

Original Research Article

Empowerment of fisherwomen involved in post-harvest activities of Marine fisheries in Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka

Abstract:

The study focuses on the empowerment of fisherwomen engaged in post-harvest activities in the marine fisheries sector of Uttara Kannada district, Karnataka. The fisheries sector plays a significant role in the livelihoods of millions of people, particularly women who are vital to sustaining households and contributing to the economy. Despite their contributions, fisherwomen often remain marginalized in decision-making, credit access, and training. This study measures empowerment across five dimensions: psychological, cultural, social, economic, and political, using a survey of 120 fisherwomen. Findings revealed that cultural empowerment is the highest, followed by social and psychological empowerment, while economic and political empowerment remain low. The study underscores the need for targeted interventions to enhance fisherwomen's roles and status, particularly in economic and political domains.

Keywords: Fisherwomen, Empowerment, Marine fisheries, Post-harvest activities, Psychological empowerment, Cultural empowerment, Social empowerment, Economic empowerment, Political empowerment

Introduction:

The fisheries sector in India is crucial for the livelihoods of more than 12 million people who are directly involved in fishing activities, and an additional 60 million people rely solely on fisheries for their livelihood (Rao *et al.* 2016). Nowadays, the typical Indian fishing family faces challenges in sustaining their household income year-round. Women within fishing communities worldwide have a multifaceted responsibility in sustaining their households and means of living. A structural transformation has occurred in the employment pattern of women, as they have transitioned from net mending to fish marketing and processing. The disparities in the income distribution among men, together with the necessity for long-term financial stability, compel the majority of women to engage in more diverse fishing-related occupations. The fluctuating nature of employment in the fisheries industry distorts the data on the per capita wages of fisher folk, which is closely linked to their poverty condition. While women make significant contributions to development at both micro and macro levels, their contributions are not adequately measured or acknowledged. The fishing

community relies heavily on fishery resources for their livelihood, and the contribution of fisherwomen in this regard is crucial for the preservation of the industry. Consequently, it is necessary to harness the immense potential among the unemployed fisherwomen by equipping them with the ability to engage in financially rewarding job opportunities independently. Nevertheless, this necessitates that the women exhibit motivation, show a certain level of consciousness, be capable of critical thinking and decision-making, and, most importantly, have a certain level of self-esteem. Indiresan (1999) defines empowerment as a systematic process that enables individuals to acquire authority over their life by means of imagination, consciousness, action, and effort, therefore exerting enhanced control. Empowerment is the emotional state that summons the psychological energy necessary to achieve one's objectives. The concept of empowerment encompasses several dimensions, including psychological, social, cultural, economic, and political empowerment, among others. Women empowerment refers to the exercise of women's power by leveraging their immense potential and motivating them to strive for a respectable and fulfilling lifestyle with assurance and proficiency. The empowerment of women will enable their active involvement in the planning, execution, and implementation of rural development agendas. Although there have been technological advancements in fisheries, many of the conventional beliefs around gender roles in fisheries have remained much unchanged. As a result, women are marginalized from fishing associations, disregarded by creditors, and limited in their training to enhance fishing methods, possibilities, and conditions. Hence present study was conducted to know the empowerment of fisherwomen involved in post-harvest activities of marine fisheries.

Methodology:

The study was conducted in Uttara Kannadadistrict of Karnataka during the year 2023-24. Karwar and Ankola taluks were selected through purposive random sampling method as majority of the fisherwomen from these taluks were involved in marine fisheries. A total of 120 respondents (from Karwar 60 respondents and from Ankola 60 respondents) were selected. Pretested interview schedule was used to collect the data and analysed data by using garrets ranking. The state was purposively selected because these are one of the major fish producing states in western part of India and the fact that Uttara Kannada district was situated along the coasts of Arabian sea, marine fishery is one of the most important subsistence and economic activity.

Results and Discussion:

Results from Table 1 is pertains empowerment of fisherwomen which was measured by means of a scale with five components viz, psychological empowerment, cultural empowerment, social empowerment, economic empowerment and political empowerment.

Table 1: Empowerment of fisherwomen involved in marine fisheries (n=120)

Sl. No	Items (*)	Uttara Kannada
		Mean score (Index)
A	Psychological empowerment	
	Self confidence	
1	Confidence built within the family	2.58 (86.11)
2	Confidence built within SHG meetings	2.38 (79.17)
3	Confidence built within community meetings	1.72 (57.22)
4	Use of skills for income generation	1.44 (48.06)
	Self-esteem	
1	Self image in the family	2.46 (81.94)
2	Self image in the community	1.91 (63.61)
3	Feeling of security in the family/society	3.00 (100.00)
4	Courage	1.86 (61.94)
B	Cultural empowerment	
1	Freedom to interact with male outside family	2.18 (72.50)
2	Freedom for performing festival ceremonies	2.79 (93.06)

3	Freedom for wearing a kind of dress	2.21 (73.61)
4	Freedom for attending religious place	2.64 (88.06)
5	Freedom for deciding (food) menu	2.53 (84.44)
6	Liberty for attending marriage ceremony	2.41 (80.28)
C	Social empowerment	
1	Freedom to work outside the family	1.67 (55.56)
2	Freedom to visit hospital/doctor	3.00 (100.00)
3	Participation in decision about family planning (welfare)	1.74 (58.06)
4	Participation in co-operative societies/ fisherwomen groups	3.00 (100.00)
5	Participation in decision about education of children	2.60 (86.67)
6	Participation in decision about girls marriage	2.89 (96.39)
7	Appreciation by family members for significant contribution	2.91 (96.94)
8	Able to attend skill development training programmes on fisheries	1.15 (38.33)
9	Attend community/ village meetings related to social issues	1.11 (36.94)
D	Economic empowerment	
1	Freedom for selection of job	1.00 (33.33)
2	Personal saving in the form of fixed deposit	1.52 (50.56)
3	Operating personal account in bank	2.00

		(66.67)
4	Participation in decision about purchasing building/house	2.00 (66.67)
5	Participation in decision about marketing of produce	2.67 (88.89)
6	Participation in purchase of input for family/enterprise	2.00 (66.67)
7	Freedom to invest in economically viable activity by virtue of their membership in self-help group/ co-operative society	1.42 (47.22)
8	Freedom for spending on entertainment of guest/relatives	2.00 (66.67)
9	Freedom for offering presents to relatives	1.71 (57.51)
10	Able to get quality of fish for marketing	2.55 (85.00)
11	Able to sell fish at reasonable price in the market	2.00 (67.33)
12	Decisions regarding availing institutional credit for fisheries activities	1.95 (65.00)
13	I can participate in decisions regarding family business, crop and livestock raising activities	1.04 (34.72)
14	I have ownership over my own earnings	1.38 (46.11)
E	Political empowerment	
1	Holding a political position at present	1.00 (33.33)
2	Freedom for participation in active politics	1.00 (33.33)
3	Awareness of Schemes & policies	1.00 (33.33)
4	Awareness of political institution	1.23 (40.83)

5	Awareness of legislation for women	1.00 (33.33)
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***Multiple responses are possible**

Psychological empowerment

In Uttara Kannada with respect to the psychological empowerment mean scores for the statements self-confidence the mean score was high in confidence built with in the family 2.58 followed by confidence built with in SHG meetings (2.38), confidence built within community meetings(1.72), use of skills for income generation (1.44). In case of self esteem the mean score was high in feeling of security in the family (3.00), mean score for self-image in the family was (2.46), mean score for Self-image in the community was (1.91) followed by courage (1.86).

Cultural empowerment:

It was observed from the table that, in Uttara Kannada high mean score was seen in freedom for performing festival ceremonies (2.79) followed by freedom for attending religious place (2.64), Freedom for deciding (food) menu (2.53), liberty for attending marriage ceremony (2.41), freedom for wearing a kind of dress (2.21), freedom to interact with male outside family (2.18).

Social empowerment:

The table also concluded that in Uttara Kannada equal mean score was seen in freedom to visit hospital/doctor and participation in co-operative societies/ fisherwomen groups was 3.00 followed by appreciation by family members for significant contribution (2.91), participation in decision about girls marriage (2.89), participation in decision about education of children (2.60), participation in decision about family planning (1.74), freedom to work outside the family (1.67), able to attend skill development training programmes on fisheries (1.15) and attend community/ village meetings related to social issues (1.11) respectively.

Economic empowerment:

In Uttara Kannadaeconomic high empowerment was found about participation in decision about marketing of produce (2.67) followed by able to get quality of fish for marketing (2.55), equal mean score (2.00) was seen in four activities like operating personal account in bank, participation in decision about purchasing building/house and participation in purchase of input for family/enterprise, freedom for spending on entertainment of guest/relatives andable to sell fish at reasonable price in the market. Decisions regarding

availing institutional credit for fisheries activities had mean score of 1.95 followed by freedom for offering presents to relatives (1.71), personal saving in the form of fixed deposit (1.52), freedom to invest in economically viable activity by virtue of their membership in self-help group/ co-operative society (1.42), ownership over their own earnings (1.38), participation in decisions about family business, crop and livestock raising activities (1.04) and freedom for selection of job (1.00).

Political empowerment:

With respect to political empowerment in Uttara Kannada fisherwomen had high empowerment about awareness of political institution (1.23), equal mean score (1.00) was seen in holding a political position at present, freedom for participation in active politics and awareness of schemes & policies and awareness of legislation for women.

Table 2: Mean score indices on empowerment of fisherwomen in marine fisheries (n=120)

Sl. No	Dimensions	Uttara Kannada	
		Mean score	Index (%)
1	Psychological empowerment	2.17	64.51
2	Cultural empowerment	2.49	83.10
3	Social empowerment	2.23	74.32
4	Economic empowerment	1.80	60.08
5	Political empowerment	1.05	34.83

Table 2 summarized mean score indices on empowerment of fisherwomen in Uttara Kannada where cultural empowerment had highest index (83.10), followed by index for social empowerment of the fisherwomen was 74.32 followed by psychological empowerment (64.51), economic empowerment (60.08) and political empowerment (34.83).

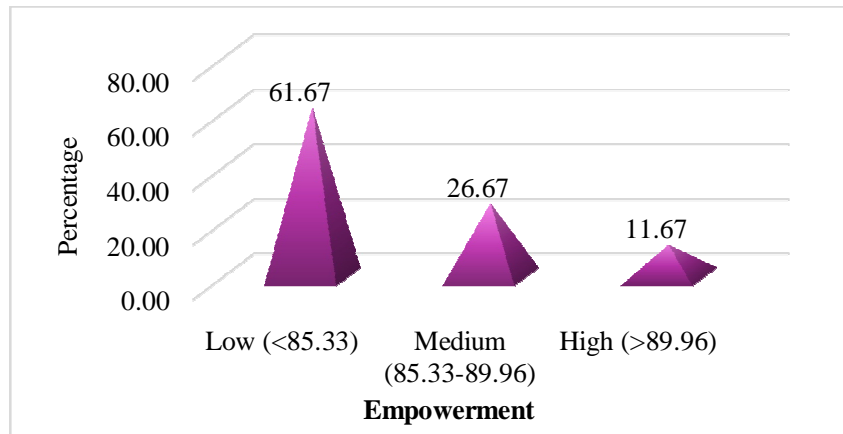


Fig 1: Categorization of fisherwomen based on level of empowerment

Fig 1 illustrates the categorization of fisherwomen based on level of empowerment. In Uttara Kannada less than two third (61.67 %) of the fisherwomen had low level of empowerment, 26.67 per cent had medium level of empowerment, 11.67 per cent had high level of empowerment.

According to the data in Table 1 and 2, cultural empowerment was found to be high in both states. This indicates that they have the freedom to celebrate festivals, attend religious places, and decide their food menu. The social empowerment of fisherwomen is quite remarkable. They have actively participated in co-operative societies, giving them a strong sense of freedom. Fisherwomen participated in decision making like girls marriage and to visit hospitals. Their significant contributions are appreciated by their family members. Psychological empowerment is ranked third, indicating a boost in self-confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of security within the family as well as in their community. In fourth place, economic empowerment was highlighted. Fisherwomen play an active role in making decisions about marketing their produce and participating in decisions regarding purchasing a house and buying inputs for their families, among other things. Empowerment in political affairs was observed to be minimal, with beneficiaries being involved to a lesser extent and men were dominant. The results were consistent with the findings of a previous studies conducted by Salim, (2013) and Salas *et al.* (2017)

Fig 1 shows that, In Uttara Kannada district less than two third (61.67 %) of the fisherwomen had low level of empowerment status, 26.67 per cent had medium level of empowerment status. The data indicates a substantial proportion of fisherwomen in Uttara Kannada are at a low level of empowerment status. This indicates that many of them may lack access to resources, decision-making power, and opportunities for personal and

professional growth. The results were consistent with the findings of previous studies conducted by Parveen and Leonhauser (2004), Rahman and Naoroze (2007), Meetei *et al.* (2015) and Sah *et al.* (2018).

Conclusion:

The empowerment of fisherwomen in Uttara Kannada district, while significant in cultural and social dimensions, remains low in economic and political areas. The findings highlight the need for enhanced training, credit access, and political inclusion to further empower these women. Their roles in decision-making, income generation, and social contributions are valuable, yet underappreciated. Tailored policies and programs are necessary to ensure that fisherwomen can leverage their potential fully, ensuring sustainable livelihoods and greater autonomy in both personal and professional spheres.

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