

Informal fish Vending and Livelihood Implications among Urban-based Women Vendors in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study sought to establish the informal fish vending and the livelihood implications among the urban-based women vendors in Dar es salaam City, Tanzania. The study adopted the qualitative approach with the phenomenological design. Convenient sampling was used to recruit 110 fish vendors who were willing to share their views on the topic of the study. Through questionnaire, the researcher asked a similar set of questions to all respondents with an exception of more probing to respondents who gave insufficient information. Data was analyzed descriptively. The study established that informal fish vending improved the livelihood of the urban-based women vendors in Dar es salaam City in various ways. Based on the conclusions, the study recommends that the government and other stakeholders need to establish small microfinances for providing and supporting soft loans to women fish vendors for them to increase their capital and expand their business which will facilitate better livelihood.

Keywords: Fish vending; livelihood; women vendors.

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Introduction

Due to the growing urban population, which increases both the demand for and supply of fish products among urban and peri-urban residents, urban fish vending is increasingly becoming a crucial livelihood strategy (URT, 2016; Jaheer et al 2021). Thirty percent of Tanzania's estimated 61,741,120 million people live in urban areas, according to the 2022 National Population Estimate. Fishing and the trade of fish products are among the vital livelihood activities that keep the Dar es Salaam's population of 5,383,728 people alive (Getu et al., 2015). This suggests even more that Dar es Salaam's presence of this population serves as a market for a variety of goods, including fish and other related goods. In such a situation, a considerable number of people have considered fish vending as an employment opportunity to them and have been making a reliable living out of this activity in order to supply the required amount of fish in the required

quantity. Consequently, the fisheries sector has benefited the nation's economy through fish vending in addition to giving a respectable number of people a job (Kessuvan et al., 2015; Sambuo et al., 2020; URT, 2016).

In Tanzania, a significant number of women work in the fishing industry either directly or indirectly, despite the widespread belief that fishing is a male-dominated profession (Weeratunge et al., 2010). While some indirect roles of women (cooking, catching baits, mending nets) have been reported (e.g., Biswas, 2018) in the entire East African coast, more than 2.1 million women participate directly in the fishing sector and their income has not only supported the fishing industry, it has been a means of livelihood in their families and countries at large (Harper et al 2020; Kleiber et al 2015).

Given the significance of fishing for livelihoods as discussed above, numerous initiatives have been

developed to help the Dar es Salaam fishing industry's female participants grow their businesses. The government grants from local governments, which allocated a portion of their annual budget to empowering women's activities and boosting their economies, were a good initiative (Msuya et al, 2017). Another venture involves building fish farms so that women can buy fish whenever they want and sell it, which would alleviate Tanzania's fish shortage and support women's fish businesses. The UN would provide funding for this challenge as part of the Marine and Coastal Environment Management Project (Kimasa, 2013) which had as its goal lowering poverty levels. Fresh fish, smoked fish and fried fish are all sold at fish vending kiosks that have been established to provide jobs for women and young people. Women's participation in fishing is part of a larger strategy for livelihood diversification that combines various economic pursuits in order to manage risk and deal with life's shocks (Lekshmi et al., 2022). With this safety net function being argued to be the primary contribution of small-scale fisheries, employment and income from fishing can strengthen households' resilience and prevent them from devolving further into poverty (SSF) (Luomba & Mlahagwa, 2013).

Furthermore, according to FAO (2022) Tanzanian women were capable of forming the Tanzania Women Fish Workers Association (TAWFA) which served as a long-needed bridge for women in the fishing industry. Several pro-women initiatives have been carried out, with a focus on building capacity in areas like sustainable fishing, women's rights and empowerment, and access to market resources and information. Accordingly, the Tanzanian government created the National Fisheries Policies (NFS) in 2015 that emphasized gender mainstreaming and awareness in fisheries and aquaculture and promoted equity in the access to resources and benefits associated with fisheries production (URT, 2016). In addition, the government built a number of markets, including the Ferry fish market, the Kasanga market in Rukwa, the Bagamoyo modern fish market and the Kirumba fish market (FAO, 2016). Overall, different kiosks have been developed to sell a variety of fish, including fresh, smoked and roasted varieties.

There is dissatisfaction with women who work in this industry despite the importance of informal fish vending among women and the efforts made to improve it (Pearson et al 2013). In addition, while women's involvement in the fish vending industry

has been documented, little is known about the role that fishing plays in the livelihood of these women, particularly those who work as informal fish vendors at Ferry Markets. As a result, the study investigated how informal fish vending affects the lives of women who work as informal fish vendors at the Ferry Fish Market in Dar es Salaam.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF). According to the SLF, sustainable livelihoods refers to an individual's or household's capacity to maintain its well-being [overcome the vulnerability context] without eroding the resource base. Such capacity is determined by the access to and ownership of capital, notably natural, physical, human, financial and social capitals. Human capital encompass skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health while physical capital includes basic infrastructure (transport, shelter, water and energy) and communication facilities. Social capital entail social resources (meaningful networks, membership of formal and informal groups, relationships of trust, and access to wider institutions of society) that people draw upon in pursuit of livelihoods. Financial capital include cash money, savings, supplies of credit or regular remittances and pensions, while natural capital include aspects such as land, water, wildlife, biodiversity and other environmental resources (DfID, 2000).

The researcher examined how much women informal fish vendors replenished various livelihood capitals, particularly monetary, natural, physical, human, and social capital at the individual and household levels using the framework in the context of this study. This framework is relevant to the study's context because it is used to evaluate people's and households' capacities and resources (Scoone et al., 1998), which frequently affect their living conditions and the decisions they make regarding their means of subsistence and welfare outcomes (Mensah, 2016). Another benefit of the framework is that it makes it easier to recognize and comprehend how societies and individuals who are vulnerable to various conditions can make use of a variety of tools and methods at their disposal to support themselves. Additionally, the framework emphasizes the ability of a person or a household to maintain its well-being across the context of vulnerability without depleting its base of resources (DfID, 2000).

Empirical literature

The Role of Fish Vending on Livelihoods

In explaining the role of fish vending to the livelihood of women fish vendors, sustainable livelihood framework was used with all capital inclusive. Ibrahim et al. (2017) realized that financial natural and social capital have positive relationships although it is insignificant for livelihood outcome. Human, social, physical, financial and natural capital are all discussed in the literature. Human capital includes components like health problems, education and many others. According to Mfinanga (2014), fish vending contributes to better family and community nutrition. Accordingly, the fishery master plan provides evidence that the development of the blue economy enhances livelihood, nutrition and food security.

It was estimated that 58% of fishermen earn their living from multiple sources (Luomba et al., 2013). Ibrahim et al., (2017), elaborated sustainable livelihood framework as advocated by Chamber and Cornwall (1992) on the basis of their study that capital is the core component.

The majority of the fishers' income goes toward a variety of activities but a sizable portion goes toward meeting their most basic needs, including those for food, clothing, shelter, healthcare and education. When it comes to education, it has two sides: the vendors' ability to pay for their children's school expenses and the vendors' educational attainment. The study of Gibson et al. (2020) further reports that it was anticipated that uneducated men and women would work as fish vendors. In contrast to educated vendors, the uneducated ones made choices based on their level of education.

The study by Azmi and Lundy (2022) showed that a severe lack of medical facilities and other infrastructure affected the activities of fishing communities in Bangladesh in reducing their income. In another case, Fabinyi and Barclay (2021) emphasized that the physical infrastructure provided by the authorities is affected by livelihood improvement while improving the welfare of the people.

However, the natural capital is a collection of natural resources in the physical environment which humans act upon to create livelihoods (Guerry et al., 2015). These natural endowments include river and stream water for fishing and irrigation purposes, land for farming and construction, forest resources, livestock, and mineral deposits. Additionally, by

bridging the gap between household income and food supply, and in some cases, serving as the household's main source of protein and/or income, fishermen make a significant contribution to livelihoods and food security. On top of that, it is observed that women are primarily responsible for providing and preparing food for their households (Hauzer et al., 2013). In general, a sizable portion of the fishing industry is made up of women. However, the social, cultural and economic contributions that women make to the fishery are weighed against any potential ecological effects of their current fishing methods (FAO, 2020). Millions of coastal communities around the world are known to rely on small-scale fishing for their livelihood (Azmi & Lund, 2022). For instance, women in Kerala, India, sell fish in the market and at home. This is an economic activity that, through taxes and tariffs, indirectly helps to bolster local governments and the national government's coffers (John & Diwakar, 2014). Women fish vendors make a small contribution to their own families, communities, society and economy. Almost all previous studies have shown that the family's ability to survive and provide for itself depends on their income. Traditionally, women enter the workforce to support their family's financial needs. The families almost entirely rely on the income of the fish-vending women, despite the fact that some of the women are widows and that some of their husbands are ill, lazy, alcoholic or occasional drinkers who cause to drain a considerable portion of the family income (Fabinyi and Barclay 2021).

In addition, women leveraged their social networks and social capital to increase the market for their goods. They sold to female friends or relatives and expanded their networks to ensure that the supply of fish was never depleted (Gibson et al., 2020). The author went on to say that the network was crucial in connecting fish vendors with the owners of food kiosks who served as their primary sources of revenue from the sale of fish and fish-related products.

Natural resources such as land, water, wildlife, biodiversity and other environmental resources are also included in this category (Munishi, 2013; DfID, 2000). One of the elements that have drawn attention to the livelihood approach is natural capital. Women who sell fish have thought of access to land and land ownership as a part of natural capital. However, some of the money that women fish vendors make can be saved and accumulated to

buy capital like a piece of land which belongs to them and most of these women claim to have owned their own houses (Gibson et al., 2020)

Women fish vendors thought that having physical capital, the construction of infrastructure and having access to electricity were among the things that would help them develop in the fisheries and aquaculture sector in order to increase the nation's annual fish production and advance the industry by lowering post-harvest loss unstable financial capital (Mfinanga, 2014). This facilitates financial assistance and credit access inside or outside of a group, which can increase the household income and decrease the likelihood of participating in fishing. Aforementioned studies have been conducted elsewhere and little has been published on fish vending and livelihood impact to women at Ferry market, especially in Tanzania. This study will therefore fill the gap.

Methodology

Study Area and Design

This study was carried out in the Dar es Salaam Ferry market because the place is one of those that have the highest concentration of fish vendors. The Ferry market is a well-known center for oceanic fishes and fish products in Dar es Salaam City. The study adopted a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design.

Population and Sampling

Convenient sampling was used to recruit fish vendors who were willing to share their views on the topic of the study. It was important to use the convenient sampling procedure because of the nature of the business. Therefore, the researcher searched for availability and willingness of respondents. In this study, data was collected

through an open-ended questionnaire with 110 women fish vendors from the Ferry fish market in Dar es Salaam City. In the questionnaire, the researcher asked a similar set of questions to all respondents with an exception of more probing to respondents who gave insufficient information. Data was analyzed descriptively.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity and reliability of the results, the study adopted the questionnaire from Hapke and Ayyankaril (2018) and little adjustment was done in attempt to contextualize it.

Ethical Consideration

Based on the ethical principles for qualitative research, participants were informed of ethical issues prior to the data collection exercise. All other ethical rules, including the right to remain anonymous and withdraw from the study, were upheld.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the study's findings, which were guided by research questions as follows.

Research Question 1: What is the contribution of fish vending to the women vendors' livelihood in Dar es Salaam?

Respondents gave out their views and opinions on ways in which fish vending had changed their lives. The themes were generated and categorized into four types or groups: human capital, social, physical and financial. Such groups were adopted from the livelihood theory reported on the livelihood capital and sustainable livelihood (Issa et al., 2022, Ibrahim et al 2017, & Munishi et al., 2021).

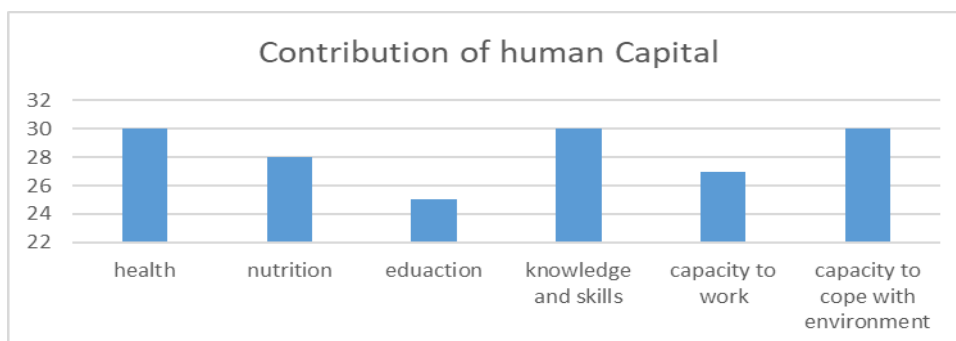


Figure 1: Contribution to Human Capital

Human Capital

Human capital includes health, nutrition, education, knowledge and skills, capacity to work and capacity

to adapt which enable a person to implement strategies to achieve life goals as indicated in figure 1. Firstly, one respondent stated that the fish

vending business provided them with income, which enabled them to support their family members when they became ill by paying medical bills and purchasing medicine and other related medical needs. The results contradict with Zhong and Di (2017) who found fish vendors experiencing unavailability of medical facilities.

Respondents revealed that fish is among the nutritious components that contributed to the development of the brains in their children. The finding continues that fish contains minerals that are important for health improvement to people of all ages. As a result, the community was able to achieve better nutrition. The results are supported by what has been found out by Mfinanga (2014) that fish vending provides nutritional requirements to family and society at large. Moreover, because of the earning from fish vending business, varieties of food can be obtained that also contributes to the improvement of health status of families.

On education, it was found that most of the fish vendors were performing well in their business and therefore it made them to be able to afford the payment of school fees for their children. Some parents/women were much interested in making sure that their children school well through the income received in the fish vending business. This indicates that women have realized the importance of education to the life of their. This finding is in harmony with that by El-Azzazy (2019) which revealed similar results that women fish vendors contribute much to their family income especially in the aspect of education of their children.

Fish vending business had also contributed to the improvement of knowledge and skills of doing business through sharing of knowledge and experiences in doing business. The study revealed that most women were able to stand in the fish

vending business because of the experience and encouragement they had obtained from others. Moreover, the findings show that women had managed to open up other vending centers as a result of the knowledge they acquired. This is important for development because it is creation of employment to others.

Social Capital

Social capital on this context includes networks and connections (patronage, neighborhoods and kinship), relations of trust and mutual understanding and support, formal and informal groups, shared values and behaviors, common rules and sanctions, collective representation and mechanisms for participation in decision-making, leadership.

Results in figure 1 indicate that the fish vending business contributed to the increase in social networking as some of respondents were able to get new friends which acted as new market for their products and good relations. Furthermore, some participants obtained their spouses through this activity. Some admitted that they had been able to establish relations of trust and mutual understanding and support at their workplace which in one way contributed to improvement in the fish vending business through acquisition of loans (Pedroza-Gutiérrez & Hernández, 2020). Social network was observed in this study to be an important component in various sectors more especially acquisition of loans and getting new customers for the business.

The results in figure 2 support what Gibson et al., (2020) found in their study on networking among women and access to loan together with power to make decision at the community and family.

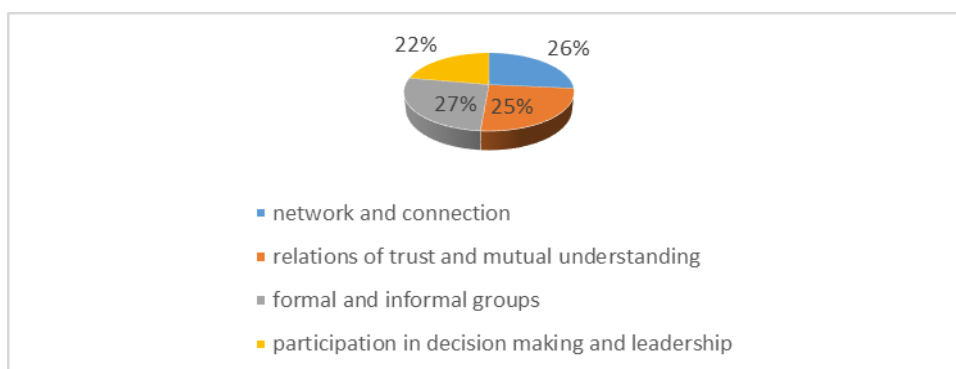


Figure 2: Contribution of Social Capital

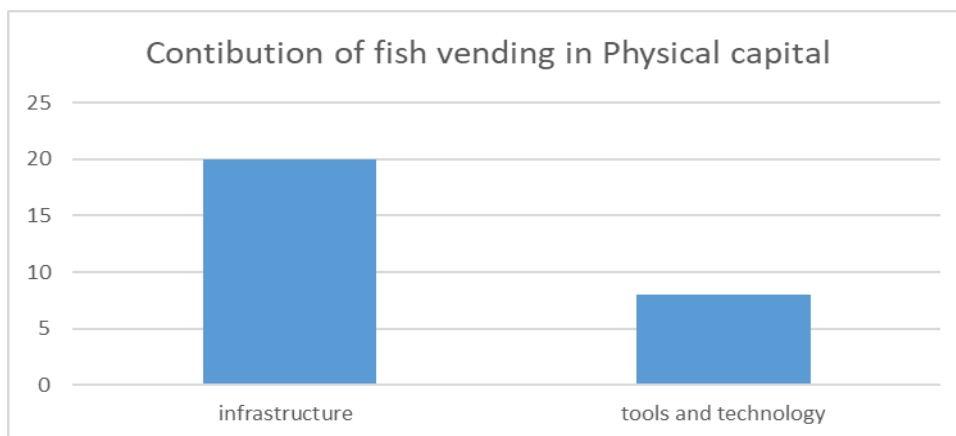


Figure 3: Physical Benefits

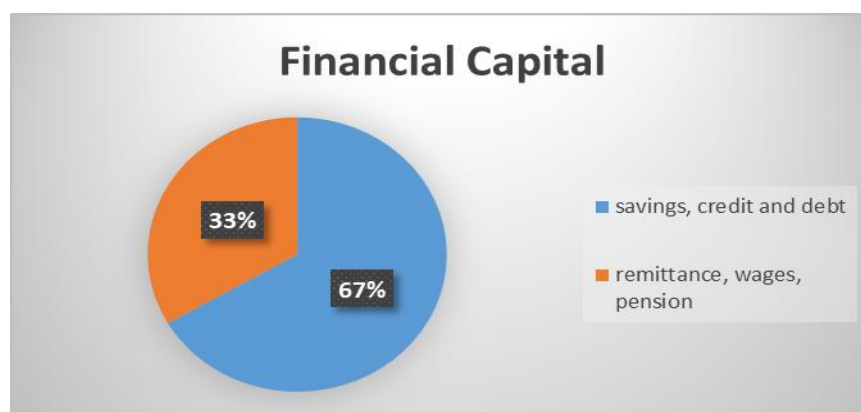


Figure 4: Financial Capital

Physical Capital

Figure 3 presents the contribution of fish vending on the physical capital. Physical capital includes infrastructure (transport, roads, vehicles, buildings, water supply and sanitation, energy, communications) and tools and technology (equipment for production, seed, fertilizer, pesticides). The study found that the government obtained a lot of money as tax from fish vending business domestically and internationally. However, the amount obtained is later on translated into service provision to individuals including water, health education, electricity, communication and security issues. Mfinanga (2014), supports these findings by arguing that women fish vendors had the capacity to improve infrastructure such as buildings and electricity for better living.

Financial Capital

Figure 4 indicates that 67 percent of women fish vendors had access to credit because of the business which in one way or the other acted as a collateral and made women to have mutual relations for them to be guaranteed by other business people. Moreover, 33 percent obtained capital from other formal sources which include

remittance, wages, salaries and pension. From the figure it is evidenced that other sources have little contribution in capital access compared to ownership of fish vending business.

Above all, the study reveals that fish vending activity increased the women's access to loans from microfinances and other financial institutions, their ability to save small sums and lend to others, their ability to pay workers' wages and their ability to repay loans. Therefore, fish vending activities significantly improved the livelihoods of women fish vendors. The study of Fabinyi and Barclay (2021) support this finding by stating that women fish vendors enter the vending industry due to financial hardship and thus it contributes to the family's financial capital.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concluded that women fish vendors managed to address their financial needs due to availability of their fish vending business. Furthermore, the women managed to increase social capital which increased the social network, expanded their market and eased access to loan for business development. Physical infrastructure has

been improved as a result of income that the government received from women fish vendors. Therefore, informal fish vending improves the livelihood of the urban-based women vendors in Dar es salaam City.

Based on the conclusions, the study recommends that the government and other stakeholders need to establish small microfinances for the providing and supporting soft loans to women fish vendors for them to increase their capital and expand their business which will facilitate better livelihood.

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