Fish-for-Sex (FFS) and Risk of HIV Infection among Fishers in Elmina Fishing Community in Ghana

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Abstract

This paper is a cross-sectional study that employed mix-methods for data collection and analysis to investigate a relationship between mobility and HIV risks among 385 fishers in Elmina. It discusses the roles of people in fish-for-sex (FFS), the reasons for such transactional sexual activity, and its implications for HIV-risk infection. The study uses the theory of gender and power (TGP) to explain gender dynamics in power inequalities, and their effects on interpersonal sexual relations between males and females within the fishing community. The paper concludes that the gendered division of labor exists in the study area and thrives on socio-cultural norms and power inequalities. These inequalities mainly favor men, who are thus emboldened to exploit women through the supply of fish. The paper further observes that as long as the female petty fish traders require capital for their fish trade and the male fishers have greater control over the supply of the fish, the women will have limited negotiating power. In addition, the paper establishes a linkage between fish-for-sex relations and the risk of HIV exposure among fishers in Elmina. The paper recommends the empowerment of female petty fish traders by granting them trading capital to limit their overdependence on male fishers for capital, thereby eliminating the need for exchanging sex for fish. The paper also calls for the intensification of education by relevant agencies involved in HIV education on safe sex practices through the use of condoms in fishing communities.

Keywords: fish-for-sex, gendered labor division, power, inequality, exploitation

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INTRODUCTION

Fish-for-sex (FFS) is a transactional sexual activity that involves an exchange of fish for sex between male and female fishers[2] in fishing destinations. Earlier studies have reported the occurrence of FFS in fishing communities in many developing countries (Kissling et al., 2005; Camlin et al., 2013). Most of the occurrences of FFS are observed in sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, scholars like Camlin et al. (2013) and Merten and Haller (2007) observed the presence of such activity in the Nyanza lakeside communities in Kenya, and among local Ila or Tonga women and immigrant fishermen in the Zambian Kafue Flats. Anecdotal evidence shows that it may be happening in some fishing communities in Ghana too. Béné and Merten (2008) describe it as a transactional sexual relationship between male and female fishers as part of the local fish-trade economy. Kwena et al. (2013) explain that generally, female fish traders enter into the FFS to be assured of a steady supply of fish to sustain their fish trade. Duwal et al. (2015) emphasize that once this arrangement is concluded, male fishers are obliged to grant their FFS partners preferential access to their catch of fish. MacPherson et al. (2012) report that after the sexual transaction, the women become the first to get their supply of fish, while those who do not engage in this transactional sexual relationship often find it difficult to get fish. For this reason, female fish traders are sometimes compelled to look for sex partners among male fishers at fishing destinations. Gordon (2005) reports that in some communities, the female fish traders compete to be part of an FFS arrangement, or risk losing out on the supply of fish, especially during lean fishing seasons (FAO, 2006).

Kissling et al. (2005) maintain that FFS increases HIV vulnerability among those who engage in this practice. Female fish traders who lack trading capital are the victims of FFS in many fishing communities, at the hands of male fishers who demand sex before supplying fish (Kwena et al., 2013). Kwena et al. (2013) also contend that not only do the women become victims of exploitation, but the FFS occurs in unprotected contexts of very low condom use. Further insights into the practice also show that it involves either a small number of female fish traders having unprotected sex with a large number of male fishers or a large number of female fish traders having sex with a small number of male fishers within the fishing destination (Garnett and Anderson, 1996, cited in Duwal et al., 2015).

The extant literature deems FFS both a potentially HIV-risk practice, and an exploitative practice as it increases the vulnerability of not only fish traders but the general population through their sexual partners. It is an issue of power play in which males have an upper hand in the decisions taken to engage in sex, with some men even refusing to use condoms (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2019). Incidentally, very little is documented on FFS in the fisheries literature in Ghana, even though anecdotal evidence shows that this phenomenon may be occurring in some Ghanaian fishing

2 'Fishers' refers to the study participants who were categorized into four groups: those who catch the fish, those engaged in post-harvest activities (drying, smoking, marketing, etc.), those engaged in maintenance and repair activities (boat repairs, net mending, etc.), and those who carry fish from one point of the fishing market to another.

communities. This paper analyzes the roles of people in the fishing activity of Elmina in the Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abirem (KEEA) Municipality in Ghana, their engagement in FFS, the reasons for engagement, and the implications for HIV-risk infection among men and women in the fishing community. The paper is based on an earlier study, which established a relationship between mobility and HIV-risk infection among fishers in the Elmina fishing community.

THEORY OF GENDER AND POWER

The theory of gender and power (TGP) is an important theory to consider when designing behavioral health interventions that address issues that adversely affect women. The TGP is a social structural theory that addresses the wider social and environmental issues surrounding women, in the distribution of power and authority, affective influences, and gender-specific norms within heterosexual relationships. The theory was developed by Robert Connell in 1987 and has three constructs: sexual division of labor, sexual division of power, and the structure of cathexis. The TGP has been used in public health research to examine risk factors, also known as acquired risks, as they relate to women's health. It has also been used in earlier studies to analyze gender-based inequalities and disparities that affect women's choices and decisions in sexual relationships. In this paper, the theory is used to explain the division of labor, power, and sexual relationships between male and female fishers in fishing communities, and the implications for the risk of HIV infection. The three constructs of the TGP operate at both the societal and institutional levels, and identify conditions that expose women to HIV risk at both levels. At the societal level, in terms of the sexual division of labor, males and females are assigned gender-specific occupations where females usually find themselves in low-paying positions. At the institutional level, females are often assigned to do work usually described as "women's work", with lower income compared to that of men. This is how most fishing economies are structured, where males engage in actual fishing and have control of fish, and females engage in post-harvest activities such as smoking, drying, and marketing (Mbenga, 1999; FAO, 2016).

There is, however, evidence that women also wield power in the fisheries (Overa, 2003; De Silva, 2011). For example, earlier works in some fishing communities in Ghana indicate that women have significant control within the post-harvest domains such as setting prices. Evidence also abounds where women are financiers of many fishing expeditions, own canoes, and even hire men to fish for them. Through their provision of capital, ownership of canoes, and control of fish pricing, some women secure their supply of fish and wield a lot of power (Overa, 1993, 2003). Regardless of gender-role differences, both women and men play dominant roles in the value chain (De Silva, 2011). Notwithstanding the power some women wield, the fisheries literature generally indicates that most female fishers are engaged in the lower levels of the fisheries value chain and have less access to fish resources and income compared to men (De Silva, 2011). Wingood and DiClemente

(2000) argue that the sexual division of power at the institutional level is maintained by abuse of power, authority, and control in the hands of men. Such is the case in FFS relations, which allows men to use their control over fish to exploit women engaged in petty fish trading for sex (Kwena et al., 2013). Kwena et al. (2013) and Mojola (2011) also adduce low condom use in fishing communities to the division of power, which usually occurs because women have very little say in negotiating for protected sex in FFS. Pitpitan et al. (2012) report that many fish traders are afraid to discuss condoms with male partners for fear of being denied access to fish.

The third construct refers to the structure of cathexis. Connell (1987) used this term to describe the constraints in people's emotional attachments to each other. At the institutional level, social norms and affective attachments are maintained by social mechanisms such as socio-cultural biases, which allow the ascription or references of 'maleness' and 'femaleness' to certain jobs and positions. For example, in the fishing communities, the actual work of catching fish is a preserve for males because that is what society accepts and this tends to discourage women (Odotei, 1990; De Silva, 2011). Hitomi (2009) notes that socio-cultural beliefs limit women's participation in actual fishing, citing the example of South Asian fishing communities, where it is believed that women onboard a fishing expedition brings bad luck. The Fante and Ewe fishers in Ghana also hold the belief that a woman in her menstrual period on a fishing expedition could lead to a bad fish catch or the capsizing of the expedition boat, putting lives at risk (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2019). These cultural beliefs affect women's participation in fishing to men's advantage. In sum, the three constructs of the theory explain the gender division of labor, power dynamics, and sexual behaviors between male and female fishers in fishing destinations.

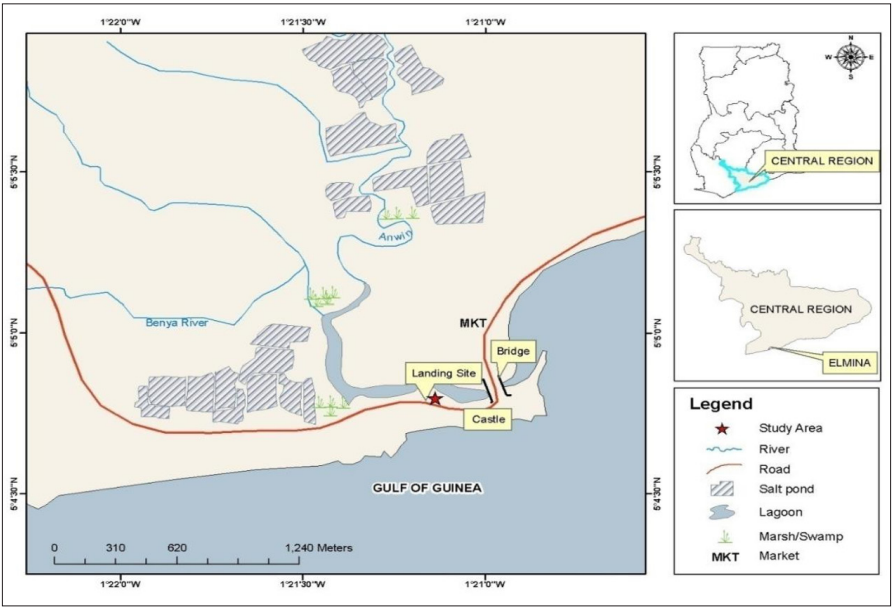
METHODS

This paper presents findings from the initial study that set out to establish a relationship between the mobility of fishers and HIV infection risks. This cross-sectional study employed convergent parallel mixed research methods for data collection and analysis and was conducted among artisanal fishers in the fishing community of Elmina in Ghana (see Figure 1). The choice of qualitative methods allowed for an in-depth interpretation of mobility and sexual experiences of fishers, while the quantitative method examined relationships between independent and dependent variables in the analysis. The study combined a survey, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and observation for collecting primary data. The population comprised artisanal marine water fishers aged 18 and above engaged in any form of fishing activity and included actual fishers, fish porters, boat (canoe) repairers, fishing gear sellers, and fish traders.

Due to budget constraints, the time needed to administer questionnaires, and the unknown population size of fishers in the study area, the researcher derived the sample size by computing the minimum sample size required for accuracy in estimating proportions. The author reached an estimated sample size of 385

respondents for the survey.

Figure 1 Map of the study area in KEEA Municipality



Source: Fieldwork, July-August 2017

The study used purposive sampling in the selection of 30 key subjects for the KIIs. Participants of the KIIs comprised key officials of the KEEA Municipality, and community opinion leaders. The purpose of conducting the KIIs was to explore their views on fishing activity and issues related to the sexual behaviors of fishers. The researcher held two separate FGDs with female and male fishers, with 10 participants in each group. At the landing beach, the researcher made several visits for physical observation of the settlement patterns, state of social infrastructure, mode of economic activities, and living arrangements of the fishers in Elmina. The researcher organized and analyzed the qualitative data gathered during the interviews and FGDs through a five-stage process, using a thematic approach. The study includes narrative descriptions to explain relationships in the data presented, with selected quotations by subjects in the FGDs and KIIs to enrich the analysis.

Regarding the quantitative analysis, the study used both descriptive (frequencies, percentages) and inferential (chi-square test) statistics. The researcher did bivariate analysis by way of cross-tabulation between variables of interest to determine the association between independent and dependent variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic characteristics of fishers

The researcher examined the socio-demographic characteristics of the 385 fishers who participated in the study with respect to age, sex, marital status, level of education, religion, mobility status, and type of fishing occupation engaged in, as illustrated in Table 1. More than half (51.4 percent) of the participants were female, while the remaining 48.6 percent constituted males. The large majority of female fishers in the current study indicates active participation of females in fishing, hitherto described as a male-dominated endeavor. In terms of age, Table 1 also shows that participants aged 34–44 constituted the highest percentage (29.9 percent), followed by the 25–34 age group (24.2 percent) and <25 age group (22.3 percent). Respondents aged 65 years and above constituted the least (3.6 percent). The data presented in Table 1 further indicate that fishers below the age of 35 represented 76.4 percent of the respondents. This suggests higher engagement of younger people in the fishing activity in the study area, corroborating earlier works which describe the fisheries sector as an area attracting younger and stronger individuals with the capacity to do physically demanding tasks (Caldwell et al., 1997). Table 1 also indicates that 54.3 percent of the study participants were mobile fishers,[1] while 45.7 percent were non-mobile.

The data in Table 1 further indicate that 53.8 percent of respondents had Middle/Junior High School education, almost a third of respondents had no education, and 12.7 percent had secondary/vocational school and higher education. The results show a high illiteracy rate among fishers in the study area. This was to be expected as some studies undertaken on artisanal marine fishers have shown high illiteracy rates among fishers (Duwal et al., 2015). The majority of respondents were Christians (82.1 percent), and regarding marital status, 46.8 percent reported being married, while 53.2 percent were not in any form of marital union. From Table 1, it is evident that the fishers who engaged in post-harvest activities constituted the highest number (38.7 percent), followed by those engaged in actual fishing (25.5 percent), fish porters (21.6 percent), and boat (canoe) repair and maintenance workers (14.3 percent).

1 Fishers reporting to have traveled from Elmina to other fishing communities to engage in any fishing activity in the last 12 months before the study.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Sex	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Male	187	48.6
Female	198	51.4
Age		
<25	86	22.3
25-34	93	24.2
35-44	115	29.9
45-54	50	13.0
55-64	27	7.0
65+	14	3.6
Mobility Status		
Mobile Fisher	209	54.3
Non-Mobile Fisher	176	45.7
Education		
No Education	129	33.5
Middle/JHS education	207	53.8
Secondary/vocational and higher	49	12.7
Religion		
Islam	21	5.5
African Traditionalist	19	4.9
No religion	29	7.5
Christianity	316	82.1
Marital Status		
Never married	112	29.1
Cohabiting/Informal/Consensual	34	8.8
Married	180	46.8
Divorced/separated/widowed	59	15.3
Type of fishing occupation		
Fish Catch Group	98	25.5
Post-harvest Group	149	38.7
Maintenance and Repair Group	55	14.3
Porters and Errand Group	83	21.6

Source: Fieldwork, July-August 2017.

Elmina fishing activity and the engagement of women

The roles in the fishing activities in Elmina are sharply divided, with men dominant in the areas of actual catching of fish, boat repair/maintenance and sale of fishing gear, and fish porterage, with women dominant in the post-harvest activities, as seen in Table 2. 'Actual fishing' refers to the fishers who go out to sea on fishing canoes/boats to catch the fish. In an interview with the Regional/District Fisheries Officer, he indicated that there is no record of any woman going to fish in the sea in Elmina. Actual fishing is exclusive to males, as the study results confirm in Table 2. In an earlier study on gender and traditional authority in the artisanal marine industry in Ghana, Odotei (1990) describes the sea as an entity that is recognized as a god

who abhors uncleanliness. Participants in the male FGD reported that women are perceived to be unclean during menstruation and cannot go near the god of the sea and fish in that state. The fishers in the community hold the belief that women carry a lot of bad luck during their menstrual period and may be displeasing to the sea god, who might show his wrath with a poor fish catch or capsizing an expedition boat (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2019). The perception of women causing bad luck at sea demotivates their engagement, as noted by Hitomi (2009). It is important to note that the lack of engagement by women in actual fishing does not in any way place all-female fishers at a disadvantage in terms of fish supplies. The women also have power and control over retailing and fish pricing, which give them significant power within the post-harvest space (Overa, 1993).

Table 2: Type of fishing activity engaged in among respondents by Sex

Response	**Type of fishing activity engaged in**							
	Actual fishing		**Post-harvest activity (processing, marketing, storage, transportation etc.)**		**Boat repair/ maintenance and sale of fishing gears etc.**		**Fish porters (mending of nets, carrying, errands etc.)**	
Sex	Engaged	Not engaed	Engaged	Not engaged	Engaged	Not engaged	Engaged	Not engaged
Male	52.4	47.6	4.8	95.2	18.2	81.8	24.6	75.4
Female	0.0	100	70.7	29.3	10.6	89.4	18.7	81.3
P-Value							0.000	

Source: Fieldwork, July-August 2017.

According to the study results, post-harvest fishing activity in Elmina is a female-dominated area. Table 2 shows 70.7 percent engagement of females compared to only 4.8 percent of males. The post-harvest activities relate to a variety of activities by women, such as processing of the fish through drying, smoking, and frying. It also involves marketing, where the fish traders either buy or sell the fish on a retail basis. The post-harvest also includes storage and transportation, which is dominated by large-scale female fish traders referred to as fishmongers. According to some fishmongers interviewed, many of them acquire their trading capital through loans, which are accessed from rural banks and savings/loans companies. Since they have access to capital, they serve as financiers of many fishing expeditions and also buy portions of fish from fishers who work on the canoes. In an interview with one fishmonger, she expressed the following:

> Most of the fishing trips are financed by women who provide money for fuel, food, and maintenance of boats and nets. Most of us pre-finance the fish expeditions to secure access to the catch from the fishers on the canoes. Some of our women even own canoes/boats and engage male fishers as the crew of their boats. They always have money with them and buy fish from the fishers who work on the canoes.

The statement above indicates the power that some women wield over fish supplies, either because of their access to capital, investments in expeditions, or ownership of fishing boats, corroborating the findings of earlier studies (Overa, 1993, 2003; Quagrainie and Chu, 2019; USAID/SFMP, 2020).

In the female FGD, participants also reported that just as women are not encouraged to catch fish, the men are also not encouraged to engage in post-harvest activities, which are the preserve of women. The following was expressed by a participant:

> In Elmina, women don't go fishing. Only our men are permitted to go. So, we also have taken over post-harvest activities, which are usually regarded as female activities. When a man smokes fish or fries fish, people in the community will refer to him as Kojo basia (a male who behaves like a female). Owing to this, many of our men are not even interested in processing, and marketing.

The observation expressed above accounts for the predominance of men in the actual catching of fish and of women in post-harvest fishing activities. It further clarifies the structure of the division of labor in the fishing economy of Elmina and the players within it, as documented earlier by Britwum (2009). The description of the post-harvest roles as a female enterprise is a common community perception, which demotivates males to accept certain post-harvest roles, in order not to be branded Kojo basia. The feminine ascription attached to post-harvest fishing activities also affords women considerable influence in fisheries governance as their roles make them the primary processors and marketers of the bulk of the harvested fish (Overa, 2003; Britwum, 2009; Quagrainie and Chu, 2019). Though the prevailing narratives in the fisheries literature have described post-harvest activities as the domain of women, there is evidence that seems to suggest that the situation is changing as a few males now engage in post-harvest fishing activities (Overa, 2007; Quagrainie and Chu, 2019; USAID/SFMP, 2020).

Overa (2007) notes that the meager formal job market in Ghana forces men to cross gender barriers and enter domains described as female-dominated. The statement above confirms that the changing dynamics have also affected the fisheries job market.

The boat repair and sale of fishing gear also has a higher percentage engagement of males (18.2 percent) compared to females (10.6 percent), as seen in Table 2. Although the sale of fishing gear has significant participation of females, the fisheries literature describes the aspects of boat repair/maintenance as dominated by aged male fishers (FAO, 2006; Kyei-Gyamfi, 2019). Participants in the FGDs indicated that older male fishers do boat repair or maintenance work because it requires experience, expertise, and less physical strength.

The fish porters are young males and females who carry fish from the canoes/

boats at the landing sites to the markets. The FGDs revealed that the work of the fish porters is laborious and requires extreme physical ability to carry it out. This may explain the engagement of more males than females in this area (see Table 2).

Fish-for-sex in Elmina

Earlier studies have described FFS as a transactional sexual relationship between male and female fishers as a part of the local fish trade economy in which fish is traded for sex (Kissling et al., 2005; Béné and Merten, 2008; Mojola, 2011). Participants who reported engaging in FFS were asked if they had engaged in the practice in the previous 12 months. As shown in Table 3, a proportion of 13.9 percent affirmed.

Table 3: FFS in the last 12 months by sex, age, mobility status, marital status and type of fishing activity

Background Characteristics	**Respondents who engaged in FFS**		
	N	**Percent**	**P-value**
Sex			**0.000**
Male	31	24.8	
Female	6	4.3	
Age			**0.000**
<25	20	32.8	
25-34	10	15.9	
35-44	6	7.1	
45-54	1	3.0	
55-64	0	0.0	
65+	0	0.0	
Mobility Status			**0.024**
Mobile Fisher	28	17.7	
Non-Mobile Fisher	9	7.8	
Marital Status			**0.001**
Never married	22	27.8	
Cohabiting/Informal/Consensual	2	11.1	
Married	10	7.4	
Divorced/separated/widowed	3	12.3	
Type of fishing occupation			**0.000**
Fish Catch Group	16	23.9	
Post-harvest Group	3	2.9	
Maintenance and Repair Group	3	7.5	
Porters and Errand Group	15	27.8	
Total	37	13.9	

Source: Fieldwork, July-August 2017

Higher engagement is reported among males (24.8 percent) than in females (4.3 percent), confirming earlier findings (see for example, Idowu et al., 2012). The result of the engagement in FFS needs to be interpreted with caution. The FGDs revealed that male fishers were more outspoken in sharing their FFS experiences than female fishers. This was to be expected because according to Kwankye et al. (2007) and Kyei-Gyamfi (2019), in Ghana, it is easier for males to openly discuss personal sexual experiences than for females. Adiku (2017) also notes that women in Ghana hardly talk about their sexual issues with strangers. Based on these earlier findings, it is, therefore, possible that some of the female respondents who reported not engaging in FFS may have engaged in it but were shy in disclosing their engagement. It can also not be ruled out that the males may have exaggerated their engagement as a way of bragging about their FFS exploits.

In terms of age, respondents who reported engaging in FFS were younger fishers. Table 3 shows a statistically significant association ($P<0.000$) between age and engagement in FFS, with higher engagement being recorded among respondents younger than 25 years (32.8 percent) and those in the 25–34 years age group (15.9 percent). This finding confirms the findings of Idowu et al. (2012), who found that younger fishers are more prone to engaging in FFS. Participants in the female FGD reported that FFS occurs among a few young unmarried fishers. This was corroborated in a KII with the Fish Queen, who affirmed it as follows:

> These days it is not easy for fishers to make a good catch, and for an entire crew to give away their fish for sex, is impossible. If any of them would use their portion of fish for sex, then it may be the young boys on the boats.

During the interview with the Chief fisherman, he also indicated that FFS is common among younger fishers who work on canoes:

> Most of the young male fishers on my boat engage in all kinds of risky behaviors, including sexual encounters with fish traders. Since they don't have money to have fun, they use part of their portion of the fish catch I give them at the end of a fish trip to indulge in alcoholism and sex.

This statement suggests that in Elmina, FFS occurs among younger fishers, suggesting that being young influences one's quest to engage in risky sexual behavior such as FFS (Duwal et al., 2015). From the narratives, it is evident that younger fishers are more exposed to HIV risk through their sexual behavior in the fishing destinations.

The results further show that engagement in FFS is common among mobile fishers,[2] and this is also affirmed in Table 3, where a higher rate of engagement (17.7 percent) was reported among mobile fishers than the non-mobile fishers (7.8

2 A mobile fisher is any respondent who traveled outside of Elmina (point of origin) to engage in any fishing-related activity in any other fishing community during the 12 months preceding the study.

percent). The FGDs revealed that it is common to find mobile female fishers engage in FFS because their identities are usually unknown in other fishing destinations, and they are less likely to be found out even if they engaged in it. One participant in the female FGD explained:

> I have heard that some women from other communities exchange sex for fish when they come here but I doubt if the local women can do the same. If community members hear that a local woman engages in FFS, she will be branded as a prostitute.

Another participant indicated that he has engaged in FFS relationships for several years and has never had sex with a woman domiciled in Elmina:

> None of the women I have had sex with lives in Elmina. Many of my partners are from other towns. I believe the local women do not engage in FFS because of fear of local gossip.

The above statements indicate that mobile female fishers are more likely to report FFS engagement than non-mobile ones. Conversely, female fishers who are domiciled at the fishing destination may be branded as prostitutes if they were found to be engaging in FFS, which is not the same case as mobile fishers whose identities are not known. The current finding conforms to earlier studies that documented higher FFS engagement among mobile fishers (see for example, Skeldon, 2000; Mojola, 2011).

In chi-square analysis, marital status and engagement in FFS are significantly associated ($P<0.001$), with higher engagement observed among respondents who were never married. Participants of the FGDs reported that the higher engagement could be because of the involvement of migrant fishers on the boats, most of whom were unmarried. One participant in the male FGD said:

> Most of the men on the boats have wives and give them their fish portion. Those who give their fish to other women in exchange for sex are the young unmarried fishers.

The likelihood of unmarried fishers engaging in FFS was emphasized in the following statement by another participant in the male FGD:

> The unmarried fishing crew hold no allegiance to anyone. They neither have marital commitments nor wives to hold them in check and are always free to decide on what to do with their fish. This accounts for some of them exchanging their fish for sex.

This finding of unmarried men having a higher involvement in FFS is not unique

to this study. The current results conform to earlier studies that found risky sexual behavior among unmarried fishers at fishing destination points (see Zafar et al., 2014; Duwal et al., 2015).

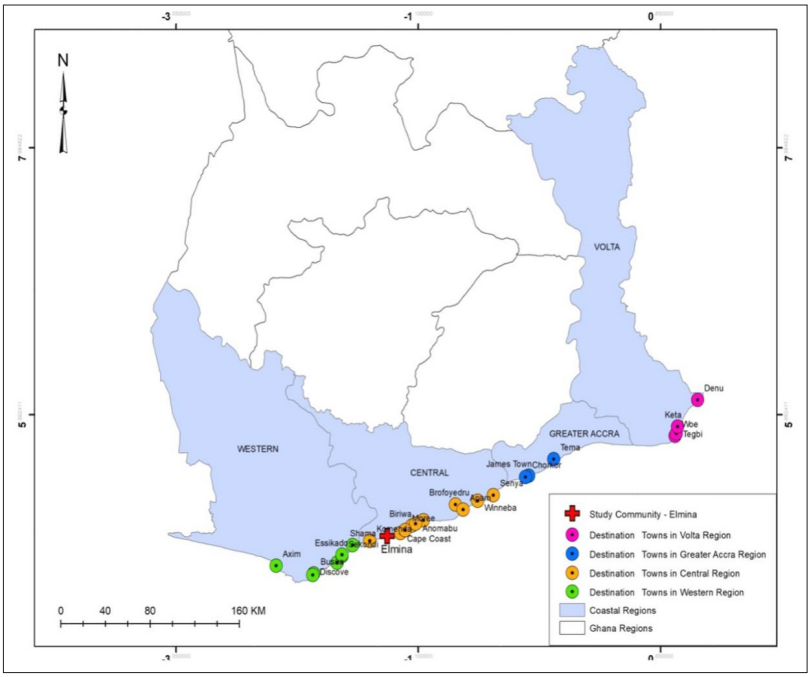
The chi-square test indicates a significant association between type of fishing activity and engagement in FFS (P<0.000). Based on the type of fishing activity, engagement in FFS was found to be highest amongst actual fishers and those engaged in the porterage of fish, but the lowest among respondents engaged in post-harvest activities, which are dominated by females. This was to be expected due to the high composition of males and young people in the first two categories.

Though the result shows a 13.9 percent rate of engagement in FFS, it is quite high considering the risk involved in this practice, and earlier findings of fishers consistently not using condoms in casual sexual encounters (Kwena et al., 2013).

Factors accounting for FFS

In Elmina and the other immediate fishing destinations (see Figure 2), the crew on fishing boats are not paid cash at the end of a fishing expedition but receive portions of fish as payment (wage). The KII with the Chief fisherman revealed that many of the fishing expeditions are not financed by boat owners, but by other financiers, some of whom are large-scale female fish traders (fishmongers). The fishmongers usually prefinance the fish trips to secure fish supplies from the catch. At the end of a fishing expedition, the crew has to account to the financiers for the fish catch and pay the cost of the trip. After counting all the fish, the financier is given an amount of fish that covers the cost of investment. When that is settled, the boat owners are then given their portion, and the remainder is shared among the rest of the crew. The portion given to the crew is what is referred to as edzidzinam. After receiving their portions of the fish, it is up to the fisher to decide to whom to give their fish to sell. The married fishers usually give their fish to their spouses and the unmarried ones to their girlfriends or local contact fish traders. Incidentally, most of the local contact fish traders (most of whom are female petty traders) are not able to make outright payment for the fish, so the male fishers give it to them on a credit basis, for payment on an agreed future date. This initially starts as some sort of business arrangement but may later turn into a sexual relationship if the fish traders default on their payments.

Figure 2: Map showing immediate fishing destinations



Source: Fieldwork, July-August 2017

Several reasons account for the FFS in the study area. Participants in the male FGD reported that most men engage in FFS for sexual gratification, and they do so by exploiting women who owed them money. One participant who claimed to have engaged in FFS corroborated it in the following statement:

> The woman I had sex with owed me money for fish I gave her to sell. We agreed to defray some of the cost by having sex with her. Since then, anytime she defaults on payment, she offers sex in return.

In the male FGD, a participant indicated that there are instances where some male fishers refuse to give out fish even when the fish trader has money to buy some outright. He explained:

> Some of the fishermen are very bad. During lean fishing periods when fish is hard to come by, they use their fish to get women to have sex with them. These fishermen only give their fish to traders who will agree to have sex with them before giving out the fish.

It was also reported in the female FGD that there are young female fish traders in the community who have little or no capital to sustain their fish trade. Such women are the targets of some fishers who lure them under the guise of doing them a favor by giving them the fish at reduced prices or on a credit basis. When these women default on their payment, the fishers ask for sex to defray or settle payment because they know the women have no means of settling the debts. This finding indicates how some male fishers exploit female fishers through the supply of fish. It also depicts how some female petty fish traders were pushed into FFS due to their inability to either settle their debts or secure capital for their fish trade. This finding corroborates earlier research, which notes that FFS occurs when fish traders are unable to secure capital or supply of fish on credit from fishermen (Kissling et al., 2005; FAO, 2006; Lungu and Hüsken, 2010; Idowu et al., 2012).

The highly gendered roles within the fishing labor and activity chain offer some advantages to both men and women in terms of income (De Silva, 2011). For example, the trader power of fish pricing in post-harvest activities often resides with women, granting them a considerable advantage in terms of earnings (Britwum, 2009). The men, on the other hand, have a competitive advantage over women as some of their areas of engagement in the fisheries value chain also generate better income than their female counterparts. For instance, the actual harvesting of fish, and the maintenance/repair works are all dominated by men. With regards to the sale of fishing gear, it was also observed that though women participated, the larger wholesale fishing gear shops around the fishing harbor in Elmina were all owned by males, and the smaller retail shops were owned by females. It was also gathered from the KII with a Fisheries official that except for a few elderly large-scale fish traders who can secure loans for their business capital, the majority of the female petty fish traders lack capital for their fishing trade. Due to the lack of an adequate and reliable source of capital, many women who were engaged in petty fish trading tend to borrow from friends and relatives. However, the amount they can mobilize is usually meager to serve as trading capital.

In sum, compared to women, the male fishers (though not exclusive) in the study area have better sources of income since their areas of engagement yield better income. Though some large-scale female fish traders wield power and have control over fish supplies and pricing, the situation is not the same for the vast majority of the women engaged in petty trading who have no access to capital and depend on the male fishers for fish. In effect, some women engage in FFS because they have very limited sources of income and can hardly raise capital for their fish trade, so relying on their male counterparts seems the easiest and most convenient source of raising capital.

Fish-for-sex as risky sexual behavior

FFS is risky because it is done under unprotected circumstances with less condom usage (Kwena et al., 2013; Kyei-Gyamfi, 2019). Concerning condom usage in

FFS practices, Table 4 shows that 67.6 percent of the respondents who reported engagement in FFS in the last 12 months did not use a condom, with non-use of condoms being higher in males than in females.

Table 4: Respondents who used condoms with FFS partners and reasons for non-use of condoms by Sex

Response	**Sex**		**Total (percent)**
	Male (percent)	**Female (per cent)**	
Used condom	30.0	42.9	32.4
Did not use condom	70.0	57.1	67.6
Total per cent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total N	30	7	37
Reasons for non-use			
Condom reduces sexual pleasure	18.2	25.0	19.2
My partner does not like to use condoms	4.5	25.0	7.7
Trust partner not to be promiscuous and didn't think it was necessary to use a condom	72.7	50.0	69.2
Condom not available	4.5	0.0	3.8
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total N	30	7	37

Source: Fieldwork, July-August 2017

When asked to explain the reason for the non-use of condoms, the majority (69.2 percent) said they trusted their partner not to be promiscuous. In the male FGD, some participants explained that most FFS partners they have had sexual relations with are women they trust to be decent and disease-free. One participant in the group who engaged in FFS explained:

> I don't use a condom with my FFS partner because I trust her. A lot of our FFS women refuse condoms during sex because they perceive that condoms are only for prostitutes.

The current results corroborate earlier work by Cassels et al. (2013) that mentions the non-use or inconsistent use of condoms in FFS because partners claim to trust each other. The other reasons mentioned were that condoms reduce the pleasure of sex (19.2 percent), refusal due to dislike of condoms by partner (7.7 percent), and unavailability of condoms at the time of the sexual act (3.8 percent).

The inability of female fishers to negotiate for the use of condoms even when their male FFS counterparts are not interested, also makes sexual relations risky to HIV infection exposure. The FGDs revealed that many women who fall victim to FFS do so because of the expectation of getting fish. As a result, they are unable to

deny the male fishers who solicit unprotected sex, for fear of losing the supply of fish. One participant who claimed to have engaged in FFS without the use of a condom corroborated this when she made the following statement:

> The male fishers in this community don't like using condoms. Even when you ask for it, they object angrily and sometimes threaten to leave you for another trader.

The reasons offered by females in their FGD were similar to those of the males. For instance, one male FGD participant said:

> I don't like using condoms and so I avoid women who require the use of a condom during sex. If my partner insists on the use of a condom, I always object, and if she is still persistent, I leave her for a partner who is willing to have sex without a condom. It is as simple as ABC.

The above statements indicate how female fishers find it challenging to negotiate condom use in FFS encounters. It also depicts how some female fish traders are pushed into having unprotected sex out of desperation for fish.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This paper has shown that fishing activity roles in Elmina are sharply divided, with men dominating the aspects related to actual fishing, boat repair/maintenance, sale of fishing gear, and fish porterage. The women, on the other hand, dominate the post-harvest activities. The division of labor is associated with social norms of tagging maleness and femaleness to certain roles within the fisheries value chain as the structure of cathexis espouses in the TGP. Whereas the females do not engage in actual fishing due to socio-cultural norms and beliefs, the males are also discouraged from engaging in post-harvest activities, for fear of being labeled 'female'. Incidentally, Overa (2007) indicates that the lack of opportunities in the job market compels both men and women to cross gender barriers to engage in activities traditionally labeled as either female or male domains. This is an indication that the labeling of certain roles, occupations, and activities as masculine and feminine domains may be changing.

In fishing communities, fish is the most important resource every fisher strives to have, and so the one who owns the fish has the power to dictate. In line with the TGP's structure of cathexis, FFS thrives on gender inequality within the fishing communities, as it allows men more access and control over fish than their female counterparts. Additionally, FFS constitutes a high-risk factor for the transmission and spread of HIV among women.

The study found that almost 14 percent of respondents had engaged in FFS in the 12 months preceding the study, and only a little above three in ten FFS respondents

used condoms. The study also found lower condom use among females. From the qualitative results, the low use of condoms stems from the trust FFS partners had for each other, men's objection to condom use, and women's inability to negotiate for its use. The issue of trust stems from ignorance and comes with significant sexual risks as the FFS partners may have other non-regular partners. Again, having unprotected sex with an FFS partner is risky as it exposes both partners to HIV infection. It is problematic and signifies that people in FFS relations, according to the results, do not perceive themselves to be at risk, even when they do not use condoms with their partners.

The vulnerability of female fishers is driven by the economic power vested in male fishers by their control over the supply of fish. Since most women lack capital and depend on their male counterparts, many are pushed into subservience, losing their confidence to insist on condom use when their male counterparts propose not to use them. If women lack capital for their fish trade and depend on men for the supply of fish, the disparities espoused by the TGP will always prevail, and HIV risks will constitute an ever-present phenomenon in fishing destinations.

The results of this study suggest a link between mobility and engagement in FFS. The findings indicate that those female respondents who were mobile during the 12 months preceding the study, engaged in FFS more than those who were non-mobile. This research shows that the identities of female mobile fishers are usually not known in the fishing destination points, thus making it much easier for them to engage in FFS than non-mobile female fishers. The implication is that mobile fish traders are more prone to HIV infection due to their high rate of mobility and low condom use. There is also the possibility of transmitting the virus to their casual partners at the destination points, and to their regular partners back home.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The TGP presented in this paper was intended to analyze and explain the gender-based inequalities that affect choices and decisions in sexual relationships. In this paper, the TGP offered important insights into the prevailing challenges faced by female petty fish traders in carrying out their roles in the fishing community and the fisheries value chain as a whole. The paper concludes that the gendered division of labor exists in fishing activities thriving on socio-cultural norms and power inequalities.

The paper outlined that although actual fish harvesting is carried out by men, their control of fish supplies is not absolute. Women also have many advantages in terms of fish supplies and earnings over the fishermen in some cases. Consequently, the results show that a few large-scale female fish traders wield a considerable amount of power being financiers of fishing trips, and owners of boats. The results indicate that most of the women engaged in petty fish trading are exploited due to their lack of trading capital and resultant dependence on male fishers for fish supplies and trading capital. According to the TGP, the gendered nature of power is maintained

by abuse of power, authority, and control in the hands of men. Such is the case in FFS transactional relations, which allow some men to have control over fish supplies and decide who to sell to, or who to give the fish to.

Furthermore, the results show that women are unable to negotiate safer sex in FFS sexual relations for fear of being denied fish by their partners. In line with the TGP construct on the division of power, FFS transactional sexual exchange is deemed exploitative and likely to elevate HIV infection rates amongst both male and female fishers due to low condom use. In sum, if the female fishers need fish or capital for their fish trade and the male fishers have power and greater control over the fish, women will have very little basis on which to negotiate. There is therefore the need to find ways of putting in place interventions that seek to address how to successfully negotiate safer sex and improve partner norms favorable to consistent condom use in fishing communities.

The TGP provides an explanation regarding how women can protect themselves from the abusive power of their male counterparts in the fishing communities. From the findings, it is evident that without control over fish supplies, male fishers have no leverage to exert power over the female petty traders for sex. The results showed that large-scale fish traders are not exploited because they have access to capital and control over fish supplies. Since the lack of capital is the main motivating factor for the engagement of female petty fish traders in FFS, they should be empowered by granting them trading capital or encouraged to form cooperative associations, which will offer them financial support. If the female petty fish traders are given the means to buy fish, they will not have to exchange sex for fish and expose themselves to HIV infection.

The revelation of low condom use is a risky sexual behavior likely to expose FFS partners to the risk of acquiring sexually transmitted diseases. Special efforts are required from the agencies engaged in HIV education to intensify education on safe sex practices. Emphasis should also be on attitudinal change since education alone may not be enough to address risky sexual behaviors. Ongoing and future programs need to explore ways of supplying free condoms and urging the fishers to consistently use condoms in their sexual exchanges.

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