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# Determinants of fish marketers' performance in Ebonyi State, Nigeria: A socio-economic perspective

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## Abstract

The study examined fish marketers' performance in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Specifically the study described the socio-economic characteristics of fish marketers; analyzed the effects of socio-economic characteristics on fish marketers' performance; and determined the major constraints faced by fish marketers in Ebonyi State. Data were collected using structured questionnaire administered in the form of interview schedule to one hundred fish marketers selected through multistage sampling procedure. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages and mean, multiple regression and factor analysis. Results showed that majority (55%) of the fish marketers were female whose average age was 44years and mean household size of 7 persons. Majority of the marketers had formal education and earned an average annual income of ₦740, 421.05. Result of regression analysis indicated that marketing experience, age, education, membership of cooperative society, and annual income were significant determinant of fish marketers' performance. Results of factor analysis showed that the constraints to fish marketing in the study area were high cost of preservation; inadequate supporting infrastructure; high inflation rate in the economy; poor marketing information; instability of purchase price, and high cost of transportation. It was concluded that the socio-economic characteristics of fish marketers had significantly influenced fish marketing in the area. It was recommended that marketers should form cooperatives to attract attention from government while government and other stakeholders should provide adequate credit facilities and improve infrastructure to enhance the performance of fish marketers in Ebonyi State.

Keywords: Fish marketing; Socio-economic determinants; Market performance; Nigeria

## 1. Introduction

In Nigeria, the fish market is characterized by indigenous mechanisms which depend on season, ability of buyer to bargain and of course driven by the concept of demand and supply. Fish supply from artisanal, aquaculture, and industrial on the average has not met 30% of the required fish demand in the last 20 years (Adewumi, Mkpado and Ohaka, 2017). In spite of the abundant water resources that Nigeria has, the larger portion of the country's fish requirement is met through importation. Nevertheless, sustainable fish marketing depends on its marketing structure and performance to close the demand and supply gap (Irhivben, Enyioko and Oluwafemi, 2015). Provision of valuable marketing information is of utmost importance since markets determine marketing policies aimed at closing supply gap.

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Fish marketing is a vital component of Nigeria's agricultural sector, providing food, employment, and income opportunities for millions (Oladejo, 2018). In Ebonyi State, fish marketing is a significant economic activity, with many households relying on it as a source of livelihood (Eze, et al 2020). However, despite its importance, the performance of fish marketers in the state is often constrained by various socio-economic factors (Ugwoke, et al., 2021).

Previous studies have shown that socio-economic characteristics such as age, education, experience, and access to credit significantly influence the performance of fish marketers (Oluwafemi and Adeyeye, 2020; Adewuyi, et al., 2019). This study aims to examine the socio-economic determinants of fish marketers' performance in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, with a view to providing insights for policy interventions, improving outcomes and bridging supply gaps.

## 1.1. Problem Statement

Despite the importance of fish marketing in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, the performance of fish marketers is often constrained by various socio-economic factors. The State has a significant fish production potential, but the marketing system is characterized by inefficiencies, leading to low prices for farmers and high prices to consumers (Eze, et al., 2020). The socio-economic characteristics of fish marketers, such as age, education, experience, and access to credit are likely to influence their market performance (Oluwafemi and Adeyeye, 2020; Adewuyi, et al., 2019). However, there is a dearth of empirical evidence on the determinants of fish marketers' performance in Ebonyi State, making it imperative to investigate the socio-economic factors influencing their market outcomes.

The lack of understanding of these factors has led to ineffective policy interventions, resulting in poor market outcomes, low income for fish marketers, and food insecurity in the State. Therefore, this study aims to examine the socio-economic determinants of fish marketers' performance in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, with a view to providing insight to policy interventions and improving market outcomes.

## 1.2. Research Questions

- What are the socio-economic characteristics of fish marketers in Ebonyi State, Nigeria?
- Is there a significant effect of socio-economic characteristics on fish marketers' performance in the area?
- What are the major constraints faced by fish marketers in the area?

## 1.3. Research Objectives

The main objective of the study was to examine the socio-economic determinants of fish marketers' performance in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to

- Describe the socio-economic characteristics of fish marketers in the study area
- Analyze the effects of socio-economic characteristics on fish marketers' performance in the study area
- Determine the major constraints faced by fish marketers in ebonyi state.

Hypothesis: The study also tested the hypothesis which stated that socio-economic characteristics of fish marketers have no significant effect on fish marketers' performance in Ebonyi State.

## 2. Methodology

- **Study Area:** The study was conducted in Ebonyi State, which is one of the five States in the South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria. Ebonyi State has a population of 3, 313, 289 based on the 2020 population projection with a land area of about 5,935 sq. km (NPC, 2020). The State lies between latitudes $6.18^0$ East and longitudes $7.96^0$ North and share borders in the North with Benue State, in the West with Enugu State, in the South with Imo and Abia and in the East with Cross River State. The yearly temperature ranges between 21°C to 30°C and humidity is relatively high. The annual rainfall varies from 2,000mm in the southern areas to 1,150mm in the northern areas. The State enjoys luxuriant vegetation with high forest zone (rain forest) in the south and sub-savannah forest in the northern fringe. The people of the State are predominantly farmers and traders. The endowment of rivers in the State encouraged fishing and fish marketing activities in area especially in Afikpo; Ikwo and Ishielu (Ikwor and Ugwu, 2017).
- **Sampling Technique:** A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 100 fish marketers from three local government areas (LGAs) in the State. The LGAs were purposely selected based on the concentration of fish marketing activities.

- The first stage involved a purposive selection of three Local Government Areas, one from each of the senatorial zone of the State that is highly involved in the marketing of fish. The Local Government Areas selected were Afikpo North, Ikwo and Abakaliki.
- **Method of Data Collection:** Data were collected from primary source using a structured questionnaire, which was administered to the respondents through face-to-face interviews. The questionnaire was designed to capture information on the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, their marketing activities, and the constraints they face.
- **Data Analysis:** Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, regression analysis and factor analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation were used to summarize the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their marketing activities. Regression analysis was used to examine the relationship between socio-economic characteristics and market performance, while factor analysis was used to determine major constraints faced by fish marketers in Ebonyi State.
- **Model specification:** Objective (ii) which seeks to analyze the relationship between socio-economic characteristics and market performance of fish marketers in the study area was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The multiple regression analysis related quantity of fish sold to socio-economic variables.

$$Y = f(X_i)$$

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + U_t$$

Where

$Y$ = Quantity of fish sold (₦) = MP = market performance (measured by sales volume)
$X_1$ = Sex (male = 1; female=0)
$X_2$ = Age (years)
$X_3$ = Household Size (Number of persons)
$X_4$ = Education Level (number of years spent in school)
$X_5$ = Marketing Experiences (years)
$X_6$ = Membership of cooperatives (member =1, not a member = 0)
$X_7$ = Annual Income (₦)
$U_t$ = Stochastic error term
$\beta_0$ = Constant
$\beta_1 - \beta_7$ = Coefficients of variables
A priori: $X_1 > 0$; $X_2 > 0$; $X_3 > 0$; $X_4 > 0$, $X_5 > 0$, $X_6 > 0$, $X_7 > 0$.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Socio-economic Characteristics of Fish Marketers

From Table 1, results showed that majority (55%) of the fish marketers were female whose average age was 44years and mean household size of 7 persons with marketing experience of 12 years. Majority of the marketers had formal education and earned an average annual income of ₦740, 421.05.

**Table 1** Socio-economic Characteristics of Fish Marketers

| Socio-economic Characteristics | Frequency (N=100) | Percentage | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sex: | | | |
| Female | 55 | 55.00 | |
| Male | 45 | 45.00 | |
| Age: | | | |
| less than 30 | 39 | 39.00 | |
| 30-40 | 57 | 57.00 | 43.65 |
| above 40 | 4 | 4.00 | |

| Marital Status: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Married | 57 | 57.00 | |
| Widow | 22 | 22.00 | |
| Single | 12 | 12.00 | |
| Divorced | 9 | 9.00 | |
| Household Size | | | |
| less than 5 | 55 | 55.00 | |
| 5-10 | 32 | 32.00 | 7.00 |
| above 10 | 13 | 13.00 | |
| Marketing experience | | | |
| less than10 | 30 | 30.00 | |
| 10-15 | 48 | 48.00 | 11.85 |
| above 15 | 22 | 22.00 | |
| Education level: | | | |
| No formal education | 10 | 10.00 | |
| Primary | 45 | 45.00 | |
| SSCE | 26 | 26.00 | |
| Tertiary education | 19 | 19.00 | |
| Annual income: | | | |
| Below 200,000 | 15 | 15.00 | |
| 200,000-300, 000 | 50 | 50.00 | |
| 301,000-400,000 | 27 | 27.00 | ₦240,421.05 |
| above 400,000 | 8 | 8.00 | |
| Member of fish marketing association: | | | |
| No | 5 | 5.00 | |
| Yes | 95 | 95.00 | |

Source: Survey, 2024

Results showed that 55% of the fish marketers were female, while 45% were male. This implied that women were more involved in fish marketing compared to their male counterpart. This finding agreed with the findings of Ali (2018) who reported that fish marketing is dominated by female who are usually more involved in fish processing and marketing. The mean age of the fish marketers was 44 years. This implied that the marketers were in their middle and active age which is a crucial factor in marketing activities and should be able to understand the marketing mix and innovations required for profit maximization. This corroborated with the findings of Ebewore (2019), who reported that those involved in economic activities like fish marketing are in their economic active age and were able to actively participate in the business.

The mean household size of the marketers was 7 persons. The result revealed that majority of the marketers had large household size and this relatively large household size is desirable and of great economic importance due to synergy in their contribution in the processing and product marketing. This is consistent with the findings of Ahmed, Mohammed, and Abah,. (2015) who reported an average of 7 persons per household positing that fish farming families prefer to have a large household size because of the cheap and free labour. This therefore explains why the use of hired labour in smallholder agribusiness enterprise is very low (Esiobu and Onugbuogu, 2018). Results further showed that fish marketing were dominated by married women and men. This implied that greater percentage of the marketers is married which indicated stability as they relied on the business as a means of livelihood and sustenance for their family.

According to Nwaru, 2004, stability creates conducive environment for good citizen training, development of personal integrity and for entrepreneurship which is important for efficient use of resources in order to attain a better livelihood for the family

The marketers had average marketing experiences of 12 years. This implied that the marketers were well experienced in the business. Hence, they can identify possible problems and are likely to proffer solution as well as the marketing strategies that would yield the desired result. Again, years of experience facilitated their ability to conduct cost and benefit analysis in understanding their marketing margin and level of efficiency. These corroborated with the findings of Babalola, Bajimi and Isitor (2015) who reported that years of experience enabled marketers to do cost and benefit assessment to determine marketing margin and efficiency. Results showed that majority of the marketers were literate and trainable to take advantage of new marketing techniques and innovation that could boost their marketing performance. This result was supported by the report of FAO (2016), which confirmed that a high level of education boosts output, revenue, and increases profit as well as improved standard of living.

It was also observed that their average annual income was ₦240, 421.05. The mean annual income of the marketers implied that marketers with high annual income have enough capital to finance and diversify their business operations thereby enjoying economies of scale, high market turn-over and profits. The findings is line with Esiobu *et al.,* (2019) who reported that farmers with the higher marketing income would easily realize more profit than their counterparts who have poor marketing income.

### 3.2. Effects of socioeconomic characteristics on fish marketers' performance

From Table 2, the regression results showed that the model coefficient of multiple determination ($R^2$) value of 0.751 indicated that seventy five percent of the variations in the quantity of fish marketed were accounted for by the variables fitted into the model. This implied that socio-economic characteristics of the marketers accounted for changes in the quantities of fish sold by the marketers. The significant F-ratio value of 15.500 indicated that the model is of good-fit. This also implied that the coefficients of the explanatory variables included in the model were statistically significant (i.e. at $p<0.05$ and $p<0.01$).

**Table 2** Effects of socioeconomic characteristics on fish marketers' performance

| Variables | Coeff. (β) | Std error | t-value | Sign |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | 36.698 | 4.740 | 7.742 | 0.000 |
| Sex | 5.514 | 59.772 | 0.092 | 0.927 |
| Age | -4.939 | 1.868 | -2.643 | 0.010 |
| Household Size | -10.831 | 8.594 | -1.260 | 0.211 |
| Educational Level | 2.008 | 0.580 | 3.461 | 0.001** |
| Marketing Experiences | 21.988 | 9.235 | 2.381 | 0.002** |
| Membership of cooperatives | 9.286 | 3.153 | 2.945 | 0.004* |
| Annual Income | 2.536 | 0.895 | 2.834 | 0.006* |
| R Square | 0.751 | | | |
| Adjusted R Square | 0.690 | | | |
| F-ratio | 15.500** | | | |

Source: Survey, 2024       $p<0.05^*$, $p<0.01^{**}$        *, ** = significant

Educational level (2.008) positively influenced the quantity of fish marketed in the area. This was justified by its positive coefficient which was statistically significant at 1% ($p<0.01$) probability level. This implied that the level of training assisted in creating product awareness and as such facilitated the rate at which consumers patronized the fish sold in the markets. This was supported by the finding of Rafique and Park., (2012) who reported that educational level encourages advertisement which actually changes the needs and wants of the people and sometimes it creates the need among the people.

Marketing experiences (21.988) had positively (p<0.01) influenced fish marketing such that a unit increase in marketing experience would lead to at least 22% increase in quantity of fish marketed. This result agreed with the a-priori expectation of increase in the years of marketing experiences would engender high profit. This also was supported by Olukosi and Isitor, (2020) who reported that increase in marketing experiences facilitates marketers to spread out market supply and improvement in quality of the product being marketed.

Annual income (2.536) was significant (p<0.05) and positively related to the quantity of fish marketed in the study area such that a 10% increased the income of the marketer would lead to 25% increase in fish marketing. This finding was similar to the findings of Chukwu and Enudu (2018) who reported that income of the marketer influenced the quality of product packaging which in turn influenced consumers buying behavior by making them to buy product and always patronize product.

Membership of cooperatives (9.286) was positively and significantly (p<0.05) related to the quantity of fish marketed in the study area. This implied that being a member of cooperatives encouraged pooling of resources and bulk purchase of products which influenced the quantity of fish marketed in the area as members enjoy bulk discount and economies of scale in their marketing processes. This agreed with Olukosi and Isitor, (2019) who reported that membership of cooperatives societies encourages members to diversify their marketing activities due to increased economies of scale and bulk discount.

The age (-4.939) of the marketer is negative and significantly related to the quantity of fish marketed in the area. This implied that increase in the age of the marketer would lead to decrease in the quantity fish marketed in Ebonyi State. This could be attributed to the inverse relationship between age and response to risk and uncertainties in business.

From the point of view of the significant f-ratio at 1% level, the stated null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative accepted. The study therefore concluded that the socio-economic characteristics of fish marketers had significant effect on fish marketers' performance in Ebonyi State

## 3.3. Constraints faced by fish marketers:

The constraints faced by fish marketers in Ebonyi Sate was analysed relative to the results of challenges presented in Table 3. From the point of view of the Kaisers rule of thumb of ≥0.400 factor loading, the constraints to fish marketing in the study area were isolated and categorized into economic, social and managerial constraints. The variables that loaded for economic constraints were: high cost for preservation (0.887), high inflation rate in the economy (0.760), high cost of marketing inputs (0.574), instability of purchase price (0.790), and inconsistent and high cost of transportation (0.784)

Consequently, the isolated social constraints were inadequate supporting infrastructure (0.574), poor cooperation (0.630), seasonality of commodity (0.806), poor marketing information (0.556), inadequate access to credit facilities (0.736), few and low acceptability of local breeds of fish (0.697) and inadequate of capital (0.509). Similarly, the variables that loaded for managerial constraints include: poor marketing policy implementation (0.930) and inadequate of government support (0.673).

**Table 3** Constraints faced by fish marketers in Ebonyi State

| Vari. code | Constraints | Components | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Economic | Social | Managerial |
| V01 | High cost of preservation | 0.887 | 0.003 | 0.151 |
| V02 | Inadequate Supporting Infrastructure | 0.177 | 0.574 | -0.103 |
| V03 | Poor cooperation | 0.190 | 0.630 | 0.271 |
| V04 | Poor marketing policy implementation | 0.271 | 0.190 | 0.930 |
| V05 | High inflation rate in the economy | 0.760 | 0.251 | -0.193 |
| V06 | Seasonality of commodity | -0.386 | 0.806 | 0.304 |
| V07 | Poor marketing information | -0.186 | 0.556 | 0.304 |
| V08 | Inadequate access to credit facilities | 0.353 | 0.736 | -0.244 |

| V09 | Few and low acceptability of local breeds of fish | 0.064 | 0.697 | -0.009 |
| V10 | High cost of marketing inputs | 0.574 | 0.041 | 0.157 |
| V11 | instability of purchase price | 0.790 | 0.341 | 0.289 |
| V12 | Inadequate of government support | 0.180 | -0.136 | 0.673 |
| V13 | Inadequate of capital | -0.062 | 0.509 | 0.243 |
| V14 | Inconsistent and High cost of transportation. | 0.784 | 0.155 | 0.266 |

Source: Survey, 2024

The study also found that the major constraints faced by fish marketers were high cost of preservation, poor marketing policy implementation, high inflation rate in the economy, seasonality of commodity, inadequate access to credit facilities, instability of purchase price and inconsistent and high cost of transportation. Poor marketing policy implementation can indeed be a significant constraint facing fish marketers as issues such as poor enforcement of market regulations can affect the performance of fish marketers, leading to reduced income and profitability. According to Oladejo and Ogunjobi (2018), inadequate marketing policies and poor implementation can lead to market inefficiencies and reduced profitability for fish marketers.

These constraints are consistent with previous studies that have shown that inadequate credit and poor infrastructure are major constraints faced by fish marketers in Nigeria (Eze et al., 2020; Ugwoke et al., 2021).

These constraints had caused the output growth not to keep pace with its demand, thereby, resulting in declining domestic supplies and a growing reliance on imports of the products.

## 4. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study found that education, experience, annual income, age and cooperative membership were significant determinants of fish marketers' performance in Ebonyi, State, Nigeria. The study also found that high cost of preservation, poor marketing policy implementation, high inflation rate in the economy, seasonality of commodity, inadequate access to credit facilities, instability of purchase price, and high cost of transportation were major constraints faced by fish marketers.

From the results, the following recommendations were made:

- Marketers who are not members of the association should be encouraged to join as this would increase their fish marketing activities
- Significant variables such as marketing experience, age, education and quantity of fish handled should be considered in policies regarding fish marketing.
- Government and other stakeholders should provide adequate credit facilities and improve infrastructure to enhance the performance of fish marketers in Ebonyi State.

## Compliance with ethical standards

*Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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