



COHESIVENESS OF FISH FARMERS GROUPS IN SOUTHERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out in Southern Nigeria to assess the cohesiveness of fish farmers; groups. Fish farmers complained about their experiences with input supplies, marketing, etc. this gave reason to investigate the cohesiveness of the Fish Farmers; Association in Southern Nigeria. Fifty members were randomly picked from each of the Fish Farmers' Association in Lagos, Delta and Imo States which were also randomly chosen earlier on Copies of Questionnaire were administered to collect data. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Spearman's rank correlation was used to test the hypothesis. There was high cohesiveness in all the Association and satisfaction of members had an almost perfect correlation with cohesiveness of the groups some members had problems with leadership, meeting venues, time and information. It was recommended that meeting venues be located for every members' convenience, meeting notices should be sent out early and farmers who have not subscribe to these groups be sensitized and persuaded to do so by extension agents.

Keywords: fish, farmers, cohesiveness, associations, satisfaction, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

A group is a collection of individuals among whom a set of interdependent relationships exist (Windapo and Afolajam, 2006). This means that the individuals influence each other. A group can be said to be a collection of people interacting with each other towards achieving a common set goal.

Cohesiveness is regarded as the degree to which members of the group desire to remain in the group. That is, how closely the members interact or the resultant of all forces acting on the member to remain in the group.

Cohesiveness is central to groups. It is considered vital in a group decision-making, goal attainment identity, and member satisfaction.

Cohesion is often viewed from an affective perspective, as inter personal attraction among member or to the group. However, cohesion can also be considered as "attraction to collectively" as opposed to an attraction to the individuals who make up that grouping. Thus, cohesion moves beyond simple interpersonal liking.

Group cohesiveness refers to the extent to which members of a group want to continue as members of the group (Ogionwo and Eke, 1999). Groups in which member are committed to the group and are strongly attracted to the group are said to be high in cohesiveness, while groups in which there is little attraction on the part of the members are said to be low in cohesiveness.

In order to close the gap between protein supply and demand in Nigeria, the federal Government considered some options that were meant to encourage development of sustainable fish farming (Ofuoku, *et al.* 2006).

This was welcomed among farmers who either diversified or changed into fish farming.

According to Gupta (1990), the economic status of the rural dwellers, especially women in Bangladesh, improved through small-scale fish farming. The fish

farmers complain that what they currently experience is quite contrary to the picture painted before them. Basorun and Olakulehin (2002) averred that fish farmers in different areas realised the disadvantages of their situation: Limited access to extension services, reliance on middlemen for marketing (who also determine the price of their product), inputs available only at inflated prices, and no chance to share experience or idea with others. This calls for the need to carry out an investigation into the cohesiveness of the various fish farmers groups in which the fish farmers maintain membership

The major objective of this study was to assess the cohesiveness of fish farmers groups in Southern Nigeria. Specific objectives were as follows:

- Identify the reasons for joining membership of the groups;
- Ascertain the degree of cohesion in such groups; and
- Determine the extent of satisfaction of members.

Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between members' satisfaction and group cohesiveness in the fish farmers' groups.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Southern Nigeria. This part of Nigeria is characterised with numerous rivers and mainly lies under tropical forest vegetation. It experiences rainfall in most part of the year. Southern Nigeria comprises of the Western, Eastern and the Niger Delta Zone. Each of the Zones is made up of six states, except the Eastern Zone that is made up of five states.

A multi-stage random sampling technique was used to select the study sample. One (1) state was selected from each zone and fifty (50) members from the Fish Farmers Association of each selected state. This gave a sample of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents (Table-1).



Structured questionnaire which was subjected to both reliability and validity tests used to collect information from the respondents. The questionnaire was administrated by the Authors.

The data collected were analyzed by the use frequency counts and percentage. The hypothesis was tested with Pearson's product moment correlation.

The degree of cohesion was measured using B-point linker's and highly cohesive = 3, moderately

cohesive = 2. Lowly cohesive = 1 and the respondent persuaded to tick their opinions. The mean for each level of cohesive calculated. The level of satisfaction of farmers was treated in a similar way. Thus, highly satisfied = 3, moderately satisfied = 2, and lowly satisfied = 1. The responds were confirmed through their opinions about the Association with respect to the factors of cohesion.

Table-1. Selection of Respondent from Fish Farmers Association.

Zone	State	Name of Association	No. on role	No. selected
Niger Delta	Delta	Delta state fish farmers association	210	50
South West	Lagos	Lagos state fish farmers association	245	50
South East	Imo	Imo state fish farmers union	172	50

Source: Respective state Agricultural Development Programme (ADG) Headquarters, 2007.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Reasons for group membership subscription

The data collected from 150 respondents shows that the reasons given by respondents for subscribing to their respective Fish Farmers' Associations included access to extension services (73.33%); direct marketing of produce (96.67%); produce (fish) price determination (100%); access to input at cheap price (57.33%) and access to credit (80%) (Table-2).

Table-2. Reasons for membership subscription and exchange of experience.

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Access to extension services	110	73.33
Direct marketing of produce	144	96.67
Produce price determination	150	100.00
Access to input at cheap price	86	57.33
Access to credit	120	80.00
Exchange to experience/ideal	133	88.67

Source: Field survey, 2007.

Multiple responses

Individual fish farmers had needs which they wanted to satisfy through group membership. The greater the extent to which the various states fish farmers, associations as groups satisfy the needs of it members, the

more cohesive the group will be (Ogionwo and Eke, 1999).

The above data implies that the members of the fish farmers; Associations had the aforementioned need to seriously satisfy. This is in consonance with Bash rum and Olakulehion (2007) who averred that some fish farmers realised their disadvantages of limited access to extension services, reliance on middleman for marketing (who also dictate the price of their produce), high cost of input and lack of opportunity to share experience and ideal. The dissemination of improved practices for fish farming was problematic for the extension agents as the farmers are scattered all over their states. This is expected to affect a lot of their (fish farmers) operations. These served as reason for the formation the group and therefore, the group of objective: Cohesion and factors of Cohesion

Cohesion can only be measured through the perceptions of members of the group on the factors of cohesion. Members of the Delta State Fish Farmers' Association were of the opinion that there was moderate level of cohesion among the members of the group (Table-3) since they had a mean score of 1.74 to Lagos and Imo States Fish. Farmers' Association there were high levels of cohesion in their groups as they had mean scores of 2.18 and 2.12, respectively which is greater than the cut-off score of 2.0. With the overall mean score of 2.01, it means that the various fish farmers' groups in the study area were highly cohesive.

This implies that the membership size of the Delta State Fish Farmers Association (DTFFA) is getting large and cliques have been formed. Generally, it connotes that they enjoy the group membership, participate in group activities, accept goals, put their head together and low absenteeism.

**Table-3.** Members' perception of group cohesiveness.

Name of Fish Farmers Association (FFA)	Highly cohesiveness 3	Moderately cohesiveness 2	Low cohesiveness 1	Score	Mean score
Delta State FFA	10 (3) = 30	17 (2) = 34	23 (1) = 23	87	1.74
Lagos State FFA	19 (3) = 57	21 (2) = 42	10 (1) = 10	109	2.18
Imo State FFA	15 (3) = 48	24 (2) = 48	10 (1) = 10	106	2.12

Source: Field survey, 2007.

Cut-off score = 2.0 (>2.0 = highly cohesive; <2.0 = moderately to lowly cohesive; 1.50 to 1.99 = moderately cohesive; <1.50 = lowly cohesive)

Level of satisfaction of members

Members of Delta State Fish Farmers Association were moderately satisfied (Table-4) as they polled a mean score of 1.82. Those of Lagos and Imo States Fish Farmers Association were highly satisfied as they had mean score of 2.26 and 2.18, respectively which is higher than the cut-off score of 2.0. The overall mean score of 2.09 is an indication that the members of the various groups of fish farmers were highly satisfied.

The implication is that the needs of individual members were being met by the Associations. The higher the degree to which a group fulfills the needs of its members, the more cohesive the group will be (Ogionwo and Eke, 1999). This result therefore corroborates the result in Table-3. This indicates the clear benefits of the groups (Fish Farmers Associations) bring to the fish farmers and the stakeholders in the local fish farming industry.

Table-4. Members' perception on their level of satisfaction.

Name of Fish Farmers Association (FFA)	Highly satisfied 3	Moderate satisfied 2	Lowly satisfied 1	Score	Mean score
Delta State FFA	12 (3) = 36	17 (2) = 34	21 (1) = 21	91	1.82
Lagos State FFA	21 (3) = 63	21 (2) = 42	8 (1) = 8	113	2.26
Imo State FFA	17 (3) = 51	25 (2) = 50	8 (1) = 8	109	2.18

Source: Field survey, 2007.

Cut-off score = 2.0 (> 2.0 = high satisfaction; < 2.0 = moderate satisfaction to low satisfaction; <1.50 = low satisfaction)

Other factors of cohesion

Majority of the respondents (90.67%) still want to maintain membership of their associations (Table-5). On commitment, 93.3% were of the opinion that they were committed to their associations, 98.6% were attracted to the groups, 90.6% were regularly involved in groups' activities, 98.6% opined that the group goals were being met, 90.67% stated that their individual wants were being met by the group.

The implication is that there is high level cohesion in the various groups (Fish Farmers Association). Groups in which members are committed to the group and are strongly attracted to the group are said to be high in cohesiveness (Feldman, 1985). Ogionwo and Eke (1999) averred that other factors which influence group cohesiveness include satisfaction of needs, group goals, group activities and member attractiveness.

Cohesiveness is higher in group in which the goals of the group are congruent with the goals of member

(Lott and Lott, 2001). From the above results, the group's goals were congruent with the goals of the members. This is the major reason behind the cohesiveness in the groups.

The leadership of the associations recognized the importance of meeting regularly to sustain member's interest, while at the same time they realized that if the financial contributions required from members were too high members commitment may lessen.

In order to ensure that members get adequate information as well as update their knowledge on regular basis, the associations held their respective general meetings fortnightly. This meeting also provide a very good opportunity for government agencies, NGOs, impute dealers, credits institutions and order stakeholders, to meet a sizeable number of fish farmers (Basorum and Olakulhim, 2007).

**Table-5.** Members' opinion about factors of cohesion as affecting their membership.

Factors	Delta State FFA		Lagos State FFA		Imo State FFA		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Still wants to be member	42	84	48	96	46	92	136	90.67
Committed to the Assoc.	40	80	50	100	50	100	140	93.3
Attracted to the group	49	98	50	100	49	98	148	98.6
Involved in group act.	41	82	47	94	48	96	136	90.6
Group goals met	48	96	50	100	50	100	148	98.6
Wants to withdraw	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not attracted to group	1	2	0	0	1	2	2	1.33
Group goals are not met	2	4	0	0	0	0	2	1.33
Not involved in group act.	9	18	3	6	2	4	14	9.33
Individual wants are met	38	76	50	100	48	96	136	90.67

Source: Field survey, 2007.

Group relate constraints of the members of the Fish Farmers' Associations

Some of the respondents (Table-6) indicated the group related constraints as location of meeting venue (36.67%), time of meeting (44.67%); incompetence of leadership (13.33%) and insufficient information about meeting (34%).

The implication is that to these few who pointed out those mentioned factors as constraints; these factors are related to their location. If the venue of meeting is too far for some people, inaccessible, difficult to locate or not familiar or friendly environment, meeting attendance of such people will be poor (Ekong, 2003). To these few people, the venue of the meeting is too far, inaccessible, not familiar or friendly for them to have the motivation of attending meetings regularly.

The time of meeting is a problem attributed to clash with some other obligations such as family meetings, cultural activities and local market days. This again is in consonance with Ekong (2003) as he opined that meetings which are scheduled in such a way that they clash with social, or cultural activities are bound to have poor attendance.

The leadership incompetence is attributed to the way the leaders steer the affairs of the associations. This is with respect to organization of the group activities and their responses to issues bordering on members' problems and decisions. According to Deecor and Nnodim (2005), one of the most important characteristics of leadership is empathy. This is the ability to share the feelings of others in your community or group. If this is lacking, the leadership is termed as incompetent.

Insufficient information about meeting is as a result of the fact that these few people either did not get

the information early enough or were not informed about the meeting. The earlier reason always causes clashes as other activities would have been scheduled for the time before the arrival of notice of meeting. Ekong (2003) stated that people may find it difficult to attend meetings because they were not informed about the meeting or the notice for such meeting was too short and so conflicted with other programs.

Table-6. Group related constraints of members (n = 150)

Constraints	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Location of meeting venue	55	36.67
Time of meeting	67	44.67
Leadership incompetence	20	13.33
Insufficient information about meeting	8	5.33

Source: Field survey, 2007.

Test of hypothesis

The test of hypothesis showed an almost perfect correlation between cohesiveness and satisfaction members of the various groups with correlation (Rho) value of 0.925. This therefore means high cohesiveness in the groups (various fish farmers' associations in southern Nigeria). The greater the extent to which a group fulfils the needs of its members, the more cohesive group will be (Ogionwoanw Eke, 1999).

**Table-7.** Relationship between cohesiveness and satisfaction of group members.

X (Cohesion)	XY (Satisfaction)	Ranking		X - Y	
		X	Y	(D)	D ²
10	12	7	6	1	1
19	21	4	2	2	4
16	17	6	4	2	4
17	17	5	4	1	1
21	21	3	2	-1	-1
24	25	1	1	0	0
23	21	2	2	0	0
10	8	7	7	0	0
10	8	7	7	0	0
Total					9

$$\rho(P) = \frac{1-6\sum D^2}{N(N^2-1)}$$

$$\sum D^2 = 9$$

$$N = 9$$

$$\rho(P) = \frac{1-6 \times 9}{9(9^2-1)} = \frac{1-54}{9(80)} = \frac{1-54}{720} = 1 - 0.075 = 0.925$$

$$\rho(P) = 0.925$$

CONCLUSIONS

Individuals subscribed to membership of the various fish farmers' associations studied, for easier access to extension services, produce direct marketing to consumers, produce price fixation, access to input at cheap price, access to credit and exchange of experiences and ideas. The level of satisfaction of the fish farmers' associations was high. Members' opinions about factors of cohesion in relation to their various respective associations were high.

The constraints of few of the members in relation to their associations included location of meeting venue, time of meeting leadership incompetence and insufficient information about meetings. The test of hypothesis showed an almost perfect correlation between cohesion of the fish farmers' associations studied and satisfaction of the individual members. There is therefore, high cohesiveness in the various fish farmer' associations used for the study.

The fish farmers who complained not subscribed to any fish farmers' groups since those used for the study expressed satisfaction on the associations and are enough representation of the population of the study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings above, it is recommended that:

1. The extension agents incharge of the various fish farmers' associations need to sensitize, persuasively, the leaders and members of the groups on the need to locate their meeting venues in places that are easily accessible to every member.

2. Members' opinion on the time should be sought always before meetings are fixed. This will give rise to compromise on meeting time.
3. Extension agents are required to organize leadership training for the various group leaderships and members of the groups at intervals.
4. Notice of meetings needs to be disseminated to members early enough and through various media convenient for the groups.
5. Extension agents have much to do with respect to persuading and sensitizing those fish farmers who do not belong to any fish farmers group to do so as a mater of urgency.

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