
**THE IMPACT OF COMMERCIALISATION OF FISHING ON GENDER ROLES, AMONG
LAKE VICTORIA SHORE FISHING COMMUNITIES OF UGANDA. A CASE STUDY OF
KATOSI FISHING VILLAGE****Asiimwe Isaac Kazaara****Metropolitan International University****ABSTRACT**

The study aimed at the impact of commercialisation of fishing on gender roles, among lake Victoria shore fishing communities of Uganda and it was guided by the following objectives; To examine the influence of culture on women and men's participation in the commercialised fisheries sector, to find out how the commercialising of the fisheries sector has affected the traditional gender roles in the household and the wider community and to analyse the benefits derived by men and women from the commercialised fisheries. The study employed qualitative and quantitative research approaches/models. The qualitative approach was used to complement quantitative methods as a way of obtaining in depth information beyond what an ordinary survey could elicit. The study population involved fishermen, Beach Management Unit (BMU), local leaders and cultural leaders. Their views represent the views of the target population. Fishermen were selected because they are major stakeholders in the day to day running of the fishing activities in Katosi, therefore, they were in position to share their experiences. The sample size of the study involved (80) respondents of which (10) of them were the Beach Management Unit officials, (15) local leaders, and 55 were the local fishing communities. From the findings, most of the female in Katosi (12%) named inadequate capital as the most important limitation to men. For Katosi, culture was cited as the second most important constraint named by 20% of all women and 3% of the men respondents, reduced catch was named as the third most important constraint (11%). Revelations from in-depth interviews indicated that the Katosi theft situation is complicated and allegations of thieves disappearing to the nearby islands were rife. There is need to revive and promote cooperative fishing and marketing and therefore, cooperatives need to be promoted not only for socio-economic expediency but also for the fact that they can promote collective bargaining and provide useful channels for government to propagate ideas to the grassroots.

Key words: commercialisation, fishing, gender roles, lake-Victoria shore fishing and communities
Background to the study

Since the 1980s, Uganda has been implementing liberalisation policies (Kazaara et al., 2023). In 1981, the Government of Uganda adopted stabilisation and structural adjustment policies but these were quickly abandoned in 1984 partly due to the intensification of civil war (Shamim et al., 2023). But prior to the abandonment, the stabilisation programmes had attained short term success particularly in the period 1981 – 1983: Inflation was tamed (Kazaara & Kazaara, 2023), parallel market activities had been reduced, production had revived and gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates were positive (Frank et al., 2023).

Received: 22.09.2023**Accepted: 25.09.2023****Published on: 30.09.2023**

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With a new government in place in 1986, Uganda appeared to follow a path of development that would be defined by a 'Marxist' type of ideology. The new government philosophy as articulated in its ten-point programme, was anti the very institutions pushing for adjustment namely International Monetary Fund (IMF), the world Bank and their creed defined by currency devaluation and free market economies (Paul & Kazaara, 2023).

The Government of Uganda has designed poverty reduction policies in the framework of liberalisation. In 1997, Uganda developed the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) that has arguably been described as a holistic framework for the eradication of poverty in the country (Shamim et al., 2023). Subsequently, the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA), which aims at replacing subsistence production with commercialised agriculture, has been developed (Grace et al., 2023). The fisheries sector is considered part of the agricultural sector and has since in the recent years been playing an increasingly important role in the economy with its export revenues expanding significantly (Nelson & Christopher, 2022). In Uganda today, fish like coffee, cotton, textiles, tea, beef, hides and skins, horticulture products and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is considered one of the strategic exports within the framework of export diversification (Tasha et al., 2023).

The Fisheries Sector grew by 0.9% in 1998, -0.1% in 1999/2000, 4.0% in 2000/2001 and 6.2% in 2001/2002 (Ashiraf et al., 2023). It is projected that during the fiscal year 2003 – 2004, fish export earnings will increase by 12 percent, with earnings increasing from United States dollars 81 million to United States \$ 90 million (ROU 2003b). Improvements in infrastructure and provision of fish fry by government have contributed to the continued good performance of the fish industry, taking advantage of the lifting of the ban on fish exports to the European Union (Victor et al., 2022). The development of the fisheries sector has attracted medium to big sized companies mainly focused on the export market and particularly of the Nile Perch. Public and private investment in the sector has also increased.

Problem Statement

A number of studies that have been done on the fisheries sector in Uganda particularly focus on fisheries management, the adoption of appropriate technologies in the fishing sector, fish infection and fish production, processing and marketing (Oscar et al., 2023). Gaheb and Sarch 2002, Wilson 2002, Mayende 1992, Kirema 1996, Etoori 1996 and Wabulya 1998. However, apart from these studies being gender "neutral" in the sense that they ignore addressing the gender differences in terms of differential experiences of women and men in the fisheries sector, the gendered differences in reaping the benefits and in facing constraints, very few of them, Olinga 2000 and Asowa-Okwe 1994 focused on gender differences in the

Received: 22.09.2023

Accepted: 25.09.2023

Published on: 30.09.2023

fisheries sector in general and none focused on the commercialisation of the fisheries sector in particular (Carvalho, 2008). None of the prior local studies in addition has addressed the changed situation resulting from commercialisation and how that has affected the female and male genders or addressed the responses generated. Besides the efforts of men and women in transforming the new situation so as to reap the apparent benefits had not been explored yet. Hence, this study is set to analyse the dynamic and changing gender roles in the fisheries sector as a result of commercialisation (Christopher et al., 2022). Gender is understood to include the social construction of females and males embedded in the cultural set up of communities which influence entitlements as well. As such the study shall establish how cultural beliefs, attitudes and practices affect women's participation in comparison to men's, particularly focusing on whether there are any variations. For instance, what is the degree of impediment provided by culture to women as compared to men's ability to participate and/or gain from the commercialised fisheries? The study shall also explore whether women as well as men are comparatively benefiting from or losing out of the commercialisation of the fisheries sector (Gracious, 2023). Besides, it will attempt to establish how women and men are responding at two levels; one being at the coping level and the second the transformative level, the later focusing on their attempts at altering the status quo. The study will also attempt to maximise the benefits of comparative analysis of people of different cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Study Objectives

Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. To examine the influence of culture on women and men's participation in the commercialised fisheries sector.
2. To find out how the commercialising of the fisheries sector has affected the traditional gender roles in the household and the wider community.
3. To analyse the benefits derived by men and women from the commercialised fisheries.

Research Questions

1. How does culture influence women's role in the commercialised fisheries?
2. How has the commercialising of fisheries sector affected gender roles of katosi fishing community?
3. What benefits have been gained by people of katosi as a result of commercialising fisheries sector?

Methodology

Study Design

Received: 22.09.2023

Accepted: 25.09.2023

Published on: 30.09.2023

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The study employed qualitative and quantitative research approaches/models. The qualitative approach was used to complement quantitative methods as a way of obtaining in depth information beyond what an ordinary survey could elicit.

Study population

The study population involved fishermen, Beach Management Unit (BMU), local leaders and cultural leaders. Their views represent the views of the target population.

Fishermen were selected because they are major stakeholders in the day to day running of the fishing activities in Katosi, therefore, they were in position to share their experiences.

The Beach Management Unit was used because they overlook any activity on the lake, they enforce regulations pertaining fishing and the general management of the lake. The local people were selected because they are both active and passive beneficiaries of the fishing business at Katosi.

Sample size

The sample size of the study involved (80) respondents of which (10) of them were the Beach Management Unit officials, (15) local leaders, and 55 were the local fishing communities.

Sample selection procedure

This study took the purposive sampling method where fishermen were selected for a fair, quick and cheap collection of data so that different characteristics of all stakeholders are captured.

Data Collection

The study employed a range of data collection methods. The use of a combination of methods was intended to help improve on the validity of results as well as allow for complementarity in data collection for purposes of attaining high levels of completeness. Broadly, qualitative method was used. The qualitative tools helped to analyse the dynamics of gender relations in the communities and record certain historical aspects and life experiences of women and men.

Data Analysis

Data cleaning, editing and coding was done before analysis. Data elicited by use of questionnaires was analysed using SPSS and results are presented in form of tables (Nelson et al., 2022). Raw frequencies were generated to categorise the demographic and the socio-economic data. Later multi variant frequency tables were generated to analyse the gender composition in various segments of the fishing communities. Data from in depth interviews, observations and other qualitative tools was analysed along key themes. Broad categories were developed to differentiate and describe the ideas expressed by respondents.

RESULTS

Received: 22.09.2023**Accepted: 25.09.2023****Published on: 30.09.2023**

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Gendered Fishing Roles in the commercialised fisheries

Apart from analysing the effect of commercialisation on the roles of women and men in the household and the wider community, my interest was also on the effect of commercialisation on the roles of women and men in the fishing activities. It is this that is presented and discussed below.

Women's Fishing Roles

Table 1: Presents Women's Fishing roles at katosi.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Trading in Fish	23	29
Fish Smoking	27	34
Selling Fishing Materials	4	5
Sun Drying <i>Mukene</i>	5	6
Actual Fishing	2	2
Sell Food/Restaurants/bars	9	1
Looking after men	7	2
Other	3	5
	80	100

Source: Primary Data, 2011

With commercialised fishing, the majority of women and men reported that the main roles of women in Katosi most of the women engaged in fish smoking (34%) and fish trade (29%). A relatively higher number of women in Katosi were engaged in actual fishing (11%). Others are engaged in selling food, running restaurants or bars (9%), sun drying *mukene* (7%) or selling fishing materials (5%). Considering what women now do in the fishing activities does not show much change pointing to the fact the status quo is largely unchanged. Below is a table showing women's roles today in Katosi.

Men's Fishing Roles

Table 2: presents men's fishing roles

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Trading in Fish	24	30
Fish Smoking	10	12.5
Selling Fishing Materials	5	6
Sun Drying <i>Mukene</i>	1	2
Actual Fishing	27	32
Sell Food/Restaurants/bars	8	10
Looking after men	1	2
Other	4	5.5
	80	100

Source: Primary Data, 2011

Received: 22.09.2023

Accepted: 25.09.2023

Published on: 30.09.2023

Today, in the commercialised fisheries in katosi, 32% of respondents indicated that men are mostly engaged in actual fishing. Others are in fish trading (30%) and transport including rowing (12%). Some few are reportedly in fish drying (1%) and boat making (6%). Men were also observed repairing boat engines as well as selling many other items related to fishing.

Photo 1: Fishermen in water doing actual fishing



Photo by: Isaac kazaara A

Fishing related Work of the respondents

Table 4: presents Fishing related Work of the respondents

Response	male frequency	male %	Female frequency	female %
Fishing	14	17	4	4.7
Trading in fish	10	12.2	24	28.4
Trade in Fish Related Products	11	14.5	6	7
Fish processing	9	11	5	5.9
TOTAL	41	54	39	46

Source: Primary Data, 2011

Received: 22.09.2023

Accepted: 25.09.2023

Published on: 30.09.2023

In general, 28% of the respondents constituting mostly women said they work related to fishing, 18% consisting of more men than women reported that they did no work related to fishing. In essence more women reported not participating in fishing in compared to men. Katosi men in this category were the majority. It has to be noted however that Katosi has a higher level of commercialised fisheries. Thus in general one would think that commercialisation excludes men more than women.

Photo 2: A woman waiting to trade in fish with fishermen at the shores



Photo by: Isaac kazaara A.

As table two illustrates, in Katosi fishing (defined here to mean actual going to the lake to capture fish) is specifically a male domain accounting for 17% compared to 5% for women. Trading in fish however is largely a women's speciality and this is mainly in smaller species like *Mukene* and *Tilapia* as trade in Nile perch is insignificant in this area except for premature ones. This might actually explain women's predominance there is more women than men reported carrying out more fishing and trading in fish and fish related products. This is very surprising as physically women in Katosi are not seen doing the actual fishing.

This activity however is done by women through hiring men. However, women who hire men in this way believe that they actually do the fishing. Besides, many women in in-depth interviews in Katosi defined fishing to include all other activities related to fishing. They argue that since the fisheries sector is primary in their area, all the people in the area are *abavubi* (meaning fisher people). They elaborate that the

Received: 22.09.2023

Accepted: 25.09.2023

Published on: 30.09.2023

restaurants, food vending, tailoring, shop keeping and all such businesses hinge around the fishing activity. This may therefore explain such a high number of women who reported their activity as actual fishing. Apart from this definitional factor, there are also some other organisational factors that will be discussed in a later section which explains why women of Katosi are relatively strong in the commercialised fisheries. As far as the motivation for engaging in fishing related activities is concerned, the majority of the respondents (70%) indicated that it was for commercial purposes and profit. However, more men said they participated in fishing related activities for commercial purposes than women though the difference was not statistically significant. There were a bigger proportion of respondents both men and women indicating they participated for both subsistence and commercial purposes. There were no major differences according to gender.

Community attitudes, cultural beliefs and practices

Katosi's scenario is very interesting. 79% percent of the women interviewed and 21% of the men said community attitude generally encouraged women's participation in fishing. It should be noted though as earlier intimated that the term fishing in the two localities is understood differently and this definitely had an influence over the results.

Even with this observation, it is important to note that the community in Katosi is today more supportive of women engaging in fishing activities in general than it was some twenty or so years ago. While there could be many factors for this shift in attitude, the presence of a strong women's fishing group. Katosi Women Fishing and Development Association may have been one of the decisive factors in influencing opinion in Katosi and can explain how women's strategic involvement in hitherto culturally "prohibited" areas has changed.

As far as men's participation is concerned, Katosi respondents indicated a strong supportive community attitude towards men's involvement in fishing with 96%. All men interviewed felt that the community attitude towards men's participation in fishing was positive. In short engaging in fishing activities is regarded a naturally God given activity for men and women's involvement is perceived in some sections of society as interference, artificial or foreign. It may be interesting to look at some of the reasons advanced for this community attitudinal position. Box One below highlights some of them.

Constraints faced by women and men

Table 5: Presents Constraints faced by women and men

Response	Male frequency	Male %	Female frequency	Female %
Market /Competition	6	7.3	4	5.2
Limited Capital	10	12.2	12	15.3

Received: 22.09.2023

Accepted: 25.09.2023

Published on: 30.09.2023

Technological Changes	3	3.7	0	0
URA/Taxes/Licence Fees	4	4.9	0	0
Safety Issues	6	7.3	2	2.6
Culture	3	3.7	16	20.5
Reduced Catch	7	8.5	2	2.6
High Transport Costs	2	2.4	3	3.8
Total	41	50	39	50

Source: Primary Data, 2011

Women's Constraints in commercialised fisheries

Katosi women (15%) cited limited capital and competition in the market (5%) as the two most important constraints for women's participation in commercialised fisheries. Most men (12%) also believed that women were limited by capital while 5% recognised market-based competition. Thirteen percent of men in addition named fishing technological changes and lack of appropriate fishing skills by women as limiting. Indeed 14% of women also cited technological and skills limitations which were a result of changes in fishing technologies and lack of matching fishing skills. Interestingly women in Katosi did not report lack of spousal support but safety considerations were cited. In addition, men (7%) pointed out high transport costs and reduced catch (7%) as other constraints faced by women.

Photo 3: Transport means as a Constraint in commercialised fishing



Photo by: Isaac kazaara A

Men's Constraints

Most of the female in Katosi (12%) named inadequate capital as the most important limitation to men. For Katosi, culture was cited as the second most important constraint named by 20% of all women and 3% of the men respondents, reduced catch was named as the third most important constraint (11%). Revelations from in-depth interviews indicated that the Katosi theft situation is complicated and allegations of thieves disappearing to the nearby islands were rife.

Another important constraint cited was high taxation and licence fees from government and harassment from officials of the Uganda Revenue Authority and other government agencies that are in charge of tax collection and compliance.

Benefits of Commercialised fishing

Benefits to Women

Table 6: Presents Women's benefits in the commercialising of fisheries

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Income	34	44
Child/Household support	12	15
Nutrition	14	16

Received: 22.09.2023

Accepted: 25.09.2023

Published on: 30.09.2023

Education	16	20
Other	4	5
	80	100

Source: Primary Data, 2011

Two main benefits to women are identified by both men and women in Katosi fishing village namely increased incomes and improved nutrition/household food security. It was found out that 44% of all the women and men reported increased incomes as the most important benefit to women resulting from commercialisation. Increased incomes to the women have resulted from income directly earned from fish sales, generation of employment opportunities and the possibility of establishing businesses to serve the fishing communities such as in fishing gear, accommodation, eating places, rental units or even sex work (Oromo et al., 2023).

Benefits to Men

Table 7: Presents Men's benefits in the commercialising of fisheries

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employment/income	33	41
Investment	18	22.5
Education	3	4
Nutrition	14	17.5
Marriage/Leisure	10	12.5
Other	2	2.5
	80	100

Source: Primary Data, 2011

Increased employment opportunities and incomes are named by both male and female respondents as important benefits to men in Katosi. However, in addition, men appear to have derived a wider range of benefits from the commercialised fisheries including investing in housing construction and purchasing land. Fewer women were reported to have invested in real estate. Additionally, more men indicated that commercialisation had improved the market for fish which was not stated by women probably indicating that the marketing function is still predominantly male (Mark et al., 2023).

Conclusion

It was also found from the field results that women in Katosi seemed to have been involved in fishing activities on a greater scale. More involvement of women in fishing related activities in Katosi is a pattern that still pertains today.

Women were found to have a more vibrant role in community activities, leadership and fisheries management serving on beach management committees for instance. It appears this greater involvement by women in activities traditionally regarded as men's including actual fishing provided the Katosi women an

Received: 22.09.2023

Accepted: 25.09.2023

Published on: 30.09.2023

opportunity to reap relatively more benefits from fisheries. It is clear that effective participation is important if women are to benefit from commercialised fisheries.

Recommendations

There is need to revive and promote cooperative fishing and marketing. Cooperatives need to be promoted not only for socio-economic expediency but also for the fact that they can promote collective bargaining and provide useful channels for government to propagate ideas to the grassroots. Men in these fishing areas may be the most beneficiaries of these as currently the research results demonstrate that they are acting more as individuals, are poorly capitalised and incapacitated to bargain and survive in the fisheries sector.

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Received: 22.09.2023

Accepted: 25.09.2023

Published on: 30.09.2023

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