ABSTRACT

Fishing is one of man's oldest occupations. It provides mankind with an important source of food, and has over the years developed into a significant source of earnings through world trade. Inspite of advancement in the fisheries sector the fisherfolk continue to be backward both socially and economically. Understanding the socio-economic framework, the extent of active involvement in the occupation, the impact of welfare programmes, the role played by women in fisherfolk families in different locations is crucial for devicing an effective strategy for the development of this backward sector of the society. This forms the rational of the study.

The major objectives of this study are (1) to analyse the socio-economic conditions of selected families of fisherfolk; (2) to examine the living conditions of the various categories of the fishing households (Mechanised Craft Owners-MCO; Non-Mechanised Craft Owners - NMCO; No Craft Owners - NCO or Labour Class - LC); (3) to analyse the role of the fisherwomen in their families in generating income; (4) to study the level of social awareness of these fisherwomen and (5) based on these findings to suggest policy measures for improving the socio-economic status of fisherfolk. Hypotheses regarding distribution of income, consumption pattern, nature and magnitude of indebtedness and status of women in fisherfolk families have been tested. The area of the study is South Arcot District, Tamilnadu and the reference period is April 1998 to May 1999.
This empirical study is based on survey method, (1) primary data collected from sample fisherfolk families by applying multi-stage sampling method, and (2) secondary data from published sources have been made use of to study in depth the socio-economic status of 738 households, in three Coastal Panchayat Unions of (a) Cuddalore (b) Kurinjippadi (c) Parangippettai covering 22 coastal villages in South Arcot district. The data collected was analysed through simple percentages, simple correlation, multiple regression, ANOVA, Giniratio, and Probit analysis to study the relationship between income, expenditure, assets and liabilities / indebtedness. The Likert Scale has been used to analyse the role of women fisherfolk.

The study has been presented in seven chapters. The first chapter encompasses the introduction and design of the present study; the second presents reviews of available literature on the subject and conceptual framework; the third presents the profile of the study area; the fourth deals with the analysis of the socio-economic characteristics and living conditions of the fisherfolk; the fifth consists of an analysis of income, expenditure, assets and liabilities of the fisherfolk; the sixth is devoted to the fisheries co-operatives and the role of women fisherfolk; the seventh chapter gives the summary of the findings, conclusion, suggestions and policy measures, which are likely to improve the socio-economic conditions of the fisherfolk.

The study being limited to South Arcot district, limits the nature of the findings. Nevertheless these findings are valuable. The major findings of the study highlight the extent of income distribution based on the status of MCO, NMCO and NCO/LC. The reasons and remedies for the present plight of the fisherfolk families are discussed in detail and suitable micro and macro policy measures have been outlined for the overall upliftment for this section.