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**SEAFOOD PROCESSING ACTIVITIES AMONG
WOMEN IN IBEJU-LEKKI LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA OF LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The importance of seafood can never be over-emphasised because of its contributions to the various aspects of human life. However, the handling and processing of seafood are essential complimentary functions of all production system. This study was conducted to determine the seafood processing activities in Ibeju-Lekki Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select 101 women seafood processors while data collection was done using structured questionnaire and interview schedule. The data was analysed using only descriptive statistics. The results showed that most (34.7%) of the women processors were between ages 31 and 40 years, married (60.4), attained secondary level of education (64.4), practised Christianity (45.5) and Islam (44.6). Shrimps (45.0%), prawn and crabs were the type of seafood mostly processed by the respondents while smoking (31.4%) processing was the predominant processing method being used. The respondents acquired information on seafood processing through seafood processors association (91.1%). The major constraint facing respondents were health hazards (97%) and lack of capital (74.3%). Thus, women are actively involved in seafood processing in the study area and provision of basic infrastructure such as health care services would encourage the processors to increase their scale of operation.

Keywords: *Seafood, processing, women, Ibeju-Lekki*

INTRODUCTION

Seafood refers to all aquatic organisms ranging from fish and fishery products, shrimps, mussels, prawns, periwinkles, crabs with each having its own different nutritional, aesthetic and socio-economic values. The importance of seafood cannot be over-emphasised because of its contributions to the various aspects of human life. Research has shown that the minerals and nutrient in seafood can improve brain development and reproduction. It has also highlighted the roles of seafood in the functionality of the human body. Seafood is

consumed all over the world and as such it provides the world's prime source of high quality protein. Also, over one billion people rely on seafood as their primary source of animal protein (Rice, 2004; Tveteras, 2006). As the world population is expected to increase by 36% in the year 2030 from approximately 6.1 billion to 8.3 billion people, it is also estimated that the total seafood demand will be 183 million tons by the year 2030 while the estimated supply will only be between 150 to 160 million tons. Thus, it implies that supply would not be able to meet the demand for seafood

(Bastien, 2003). However, seafood processing is a vital part of seafood chain which must take place in order to preserve its nutritional qualities and to reduce its deteriorating rate.

Seafood are prepared and processed for so many reasons, which include sales to consumers, retailers and wholesale business, for exportation to generate foreign exchange, for research purposes and also for nutritional purposes (FAO, 2010). Aside this importance, seafood processing is also a good source of employment especially for women in coastal regions, rural, semi-rural and urban areas (Spliethoff, 2000). Seafood can be processed using different methods such as sorting, grading, smoking, cleaning, filleting, cutting of finfish, freezing, salting, frying, etc. All these processing methods are, however, post-harvest activities which take place mainly in coastal areas and women have traditionally played a major role in these activities (Olaide et al., 2002). Over the years, the women in Ibeju-Lekki local government area have generally been recognised for their great involvement in seafood processing activities, and also their participation in the post-harvest activities encompassing processing and preserving of seafood into various forms. This has not only provided income for them but also food security in their respective homes as well as improving their standard of living. Unfortunately, the current level of seafood processing in the study area has been on the decline due to inadequate support and lack of recognition of the processors which reduces their productive potentials in the provision of seafood in the markets and on the tables. The significance of the study lies in the fact that seafood processing activities in the study area are yet to be established, and facts about health hazards associated with seafood processing by women are also lacking; hence, this study fills these gaps.

This study therefore investigates the types of seafood processed, identifies the types of processing activities used for seafood, identifies the constraints faced by

the respondents, assesses the preferred sources of information by the respondents as well as examines the personal characteristics of the respondents in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Ibeju-Lekki Local Government Area (LGA) of Lagos State. The LGA is located in the south western part of Nigeria and it shares boundaries in the north with Ogun State, in the east with Epe Local Government, in the west with Etiosa Local Government and in the south with Atlantic Ocean. The entire local government is swampy. Fishing and seafood processing are the major and primary occupations of the people in the area. The population of the study is made up of women seafood processors in the LGA. Purposive sampling technique was used to select one hundred and one (101) women seafood processors as sample size. The data were collected through the use of well-structured interview schedule and questionnaire. Variables measured include: personal characteristics of the respondents, list of processed seafood, processing activities employed, constraints facing the women processors, and source of information available to respondents. Data were collected through interview schedule and analysed using descriptive statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic characteristics

Results as presented in Table 1 reveal that 34.8% of the respondents were in their active age; however, a fairly large percentage (26.9%) was between ages 41 and 50. On the other hand, 20.8% were below 31 years in age. Thus, this age group can be said to be energetic and agile which can be an advantage to rapid adoption of seafood processing technologies for increased productivity. Meanwhile, 45.5% were Christians while 45% were Muslims. More than half (60.4%) were married, while about

31.7% were either widowed, divorced or separated. Hence their engagement in seafood processing can be regarded as being mainly for economic purpose. Majority (61.4%) of the respondents had at least primary education while a fairly large percentage (34.7%) had no formal education.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency
Age	
	21
20-30	35
31-40	27
41-50	12
51-60	6
=60	
Religion	46
Christianity	45
Islam	10
Traditional	
Marital Status	6
Single	61
Married	23
Widowed	7
Divorced	4
Separated	
Educational level	35
Non – formal education	3
Formal education	25
Primary education	38
Secondary education	

Types of Seafood Processed and Processing Methods Utilised

Table 2 indicates that 45.4% of the respondents engage in shrimp processing, 35.4% process prawn and 18.8% process crab. This implies that many of them embrace mainly shrimp processing and this further shows the need for extension to assist in the area of expansion of the processing of many other seafood aside the aforementioned. Table 2 also shows the various processing methods used by the

respondents. Majority (31.7%) are involved in smoking their products, 28.7% practice cleaning, 26.7% involved in sorting their products, 10.9% frying their products, and 0.9% engaged in salting and freezing their products. This confirms that the women processors do not have access to modern techniques of processing seafood and therefore will need assistance in training and improvement of their capacity to utilise modern processing techniques.

Table 2: Types of Seafood Processed and Processing methods Utilised

Shrimp	46	45.4
Prawn	36	35.6
Crab	19	18.8
Processing methods		
Smoking	32	31.7
Cleaning	29	28.7
Sorting	27	26.7
Frying	11	10.9
Salting	1	0.9
Freezing	1	0.9

Constraints Facing Respondents in Seafood Processing

Table 3 indicates various constraints entangled in seafood processing. A larger percentage (97%) had health hazard as their major constraint, 94.1% indicated lack of capital, while 74.3% indicated low income.

Other constraints recorded high percentage except seasonal variation and ocean current that recorded low percentage (6.9%) and (2.9%) respectively. The enumerated constraints could have adverse effect on the interest of the respondents in seafood processing.

Table 3 : Distribution of Respondents by Constraints faced in Seafood Processing

Constraints involved in

Seafood processing	Frequency	Percentage
Ocean current	3	2.9
Seasonal variation	7	6.9
Lack of information	24	23.8
Flooding	44	43.6
Poor transportation	50	49.5
Lack of storage	56	55.4
Low income	75	74.3
Lack of capital	95	94.1
Health hazards	98	97

*Multiple responses

Respondents' Sources of Information on Seafood Processing

The result on Table 5 shows that majority (91.1%) of the respondents sought information on seafood processing through their associations, town criers (56.4%), neighbours and friends (35%), extension

agents (22.8%), social groups (15.8%), radio (5.9%), ministry of agriculture (5.0%) and television (1.0%). This implies that seafood processors association could act as a channel for the purchase of modern processing equipment, capital and loan procurement, extension contact and marketing channel.

Information Sources on Seafood Processing

Sources of Information	Frequency	Percentage
Television	1	1.0
Ministry of Agriculture	5	5.0
Radio	6	5.9
Social group	16	15.8
Extension agent	23	22.8
Town crier	57	56.4
Seafood processors association	92	91.1

*Multiple responses

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that, majority of the seafood processors were educated and processed only shrimp, prawn and crab through traditional processing techniques mainly. However, the processing efforts of the women were constrained by health hazards, lack of capital, low income, poor transportation, flooding and lack of adequate information. Many of them access information on seafood processing through seafood processors association; hence, the need for agricultural extension agents to assist in the area of seafood processing so as to increase the adoption of improved and less hazardous practices by processors, resulting in general improvement on their lives and welfare.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby suggested.

- Good health care services should be provided to the women processors against the occupational hazards associated with seafood processing.
- Financial institutions such as micro finance banks, co-operative societies and other reliable groups should provide accessible credit schemes to enable processors acquire the needed capital for the processing activity.
- The extension officers should improve on their number of visits to the women seafood processors and disseminate appropriate information to them on the areas of need.
- To encourage the continuing involvement of women in seafood processing in the study area, efforts should be made by the government in the provision of basic amenities like good road networks from the coastal areas to the urban centres, and accessible storage facilities for utilisation by the women seafood processors.

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