
SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG SMALLHOLDER CATFISH FARMERS IN ILORIN METROPOLIS OF KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The socio-economic characteristics of young smallholder catfish farmers in Ilorin metropolis of Kwara state, Nigeria were assessed. Young catfish farmers were identified and randomly selected through links provided by catfish sellers and other catfish farmers within Ilorin metropolis. The data generated were basically primary and obtained through personal interview schedule with a well-structured questionnaire. Data were collected based on the socio-economic variables such as sex, age, marital status, educational status, prior knowledge of fish farming and main source of income. The data generated were subjected to descriptive statistics involving frequencies. From the result, it was observed that majority of the respondents were male, within the age group of 25 and below, while an analysis of their marital status showed that most of the respondents were single. Results also showed that majority of the respondents were educated up to secondary and tertiary level and had other sources as their main source of income. The result further revealed that majority of the respondents had a prior knowledge of fish farming before engaging in commercial catfish farming. It was concluded that male and educated youths within the age of 25 and below dominate the cat fish farming enterprise among youths in Ilorin metropolis. The establishment of fish ponds and clusters of young fish farmers with a relevant education on fish nutrition and production in secondary schools across Kwara state was therefore recommended.

Keywords: catfish, fish protein, fish farming, socioeconomic characteristics, Ilorin metropolis.

Received: 27.10.2017

Reviewed: 26.11.2017

Accepted: 13.12.2017

1. INTRODUCTION

Protein, first recognized as a dietary essential over one hundred years ago, is vital for the growth and maintenance of the body tissues. The fact that it is a part of thousands of hormones and enzymes regulating almost all the body processes accounts for the long standing interest in its nutrient and the vast amount of information we have of its role and sources. Food protein insufficiency constitutes a major problem in developing countries owing to its importance in attaining sustainable food security and health development objectives. According to Zimmerman and Snow (2012), a sustainable food system does not just include the food and those who consume the food, but also those who produce the food, like farmers and fishermen, and those who process, package, distribute, and regulate food. Unfortunately, Nigeria has a long way to go in building a sustainable food system.

Developing countries such as Nigeria depends largely on animal protein sources such as sea foods for their daily protein needs. Over the years, availability and affordability of sea foods suffered setbacks in Nigeria; this is owing to the over-dependence on the exploration and importation of natural fish stock. This dependence on natural fish stock is at risk as fish stocks are reaching its limits (Mutume, 2002; Olaoye *et al.*, 2013). However, in recent years, this situation seems to be changing; an interesting development seems to be evolving in the Nigerian agricultural sector. According to YISA, (2017), it is gladdening now to see many young people, irrespective of their educational disciplines engage in varied forms of agriculture like poultry and fish farming. Catfish is an excellent source of protein and fatty acids. According to Olayemi *et al.*, (2011), catfish contains 16.24% protein and 0.50% fat.

Although the efforts of these young Nigerians in ensuring sustainable food protein sources are still inadequate, credit must be given to their efforts while encouraging government and food security stakeholders to assist them by expanding the infrastructure for locally grown fish and fish products, provide access to healthy fish fingerlings and educate the masses on fish nutrition. To achieve this, the information on the socio-economic characteristics of these young fish farmers must be accessible. This study seeks to assess the socio-economic characteristics of young catfish farmers in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to investigate:

1. the dominant sex among the young catfish farmers in the study area;
2. the effect of age of the young catfish farmers on their choice of fish farming;
3. the effect of education on the respondents' choice of catfish farming;
4. the effect of prior knowledge of fish farming on the respondents' choice for catfish farming in the study area.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

2.1 Study Area

Ilorin metropolis is the administrative capital of Kwara State; located on Latitude 8°30' North and Longitude 4°35' East of the Greenwich Meridian (Ajadi, 2010). It is the headquarters of the Ilorin West Local Government Area (LGA) which is surrounded by other LGAs of the state. This makes it both the commercial and administrative capital of the State, the headquarters of Ilorin West LGA, and together with Ilorin East, Ilorin South, Asa and Moro LGAs they constitute the Ilorin Emirate. It occupies an area of about 100km² (Kwara State Diary, 2005), situated in the transition Zone between the deciduous woodland of the South and the Savanah of the North. The major occupation of the people is mixed farming. The rearing of animals is made possible due to the existence of savannah type of vegetation. The study was conducted in Olunlade, Asa-Dam,

Ofa Garage, Tanke, Gaakanbi, Unity, Taiwo Challenge, GRA, Fate, Basin, Sango districts. Young catfish farmers were identified and selected through links provided by catfish sellers and other catfish farmers within Ilorin metropolis.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The source of data used for this study was generated primarily. This involved the use of an interview schedule with a structured questionnaire designed to capture the vital socio-economic data needed. A total of 48 respondents were identified and interviewed throughout the study area. Data were collected based on the socio-economic variables such as sex, age, marital status, educational status, prior knowledge of fish farming and main source of income. The response of these farmers formed the primary data used. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies were used to analyse the collected data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The selected related characteristics of young participating in catfish production in Ilorin metropolis were Age, Marital status, Sex, Level of education, Prior knowledge of fish farming and Main source of income. The Socio-Economic Characteristics of the respondents are presented in Figures 1 - 4. As observed from the Figure 1, the majority of the respondents were male, while the analysis of their marital status showed that majority of the respondents are single. Figure 2 shows that the majority of the respondents were within the age group of 25 and below while Figure 3 shows that majority of the respondents had attended secondary and tertiary institutions. Figure 4 shows that while the majority of the respondents had prior knowledge of fish farming, they did not rely on fish farming as their major source of income.

3.1 SEX AND MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

Sex plays a very significant role in fish farming, especially in terms of property acquisition such as land and pond. Figure 1 shows that the majority of the catfish farmers are male.

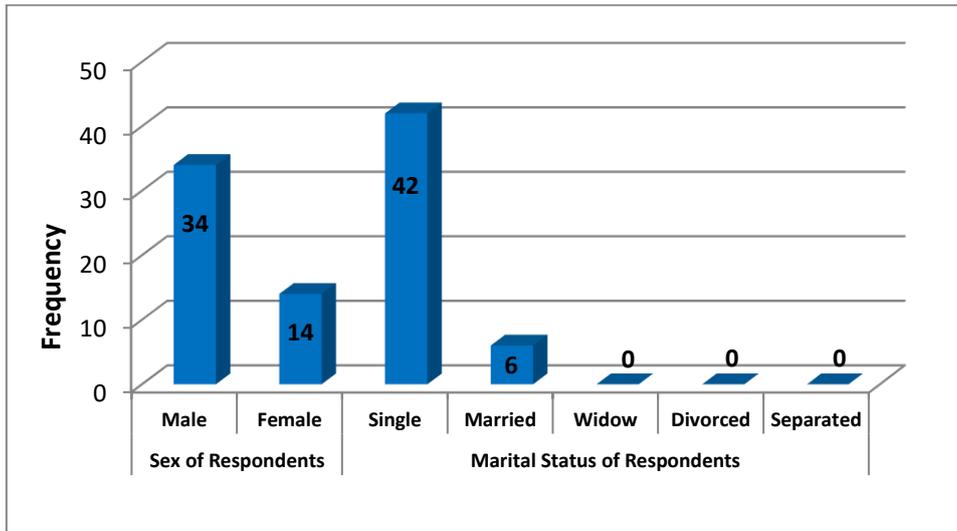


Fig. 1. Sex and Marital Status of youths participating in catfish production in Ilorin metropolis

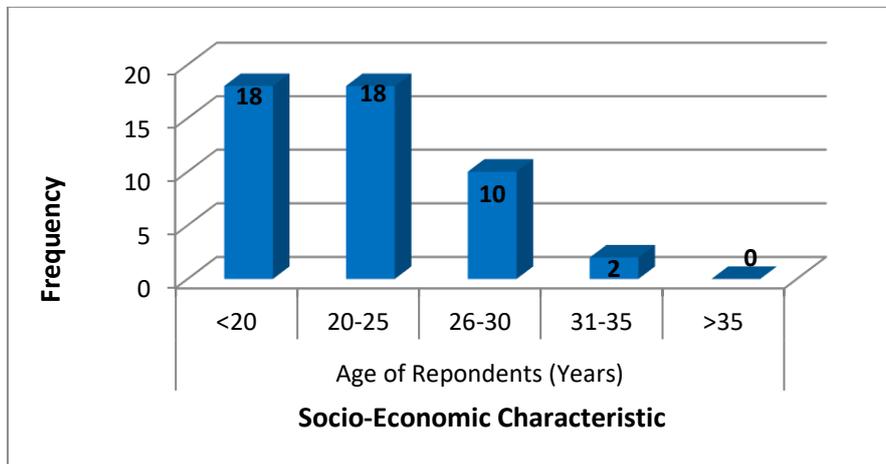


Fig. 2. Age of youths participating in catfish production in Ilorin metropolis

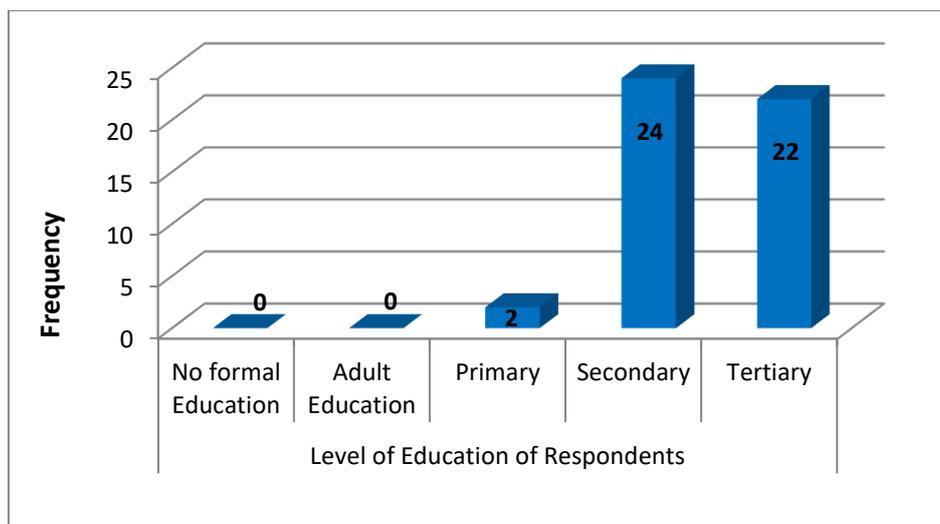


Fig. 3. Educational level of youths participating in catfish production in Ilorin metropolis

This implies that cat fish farmers in the study area are dominated by the male folk. This confirms the findings of Olaoye *et al.*, (2013) and Brummett *et al.*, (2010) that fisheries activities are mostly dominated by the male folks. Figure 1 further showed that the majority of the respondents were single at the time of this study. This marital status of the respondents could be as a result of the age range under study.

3.2 AGE OF RESPONDENTS

Age is a vital determinant of the socio-economic status of a given population. Results in figure 2 showed that respondents less than 20 years of age and respondents between 20 and 25 years of age were the most (18) followed by respondents between the ages of 26 to 30 years, while the fewest were respondents within the age of 31 to 35 years.

This high involvement of youths within the age of 25 and below could be attributed to the high level of awareness and information diffusion among youths of that age group. It appears that youths within the age group under discussion (≤ 25 years), who probably are students of secondary or tertiary institution, may have acquired the knowledge or awareness of fish farming in the course of their educational pursuit and may be interested in making meaningful contributions to enhance fish productivity in Nigeria while making extra money for themselves or to support their parents. However, this active involvement declined steadily in respondents above 25 years of age. This suggests that this group of respondents may have dropped fish farming in favour of a more lucrative and sustainable means of income, since fish farming requires adequate attention, as suggested by Olaoye *et al.*, (2013). This finding agrees with the assertion of Adeniyi *et al.*, (2014) while conducting a baseline survey of small holder fish farming enterprises. According to these researchers, the majority of their respondents were within the age of 20 to 29 years of age.

3.3 EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS

Educational level is also one of the major determinants of the socio-economic status of a

given population. From Figure 3, it could be seen that the majority of respondents are educated up to secondary school level, closely followed by respondents who are educated up to tertiary level.

This implies that young smallholder catfish farmers from the study area are dominated by the educated class. This may be due to the fact that fish farming requires a technical know-how to be successful. According to Muro and Burchi (2007), education plays a vital role in embracing an agro venture because it is easy to get and understand the required information by educated persons than the illiterate ones. Education also seems to enhance the implementation of new ideologies, in line with the assertion of Opaluwa, (2014); Audu, (2012) and Adepoju *et al.*, (2007). In this way education is not only an important determinant in involvement and adoption of agricultural ideas, but also a tool for agricultural productivity. This finding agrees with the results obtained by Adeniyi *et al.*, (2014) and Olaoye *et al.*, (2013).

3.4 PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF FISH FARMING

The result of the respondents' prior knowledge of fish farming and main source of income is shown in Figure 4.

From the figure, it could be seen that the majority of the respondents have prior knowledge of fish farming before going into it. Fish farming is a skilful venture which requires a technical know-how. Background knowledge of fish farming techniques could be a major factor in any sustainable and profitable fish farming venture. As a result, the respondents with background knowledge of fish farming should have good skills and better approaches to fish farming business while respondents with no prior knowledge are expected to face many risks in the early days of their fish farming business. This is confirmed by observations made during the collation and analysis of the questioner form. It was observed that all the respondents who did not have a prior knowledge of fish farming had other sources as their main source of income.

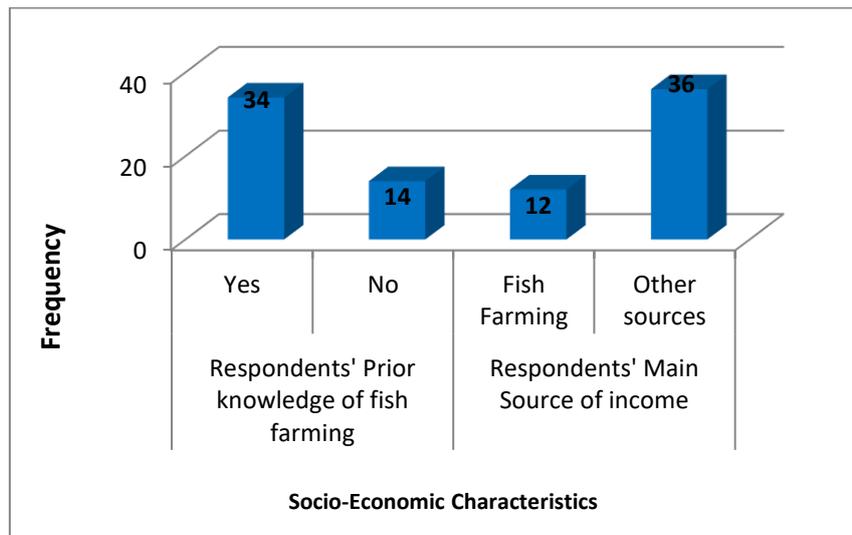


Fig. 4. Prior knowledge of fish farming and Main source of income of youths participating in catfish production in Ilorin metropolis

It could therefore be said that prior knowledge of fish farming influenced most of the respondents' choice for catfish production. This is similar to the findings of Olaoye *et al.*, (2013) while assessing the socio-economic status of fish farming in Oyo State, Nigeria. According to these researchers, respondents with longer years of experience were also able to forecast market situations in which they sell their products at higher prices.

4. CONCLUSION

The study has provided important information on young smallholder catfish farmers in Ilorin metropolis of Kwara State, Nigeria. The study revealed that most of the respondents are male and single, within the age of age of 25 and below. The study further revealed that most of the respondents are educated up to secondary school level, thus accounting for the ease at which they were able to acquire the technical know-how for successful catfish farming. It is also revealed from this study that most of the respondents had a prior knowledge of fish farming but do not depend on fish farming as their main source of income. It is therefore concluded that male and educated youths within the age of 25 and below dominate the

cat fish farming enterprise among youths in Ilorin metropolis.

5. RECOMMENDATION

Based on conclusions drawn from this study; in order to encourage food protein sufficiency in Kwara state Nigeria through catfish production and consumption, it is recommended that suitable catfish ponds be established in secondary schools and tertiary institutions across Kwara state. It is also recommended to establish clusters of young fish farmers as a social activity in secondary schools across Kwara State, because education on fish nutrition and fish production can be provided for these clusters. This could be achieved through collaboration between Government, Federal Collage of Freshwater and Fishery technology, the Nutritional Society of Nigeria, NGOs and other stakeholders in the nutrition and educational sector.

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