LIVELIHOOD STATUS OF WOMEN WORKERS IN SHRIMP SECTOR AT SOUTH WESTERN REGION IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

In Bangladesh, women are engaging in shrimp sector to support themselves and their family as well. Current study was designed to study the socio-economic and hygienic status of the women working in shrimp sector (employee) in South Western region in Bangladesh (N=150). The study also selected women who are not working in shrimp sector (non-employee) in the same community (N=75) to evaluate impacts of shrimp industry on women. In socio-economic background analysis of the women, medium household size (46% and 65.3%), primary education level (63.3% and 48%), married (79.3% and 97.3%), drinking tube-well water (93.3 % and 92%) and polli electric facility (77.3% and 84%) was dominant in both cases. Average monthly household income and expenditure was found better among the employees (9235 ± 4042 Tk and 765 ± 3032 Tk, respectively) than the non-employees (9068 ± 3113 Tk and 7208 ± 2147 Tk, respectively). In summary, the study observed and suggesting that life style and hygienic condition is better among the women engaged in shrimp sector than the non-employee in the same community.

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INTRODUCTION

Shrimp remains as one of the most popular and highest valued seafood selections throughout the world. In Bangladesh shrimp and prawn (known as white gold) are important as food and consider as the second largest export commodity. About 1 million people are engaged in shrimp farming in the areas excluding fisherman and people working in the processing plants (DoF, 2015). Shrimp farming is mostly concentrated in south-western Bangladesh in the Khulna, Bagerhat and Satkhira district represents about 75% of the country’s total shrimp farming area (Rahman et al., 2017).

Women are involving in aquaculture sector to support their family. In Bangladesh more than 1.4 million women are working in aquaculture sector mostly in low-status, low-paid and arduous jobs (Neate, 2018). Shrimp farming activities has significant impact on environment and economy of the country (Rahman et al., 2013). At the village level it has enhanced women position in families and societies through economic independence (Ahmed et al., 2010). The shrimp processing plants in South-western Bangladesh offers real prospects for women empowerment in the region. Women are heavily involved in shrimp processing plants in Bangladesh to clean and behead prawns, as well as for freezing and packaging. As for example, 80% of casual laborers in shrimp processing plants are women (Neate, 2018). Therefore it is important to study and determine the life style of the women involved in this sector to assess, evaluate and improve the current situation. Literatures on livelihood status of fisherman in different regions of Bangladesh are very rich. On the contrary, women employee’s life style of shrimp sector has not been studied yet. But, the role and economic status of women are key determinants of the food security and nutritional status of households (Smith et al., 2003). Considering the issues, current study is designed to study livelihood status of the women has involved in shrimp industry. The study would be beneficial for the policy makers, researchers and students to understand the current socioeconomic status of women working and contributing in commercial shrimp sector.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study site and primary data collection

The survey was conducted among the women working in shrimp industries in South-western region of Bangladesh. To understand the scenario the study surveyed 150 employed women and 75 non-employed women (Table 1). The respondents were selected randomly from the shrimp processing plants. We conducted semi-structured questionnaire survey at respondents’ home and direct observation to collect primary data from women labourers.

Secondary data collection

Secondary data was collected from journals, textbooks and newspapers published in Bengali and English language. Government organizations (GOs) and non-government organizations (NGOs) located in the study area were also visited to collect secondary data.

Statistical analyses

Raw data, collected from the field, were processed by removing illegal codes, reducing logical inconsistencies, dropping improbabilities and by solving ambiguities. Survey data and laboratory data were tabulated and analyzed using MS Excel 2010 and MS Word 2010 (Microsoft Corporation, USA).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic background

In the study area, the socio-economic parameters of the employee and non-employee showed that medium household size (46% and 65.3%, respectively), married (79.3% and 97.3%, respectively), drinking tube-well water (93.3% and 92 %, respectively) and polli electricity (77.3% and 84%, respectively) the highest percentage (Table 2). Mean household size was 3.97 and 4.47, respectively. House ownership was higher.
among non-employee than employee. A total of 52% of the fishermen in Rajshahi had 4-5 family members (Ali et al., 2008) and 65% of the fisherman had 4-6 family members in south-western region of Bangladesh (Das et al., 2015). Zarin (2014) reported that 40% and 17.5% of the women workers in shrimp processing industry are married and unmarried, respectively. The percentage of married workers in our study was higher than Zarin (2014). In a study, 61% and 83% of fisherman at Shirajgonj district had own house and own tube-well, respectively (Rahman et al., 2014). Compare to the fisherman of different regions of Bangladesh the shrimp industry women found a better life style. Other social advantages in terms of access to safe drinking water, sanitary facility and electricity were available among the respondents.

Age distribution and education
Current study found that 48.7% of the employees were 25-34 years old whereas 42.7% of the non-employees were ≥ 45 years old (Figure 1). In our study, most of the respondents completed primary study. The study found that 63.3% of the employees were completed primary study whereas 48.0% of the non-employees were completed primary study (Figure 2). No respondent was found ≥Higher secondary. Zarin (2014) reported that 29.2%, 43.3% and 13.3% of shrimp industry women were 21-30, 31-40 and 41-50 years old, respectively. Moreover, the study also mentioned that 65%, 30% and 5% respondents were in illiterate, primary and secondary education category. Our study suggests that educational status of the women workers are increasing. This might be due to the increasing educational facilities from GOs and NGOs.

Income and expenditure
Income and expenditure was higher among the shrimp industry women (Figure 3). Only 15% of the respondent’s income was above 3500 BDT that is much lower than the current research. In our study average income of the respondent’s was 4103 ± 349 BDT. Employee’s income (4103 ± 349 BDT) was higher than non-employee’s income (3099 ± 1162 BDT). Income level of the shrimp industry women is very low for the survival and support family (Halim, 2004). Zarin (2014) found that 62.5% of the employee income was below 2000 BDT and only 15% of had income 3500 BDT and above. In the current study, expenditure was also higher among the employees.

Table 1. Study site and number of respondents in the areas

| Study Area | Strata      | Employee | Non-employee |
|------------|-------------|----------|--------------|
| Khulna     | Khulna Sadar| 123      | 60           |
|            | Rupsha      |          |              |
|            | Batighata   |          |              |
|            | Doulatpur   |          |              |
| Bagerhat   | Kachua      | 27       | 15           |
| Total      |             | 150      | 75           |
Table 2. Socio-economic background of the respondents

| Parameters                  | Respondents |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
|                            | Employee (150) | Non-employee (75) |
|                             | No. | %     | No. | %     |
| Household size              |     |       |     |       |
| Small (2-3)                 | 62  | 41.3  | 12  | 16.0  |
| Medium (4-5)                | 69  | 46.0  | 49  | 65.3  |
| Large (≥ 6)                 | 19  | 12.7  | 14  | 18.7  |
| Unmarried                   | 2   | 1.3   | 1   | 1.3   |
| Married                     | 119 | 79.3  | 73  | 97.3  |
| Marital status              |     |       |     |       |
| Widow                       | 11  | 7.3   | 0   | 0.0   |
| Left/separated              | 11  | 7.3   | 1   | 1.3   |
| Divorced                    | 7   | 4.7   | 0   | 0.0   |
| Own                         | 55  | 36.7  | 39  | 52.0  |
| House ownership             |     |       |     |       |
| Rented                      | 89  | 59.3  | 36  | 48.0  |
| Own                         | 6   | 4.0   | 0   | 0.0   |
| Wood                        | 16  | 10.7  | 6   | 8.0   |
| Concrete                    | 54  | 36.0  | 27  | 36.0  |
| Clay                        | 80  | 53.3  | 42  | 56.0  |
| Tube-well                   | 140 | 93.3  | 69  | 92.0  |
| Drinking water source       |     |       |     |       |
| Tap water                   | 6   | 4.0   | 0   | 0.0   |
| Others                      | 4   | 2.7   | 6   | 8.0   |
| Own                         | 46  | 30.7  | 9   | 12.0  |
| Main material of the house |     |       |     |       |
| Government, NGO and others | 104 | 69.3  | 66  | 88.0  |
| Poli electricity            | 116 | 77.3  | 63  | 84.0  |
| Kerosene lamp               | 27  | 18.0  | 6   | 8.0   |
| Others                      | 7   | 4.7   | 6   | 8.0   |
| Well based                  | 111 | 74.0  | 33  | 44.0  |
| Ownership of drinking water source |     |       |     |       |
| Government, NGO and others | 104 | 69.3  | 66  | 88.0  |
| Poli electricity            | 116 | 77.3  | 63  | 84.0  |
| Kerosene lamp               | 27  | 18.0  | 6   | 8.0   |
| Others                      | 7   | 4.7   | 6   | 8.0   |
| Well based                  | 111 | 74.0  | 33  | 44.0  |
| Lighting facility           |     |       |     |       |
| Flash based                 | 6   | 4.0   | 3   | 4.0   |
| Others                      | 33  | 22.0  | 39  | 52.0  |
| Sanitation facility         |     |       |     |       |
| Well based                  | 111 | 74.0  | 33  | 44.0  |
| Flash based                 | 6   | 4.0   | 3   | 4.0   |
| Others                      | 33  | 22.0  | 39  | 52.0  |

Table 3. Maintaining hygiene at home during cooking, eating and others

| Parameters                           | Respondents |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
|                                      | Employee (150) | Non-employee (75) |
|                                      | No. | %     | No. | %     |
| Clean house and kitchen inside       |     |       |     |       |
| Clean                                | 121 | 80.7  | 51  | 68.0  |
| Partly clean                         | 27  | 18.0  | 21  | 28.0  |
| Dirty                                | 2   | 1.3   | 3   | 4.0   |
| Separate kitchen                     |     |       |     |       |
| Yes                                  | 98  | 65.3  | 54  | 72.0  |
| No                                   | 52  | 34.7  | 21  | 28.0  |
| Before cutting or peeling            |     |       |     |       |
| Before cutting or peeling            | 18  | 12.0  | 34  | 45.3  |
| Ingredients wash during cooking      |     |       |     |       |
| After cutting or peeling             | 42  | 28.0  | 21  | 28.0  |
| Before and after cutting or peeling  | 90  | 60.0  | 20  | 26.7  |
| Everyday tooth brushing              |     |       |     |       |
| Yes                                  | 140 | 93.3  | 66  | 88.0  |
| No                                   | 10  | 6.7   | 9   | 12.0  |
| Garbage disposal                     |     |       |     |       |
| Dustbin                              | 115 | 76.7  | 37  | 49.3  |
| Open space                           | 27  | 18.0  | 24  | 32    |
| Here and there                       | 8   | 5.3   | 14  | 18.7  |
Figure 1. Age distribution of the respondents

Figure 2. Educational status of the respondents
Maintaining hygiene at household

The project conducted survey to study hygiene during cooking, eating and others (Table 3). Most of the household was found clean and separate kitchen. Majority percent of the employee and non-employee respondents had knowledge on maintain hygiene during cooking, hand wash during eating and after toilet, cutting nails etc. (Figure 4). Current study observed that 100% employee and non-employee was hand before and after eating. Among the employee, 92% use sandal in toilet, 94% weekly clean and cut nail and 88% everyday take bath. On the other hand, among the non-employee 90.7% use sandal in toilet, 64% weekly cut nail and 80.7% women everyday take shower. The results revealed that maintaining hygiene was better among the employee women. This might be due to training on maintaining hygiene in the factory (100%) and this may influenced them.
CONCLUSION

Our study found that, employee women lead a better life than non-employee since livelihood levels and standards are influenced by income level, education and social changes. The new knowledge would help to formulate strategies and policies to address the major constraints to improve the lifestyle of the community. The study recommend to develop appropriate tool to improve socioeconomic status of shrimp sector women certainly offer an improved option and add a significant value to the sector. Policy makers and regulatory agencies would be benefited from being better informed regarding the livelihood and hygiene information of shrimp industry women. More research and effective actions should be implemented to train the women in order to improve their working efficiency for better production and life style.

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