

Socioeconomic Status of the Fishing Households: Insight from Some Selected Coastal Area of Bangladesh

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Abstract: This study assessed the socioeconomic status of the fishing households, was carried out in two villages of Patharghata upazilla in Barguna District, Bangladesh. Data were collected from a purposively drawn sample of 60 fisher's households through household surveys as well as from secondary sources. Most of the data were collected during 9 October to 30 October, 2022 because the government of Bangladesh banned to catch fish at that time. From the survey it was found that about half of the fisherman is full time and most of the households are male headed. Maximum number of family are small (63.3%) and average family size of the examined households was 4.32 which is almost same as the national average. Highest percentage (55%) of the fishermen is young (15 to 49 years) where about 92% of the household heads (92%) are married. By religion, 46.67% fishermen are Muslims and majority (53.33%) fishermen are Hindus. In terms of education, 46.7% had education up to primary level, 23.33% of fishermen in secondary level and 30% had no education. The average working hour of the fisherman was almost 7 hours. So, from this study, we can conclude that the socioeconomic statuses of the coastal fishermen of the selected area were not satisfactory and the fishermen were underprivileged of many facilities.

Keywords: Fishing households, socioeconomic status, coastal Bangladesh.

Introduction

Globally, fisheries support the livelihoods of about 660–820 million people, and supply 154 million tons of fish and 16.6% of animal protein intake for the world's populations (FAO, 2012). Bangladeshis have a long tradition of fishing and fish culture which contribute significantly to employment, income generation, export earnings and human nutrition. According to FAO, Bangladesh is one of the world's most significant inland fishing states. This sector supports livelihoods of about 7 million fishers directly and 12 million people indirectly and subsidizes 3.61 percent to GDP and 2.73 percent to export incomes (DoF, 2018). Fishing is very important for the people dependent on it. It is not just a livelihood activity but a way of life which determines social identity and relationships (Coulthard et al., 2011). Employment in the fisheries sector has continued to grow (between 1990 and 2010) faster than employment in agriculture (FAO, 2012). People depend on fisheries on a full-time, part-time or occasional basis. While for the full-time group, fisheries are the sole source of their livelihoods, for part-time and occasional groups, fisheries form part of their diversified livelihood strategy. Hossain et. al., 2015 stated that fishermen are traditionally poor and fishing is considered as a low-class profession in Bangladesh. The vast majority of the fishing communities of Bangladesh are confronting more or less similar problems that standing the way of increasing catch and hence income from fishing operations and fishermen are one of the most vulnerable communities by any standard and over the years (Hossain et al., 2013).

Most (93%) of the marine fishing is small-scale in nature and supports the livelihoods of over half a million fishers and their household members (DoF, 2018) living in fishing communities. Bangladesh has been identified as one of the most vulnerable countries due to climate change. The economy of Bangladesh will be amongst the most vulnerable to climate change impacts on fisheries by the 2050s (Allison et al., 2009b). The projected climate change may directly impact on the fish stocks and the Bay of Bengal ecosystems, and on the socio-economic conditions of the fishery-dependent people in

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Bangladesh. In general, the impacts of climate change between the Bangladeshi coastal small-scale fishing communities and those of other parts of the world may have some level of similarity as the nature of this fisheries system varies little across the world. Climate change may result in an increased level of fluctuation in fish production in Bangladesh (Ahmed et al., 2002). In addition, marine fisheries support the livelihoods of other households involved in ancillary activities such as fish processing, gear making and so on. Several studies have found poor physical infrastructure in the coastal fishing villages of Bangladesh and most people live in poor socioeconomic conditions (Akter et al., 2009). They have also found that most of the households cannot eat regularly, have little education, and have only moderate public health provision. Some get financial assistance from the government and international donors (Hasan et al., 2004). Local village leaders tend to make community decisions and resolve most family conflicts, although sometimes elected local government representatives such as the chairmen and members of “union parisad” (a local government unit) resolve conflicts (Ahmed et al., 2009). Most of the fishers catch fish with boats and gear, although a small number of them do not have a boat and operate only with small (push/pull) nets near the shore. The findings of such a study could also contribute to an understanding of these issues in other parts of the world with similar environmental, socio-economic and livelihood conditions.

Materials and Method

To achieve the objectives of the present study, a preliminary household's survey was directed to achieve a clear knowledge about the research area to recognize the broad socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents. To choose the households randomly, a list of the fishing villages was collected from Patharghata Upazilla office. Two villages namely Lakurtala and Hatempur under the Patharghata upazilla of Barguna were nominated for the study. These two villages were selected because these villages would signify the objectives of the study. The study uses purposive random sampling method to make a representative portion of the fishing community. The total number of households in these two villages was 265 among them 105 households were involved in fishing activities. The sample frame contained 60 fishing households who were randomly selected as a sample unit from 105 households. For better evidence, almost all of the repliers were household head because the household head have a decent sense of household.

Both primary and secondary data were collected through mixed method tactics. Data collection was executed based on observation and survey technique. Data on the socioeconomic condition of the fishermen households was collected survey indicators such as- age distribution, fisherman type, family size, religious status, educational status, housing, marital status etc. Data were collected during October-November 2022. Most of the data were collected during 9 October to 30 October because the government of Bangladesh barred to catch fish at that time. They were interviewed by their houses and Riversides only when they were accessible. Secondary data was collected from various scholarly articles and related literature. Data were presented mostly in the tabular form, because it is simple in calculation, broadly used and easy to recognize. Some statistical measures like average, percentage and ratios were considered to reach at expected findings.

Results and discussion

Socio-economic characteristics are very useful to determine the behavior of any community. It is reflection of individual's positive and negative qualities. The specific characteristics such as age, education, experience, access to credit, training received etc. are the specific characteristics that determine the behavior of the community. Decision making of any individuals would be influenced by their characteristics. The selected fisherman households' condition was also same as others fishing communities. Persons vary from one another in numerous aspects. Behavior of person is determined by his/her characteristics. A number of socioeconomic aspects of the respondent fisherman were considered in the present study. Variables such as family size and working person, educational status, occupational status have been taken into consideration for the present study.

Type of fishermen

Normally, the fishermen depended on fishing for their income, nutrition and their livelihood. The income of fishers varied with their capability and volume of the capturing fish. There were three types of fishermen; 1) Occasional 2) Part-time and 3) Full-time. In the study area all respondent fishermen were seasonal. Full-time fishermen (50%) were nearly 3-times than part-time fishermen (20%) and (30%) occasional. Occasional and part-time fishers rely mostly on agriculture, fish farming, small business and livestock rearing for their livelihood.

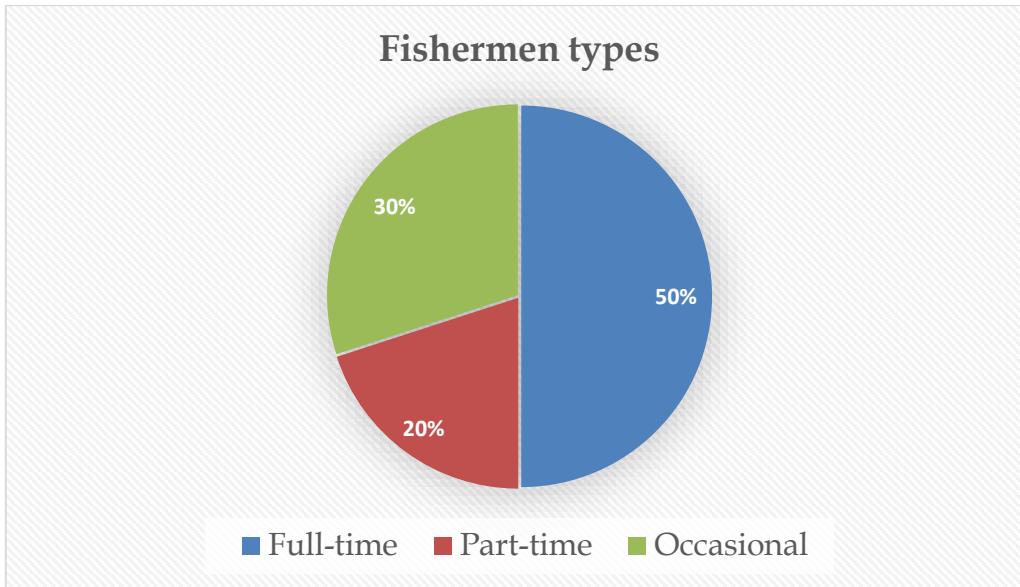


Figure (1): Types of fishermen

Household headship

Bangladesh is a patriarchal society hence, most of the household heads are male. Study samples also reported similar results, as most of households (86.67%) are male headed. Only 13.33 percent of the household heads are female.

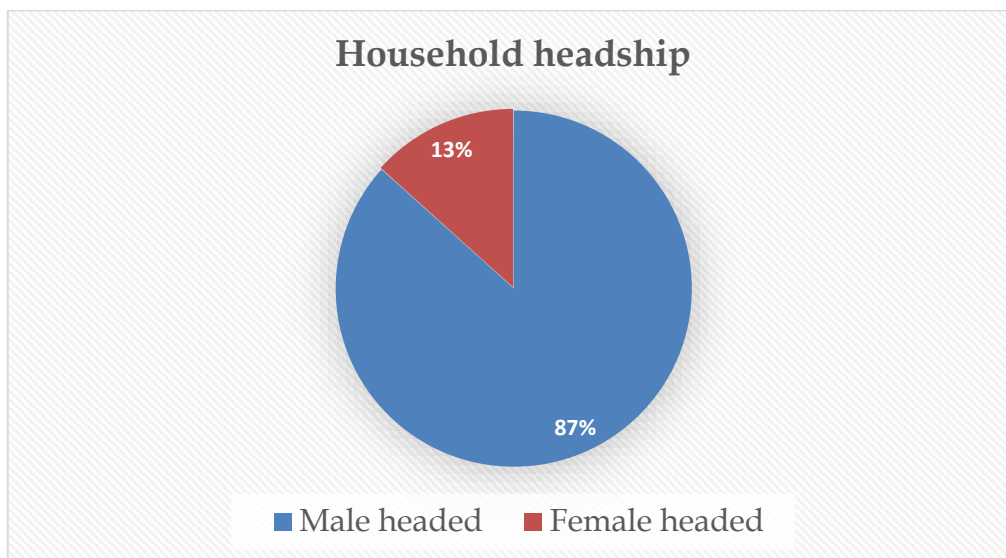


Figure (2): Household headship

Family size of the respondent

Family size composed of the members living together in a household. The household members measured as the members who always live together. From the selected households, the highest number of family

members is 7. Maximum number of families has 4 members (43.3 percent). For this study family size categories into three strata. Three strata were small, medium and large. Small family size was over 4 members, medium family was from 5 to 6 members and large family was above 6 members. From the above table 4.1, the maximum number of family are small i.e. 63.3 percent of household were small. 31.7 percent of the families were medium and the rest 5 percent were large family. It was cleared from the table that there was very little number of extended family in the selected households. The average household size in Bangladesh is 4.30 (HIES, 2022). Average family size of the examined households was 4.32 and which is almost same as the national average.

Table (1): Family size of the respondent

Family Size	Number of Household	Percentage of member
Small (Up to 4 members)	38	63.3
Medium (5 to 6 members)	19	31.7
Large (Above 6 members)	3	5.0
Total	60	100

Source: Author's estimation based on field survey, 2022

Age distribution of the respondent

In assessing potential fruitful human capitals, the knowledge about age structure of fishermen was significant. Different types of age groups were considering to observe the age structure. There were different age groups of fishermen in the selected sample repliers for the study. In this exploration, the fisher of the study area was classified into different age groups. Age of the fisher's, varied from 30 to 72 years. Grounded on their age, the fishers were classified into four groups and the groups were 0 to 14 years, 15 to 49 years and 50 to 59 years and above 60 (Health Bulletin, 2022).

Table (2): Age distribution of the respondent

Age Group (Years)	Number respondent	Percentage of respondent (%)
0-14	0	0
15-49	33	55
50-59	17	28.3
>60	10	16.7
Total	60	100

Source: Author's estimation based on field survey, 2022

From the above (Table 4.2) it was estimated that among the selected samples majority of the fisherman's i.e. 55 percent were belonged to the age group of 15 to 49 years. The national average of this age is 54.6 percent (Health Bulletin, 2022). So, there was almost same number of fishermen between this age group (i.e. 15 to 49) with the national average. From the table it was estimated that there was no fisherman between the age group of 0 to 14 years. Among the selected fisherman 28.3 percent were in the age group of 50 to 59 years and only 16.7 percent were in above 60year age group. Ahmed et al. (2021) found that 41% of the fishers were in the 26–30 age group, more than a third (38%) of the participants were in the 40–60 age range, and only a few (9%) of the fishers were in the age group of (>60 years). According to Health Bulletin (2022), the national average of the age group 50 to 59 years and above 60 years is 8.7 percent and 7.9 percent respectively. In the selected area there was highest number of fishermen between the age group 50 to 59 years than the national average and the workers above 60 years were also higher than the national average.

Religion status

According to the response on religious belief 46.67% fishermen are Muslims and majority 53.33% fishermen are Hindus. Then the study showed advanced involvement of Hindu community in fishing in the study area. Rahman et al. (2018) noted that 63% of the fishers were Hindus where the rest seemed as Muslims (27%) in the Mymensingh district. Muslim is coming to this profession is an increasing number through breaking the earlier moral and value of the society.

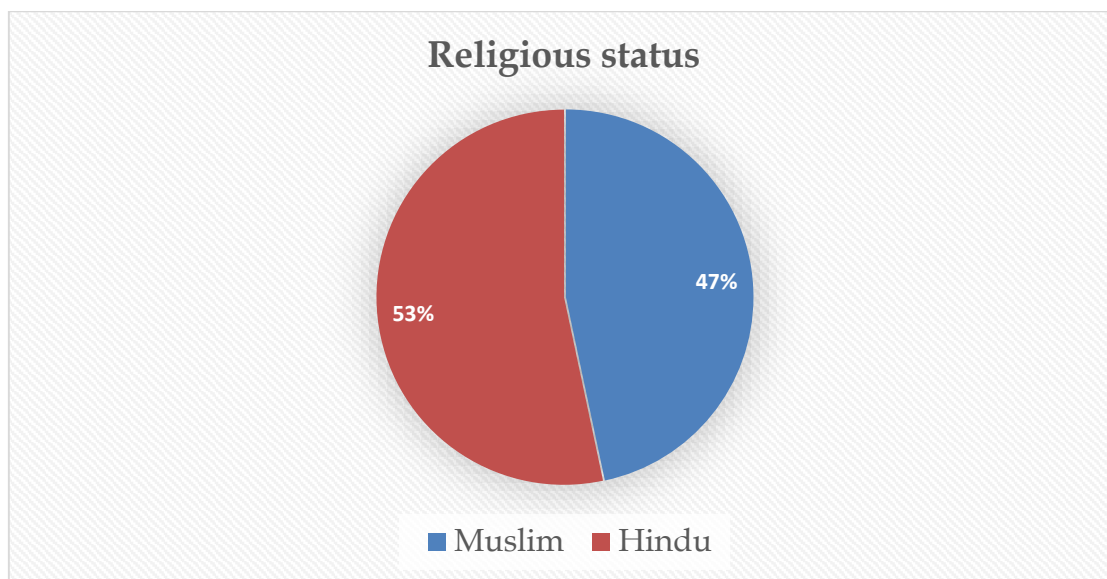


Figure (3): Religious status

Educational status of the respondents

The educational status of fishermen community was very poor. There was no graduate and higher secondary education level of fishermen. Fisherman’s children become fisherman traditionally. They did not want to send their children in school because they thought that if their children worked as fisherman, it will be supportive for them to maintain their life. It was very rare that their children had passed secondary school. Maximum household had children's who did not complete primary education. In the two villages literacy rate was very low. Most fishermen often could signature only. But maximum portion of them were illiterate. When the researcher visited the village’s fishermen said that they want to send their children in school but the educational cost was not in their capacity. They were low earners, so their main attention was on the earnings. In present situation it was hard to continue their standard life with this earning. For this reason, the fishers were eager to include their children in fishing conditioning.

Table (3): Educational status of the respondents

Educational Status	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Illiterate	18	30
Primary	28	46.7
Secondary	14	23.3
Total	60	100

Source: Author’s estimation based on field survey, 2022

In the above Table 4.3, 46.7 percent of the repliers had passed primary, 30 percent were illiterate and only 23.3 percent had passed secondary. According to Barua et. al. (2022) the level of education of the Lake fishermen reveals that 15 % were illiterate, 46% were primary educated, 33% were secondary educated, 6% were up to H.S.C. level. The national literacy rate of Bangladesh is 74 percent (HIES, 2022). In the selected study area total literacy rate was 70 percent which was almost near to the national average. Maximum fishers were study nearly over class two or three. But the illiteracy rate of the study area was also higher i.e. national illiterate percentage was 30 percent.

Marital status

Conjugal status of family heads might have effect on farm size, livestock choice and other agricultural choices to a greater range. Table 4.4. Shows that most of the household heads (about 92%) are married. Mitul et. al. (2023) also found around 90% of the fisherman household in the coastal areas were married. Only few fishermen are either unmarried or divorced. The percentage of unmarried (3.3%) is not

significant in the study area. The percentage of separated and divorced household was reported very limited which indicates greater permanency of the family bonding among fishing households.

Table (4): Percent distribution of household heads marital status

Educational Status	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Married	95	91.7
Unmarried	2	3.3
Divorce	1	1.7
Separated	2	3.3
Total	60	100

Source: Author's estimation based on field survey, 2022

Working hour of the respondent

The main sources of livelihood of the selected fisherman were wage and rationing. But all fisherman did not get ration. The average working hour of the fisherman was almost 7 hours. The maximum working hours was 12 hours and lowest 4 hours.

Conclusions

In Bangladesh, fishing communities typically lived in the seaside areas are more exposed to the serious threat of climate shocks and stress in terms of socioeconomic accessibility. This study assessed the socioeconomic status of the fishing communities of Barguna district, Bangladesh. By examining the socioeconomic condition of the selected fishing households, it was clear that their social and economic situation was so much pathetic. The fishers were deprived from different facilities. The education level among the fisherman was so poor and the affordability of education was not satisfactory. Different non-government organizations can play a vital role for improving their literacy rate. Though, the Government is taking some significant step by providing some kinds of additional facilities during the prohibition period of the fishing but still this area desires more provision to generate a justifiable progress of the fisherman. Moreover, health services must be enhanced in this area by the support of both NGO's and government. However, more innovative and widespread investigation are essential to formulate better data-base evidence on biodiversity and fisheries with plenty problems targeting to develop practical rules and regulations.

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