kumar Shantha S (2005), "Human rights: people's watch"
3. Leon, Charls (2003), "Human rights Violation against Fisher women in Kerala, India", Loyola Journal of social sciences. Vol.17, NO.1, January - June, 2003
4. Manoharan C., Vettriselvan R., &Divyaranjani R., (2019) A Research on Future Aspirations of Adolescents, International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering, 8(9S2), 254-256.
5. Marjorie Agosin (2003), "Women, Gender, and Human Rights A Global Perspective"
6. Oamjie John (2006), "Fisher Women in Kerala Fight Back" TheeradesaMahilaVedi publication.
7. <http://keralafisheries.org/fisherwomenfigh.pdf>
8. http://www.icsf.net/icsf2006/uploads/publications/yamaya/pdf/english/issue_2/art02.pdf
9. Thiruvassagam G. Rajasekar D. &Vettriselvan R. (2019) Profile and Problems of Women Domestic Workers in Mangochi, Malawi, International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering, 8(2S3): 1167-1171.
10. Vettriselvan R, Anu S, JesuRajan FSA (2016). "Problems faced by women Construction workers in Theni District". International Journal of Management Research and Social Science. 3(2):58-61.
11. Vettriselvan, R., Ruben Anto M., &JesuRajan, FSA. (2018). Rural Lighting for Energy Conservations and Sustainable Development, International Journal of Mechanical Engineering and Technology 9(7), 2018, pp. 604–611.
12. Vettriselvan, R., Sathya M., &Velmurugan T. (2018). Social Inclusion at Indian Small and Medium Mechanical Engineering Enterprises, International Journal of Mechanical Engineering and Technology 9(8), 2018, pp. 749–75
13. Vettriselvan R., & Ruben Anto., (2018) Pathetic Health Status and Working Condition of Zambian Women, Indian Journal of Public Health Research & Development, 9(9):259-264.
14. Vettriselvan, R., Rengamani, J., James, F.A., Srinivasan, R., &Poongavanam, S., (2019) Issues and challenges of women employees in Indian technical industries, International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology, 8(2S2): 404-409.
15. Vettriselvan R., JesuRajan FSA &Arunkumar N., (2018), Child Labour in Unorganized Mechanical Engineering Industries of Tamil Nadu: A Situational Analysis, International Journal of Mechanical Engineering and Technology, 9(10), pp. 809–819.