

Harnessing Fishers' Knowledge for Sustainable Fishery on Lake Victoria: The case of Wakiso District Kigungu Fishing ground Uganda

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Abstract

This study will explore fishers' ways of learning through participatory action research; fostering lifelong learning and reflections informally/ non-formally enabling participation in the conservation of the fishery resource contrary to the top-down approach.

Keywords: Fisher, Illegal fishing, Learning.

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing is a key driver of global overfishing (World wild Life,n.d). Illegal fishing has caused losses estimated at \$23 billion per year according to FAO (Wikipedia, n.d). However, global efforts are optimistic that addressing illegal fishing will positively contribute to equitable growth and empowerment of people who rely on oceans for food and income (ibid). Similarly, the Illegal fishing of immature fish on Lake Victoria is one of the biggest problems for the economy of Uganda that Government loses over 716 billion in revenue that would have been earned from fish export annually (Tajuba & Lubulwa, 2018). The Government through the Department of Fisheries has condemned illegal fishing and instituted several mechanisms to mitigate it (Tajuba & Lubulwa, 2018). Despite these educational undertakings, illegal fishing is persisting (ibid).

However, the Master's study by Namubiru in 2014 assessed the fisheries extension education methods adapted and revealed that the training methods adopted do not utilize fishers' experiences as research institutions and the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry (MAAIF) still adopts a top-down approach, which is mainly punitive and may not lead to sustainable development. This study is proactively using a social constructivist perspective to learning.

Research problem

Little research has been conducted to assess fishers' knowledge, situations, and the experiences they have gained from extension programs vs their own experiences. This may be one of the main contributing factors underlying fishers' poor compliance with new regulations instituted by the Government through MAAIF. Therefore, it is important to gain fishers' knowledge regarding their experiences or situations, as expressed in their own words on what they can do and how they can be enabled to fish sustainably through lifelong learning which is under SDG4, National Development Plan 2020/21-2024/25, Uganda Vision 20240 (National Planning Authority, 2020), SDG2 and SDG14 (FAO, n.d).

Research question

What are the fishers'/spouses' knowledge, experiences towards illegal fishing and conservation of the fishery resource, what can fishers and their spouses do and how can different stakeholders enable them to conserve it sustainably?

Research objectives

- To assess fishers' perceived attitude, knowledge, and practice of illegal fishing on Lake Victoria

- To engage fishers, especially the youth on what they can do and how best they can be enabled to sustain the fishery resource
- To engage fishers' wives/ spouses and female fish smokers on what they can do and how best they can be enabled to sustain the fishery resource
- To engage different stakeholders on how best they can support fishers for the sustainable conservation of the fishery resources.

Theoretical framework

The study is premised on Social Constructivism to learning due to its array of perspectives that post that learners construct their own knowledge from their experiences (Merriam *et al.*, 2007).

Methodology

The study is a qualitative participatory action research (PAR) to facilitate ownership and commitment of knowledge/ plans created for improved sustainable fishing. The population of the study comprised of fishers especially the youth who are the main target of this study at the Kigungu landing site to be taken through personal interviews and corresponding meetings. These are the primary beneficiaries of the fishery that has massively been depleted (Namubiru, 2014). Fishers' spouses will also be involved since fishers don't live in isolation; their behaviours/ practices are influenced by the social relations.

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