Labor mobility in Tangalle coastal fishing community of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Labor mobility in fisheries sector is varied in nature and accompanied with numerous socio economic characteristics. Therefore, main objective of this research was to examine the fisheries labor market behaviour in Tangalle with regards to 'concept of labor mobility'. Objectives of the study fold into three: identifying the push factors and pulls factors that influence people to enter and exit from fisheries, investigating the various forms of labor mobility in the fisheries and recognizing the underlying causes of labor mobility. Primary data for the study were collected conducting a field survey in October, 2014. A purposive sample of 65 fishers in Tangalle fisheries community was interviewed using a pre-tested questionnaire. Data were analyzed using SPSS 13.0 by performing Friedman test, Wilcoxon signed rank test and Chi-square test. Friedman test results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in types of recruitments to the fishery sector ($\chi^2 = 118.16$, df= 3, $p < 0.05$). Majority of fishermen (67 %) entered to fishery due to the influence arise from family followed by good wages. Around 63 % of fishers left the industry due to retirement age. Furthermore 48 % of the fishers have been moved geographically mainly due to tsunami and marriages. Occupation horizontal mobility can be identified in two different ways either completely or partial movement from one occupation to another within the industry. Occupational vertical mobility has observed among fishers due to changes of vessel type. Friedman test results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in reasons which cause occupational mobility ($\chi 2 = 48.887$, df= 3, $p < 0.05$) in which trainings followed by working capital were the dominant factors. Phenomenon of industrial mobility was not found in this community. Nevertheless, income acts as a crucial factor for labor mobility in fisheries.

Keywords: labor mobility, geographical mobility, industrial mobility,Occupational mobility, fisheries community

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Introduction

The fisheries sector plays an indispensable role in the economy of Sri Lanka contributing around 1.8% to the GDP (Fisheries Statistic, 2013). The sector provides direct and indirect employments to around 650,000 people and is directly linked with the lives of approximately 50% of the population who resides in the coastal belt(Fisheries Statistics, 2009). However, people enter to fishery and exit from the industry due to various reasons (Heen, 1988). Also their behavioral changes within the industry can be examined under the "Concept of Mobility".

Mobility has two dimensions namely time and direction. Time mobility appears as inter-generational or intra-generational (Rajan, 2002). Directional mobility is visible in different angles such as vertical, horizontal and spatial (ibid). The tendency of moving from place to place or from one occupation to another may be due to various reasons such as geographic, demographic and ethnographic; also differences in skills, knowledge and abilities; demand and supply conditions of resources and other socio-economic characteristics (ibid). These tendencies unevenly distributed within and among places creating inequalities within the community while resulting interconnected socio-economic consequences(Kerr, 1950). It has long been acknowledged for ages that mobility plays an important role in livelihoods of fishermen. Therefore the prime objectives of this paper were to examine the factors that affect people to enter and exit from fishery, to understand the various forms and magnitudes oflabour mobility in the sector while investigating the underlying factors, causes, and their implications.

Materials and Methods

A field survey was carried outinTangalle fishery region in South coast Sri Lanka during the first two weeks of October, 2014. A pre- tested questionnaire was used as a tool of primary data collection and a literature survey was done to collect secondary data. A purposive sample of sixty five respondents was interviewed using the structured questionnaire. A Likert-scale was used to measure the items which were ranging from 'Strongly agree' (5) to 'Strongly disagree' (1).The sample included different strata of fishing community such as fishermen, boat owners,fish sellers, post-harvest processors, ice makers, net menders and former fishermen. Data were analyzed by using SPSS 13.0 by applying descriptive statistics and some non-parametric tests such as Wilcoxon singed rank test, Freidman test, and Chi-square test.

Results and Discussion

Friedman test results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in types of recruitments to the fishery sector ($\chi^2(3) = 118.16$, $p < 0.05$). Majority(68%) of fishers entered to fishery influence arose from family, neighbors or relatives. Good working condition of the fishery sector was the least preferable way of recruiting people to the industry which accountedonly 2%. Various reasons why fisherman left from the industry were identified. 29% of fishermen are willing to leave the fishery in near future. Among them 63%left from the industry due to old age and poor health followed by low income (21%), alternative jobs (11%) and5%due to family reasons.

Findings revealed that 48 % of the fishers have been moved geographically mainly due to tsunami (68%) and marriages (23%).Around6% of the respondents have changed their residential places due to old age and reached to different location where their children are living. Only 3% of the fishermen have been arrived near to the coastal belt considering easy access for fishing activities.According to the chi-square test there was a statistically significant relationship between the fisherman's residential place and distance to travel for landing site. ($\chi2$ (1) =18.20, p <0.05).

Friedman test results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in reasons which cause occupational mobility ($\chi2$ (3) = 48.887, p <0.05) in which trainings (42%) followed by working capital (35.4%) were the dominant factors.Occupation horizontal mobility can be identified in two different ways either completely or partial movement from one occupation to another within the industry.When considering the complete movement, fishers who were doing fish selling (4.61%), net mending (1.53%) and ice making (1.53%) have been shifted to harvesting while 4.61% of active fishers have completely moved from harvesting to processing activities. Partial movement is moving to another occupation while engaging in the previous one too. Survey revealed that fishers who were previously did harvesting now doing both harvesting and processing (9.23%); harvesting and selling (12.30%). About 7.69% of fishers who did net mending now doing both harvesting and net mending. Among 65 respondents, 71.6% were using single day boats while 23.72% using multiday boats for fishing. Only 5.08%usedCanoe. Among them, 35.71% of single boat users had previously used canoe and 42.8% of multiday boat users had previously used single day boats. Therefore, occupational vertical mobility wasobserved among fishers due to changes of vessel type.Among interviewed fishermen, 96.3% of fishers engaged in fishing as their main occupation and among them 6.2% of respondents were doing labor work and 12.3% doing sales other than fishery. A series of indicators were used to measure perceptions of fisher-folk towards the satisfaction about the current status of the fishery (Table 1).

Table 1: Results of Wilcoxon singed rank test for fisher-folk perceptions' of satisfaction about the current status of the fishery

Perception	Mean rank	Z value	Remarks
Lack of social recognition	3.42	-3.276*	Neither agree or disagree
Low income	4.21	-4.924*	Agree

Low harvest	4.26	-4.833*	Agree
Poor future perspectives	4.24	-4.752*	Agree
Lack of subsidies	3.94	-4.348*	Agree
High competition in market	3.44	-2.380*	Neither agree or disagree

*Significant at p value < 0.05

Although, 57.6% of respondents were unsatisfied with the current status of the fisheries industry no one has completely shifted from fisheries industry to another industry because of the opportunity cost. Therefore, industrial mobility was not found in this community.

Conclusion

Majority of fishermen entered to fishery due to the influence arose from family, neighbors or relatives. Therefore, inter-generational mobility has been observed in Tangalle fishing community. The dominant factor for leaving from the industry was poor health and retirement age. Although most of fishers are unsatisfied about the current status of fishery, they are reluctant to leave. Because they believe they do not have sufficient education to do another job and they got good income in some seasons. About 48 % of the fishers have been moved geographically mainly due to tsunami and marriages. Occupation horizontal mobility can be identified in two different ways as either completely or partial movement from one occupation to another within the industry. Occupational vertical mobility has observed among fishers due to changes of vessel type. The phenomenon of industrial mobility was not found in Tangalle fisheries community. Nevertheless, income acts as a crucial factor for labor mobility in this fishery.

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