

GENDER DIVISION OF LABOUR IN CULTURE-BASED FISHERIES (CBF): INSIGHTS FROM FIVE DISTRICTS IN SRI LANKA

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Content

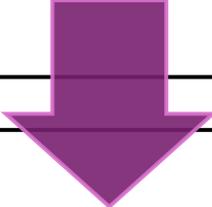
1. Introduction
2. Problem statement
3. Methodology
4. Results and Discussion
5. Conclusion
6. Recommendations
7. References

Introduction

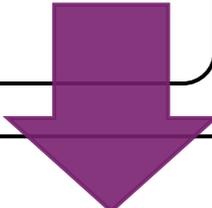
- The full and equal participation, engagement and benefit of women and men in other words, gender equality in the fisheries and aquaculture sector is fundamental for achieving sustainability and inclusiveness.
- Culture-based fisheries (CBF) as a sources of rural livelihood and it has the potential to increase incomes and food security in developing countries, such as Sri Lanka (de Silva,2016).
- Women make an important contribution to the fisheries and aquaculture sector, especially in the pre- and post-harvest components of the value chains globally (FAO, 2020).

Problem Statement

Around 25.5 % of the total female labor force was employed in the agricultural sector including fisheries (Sri Lanka labour force survey 2023)

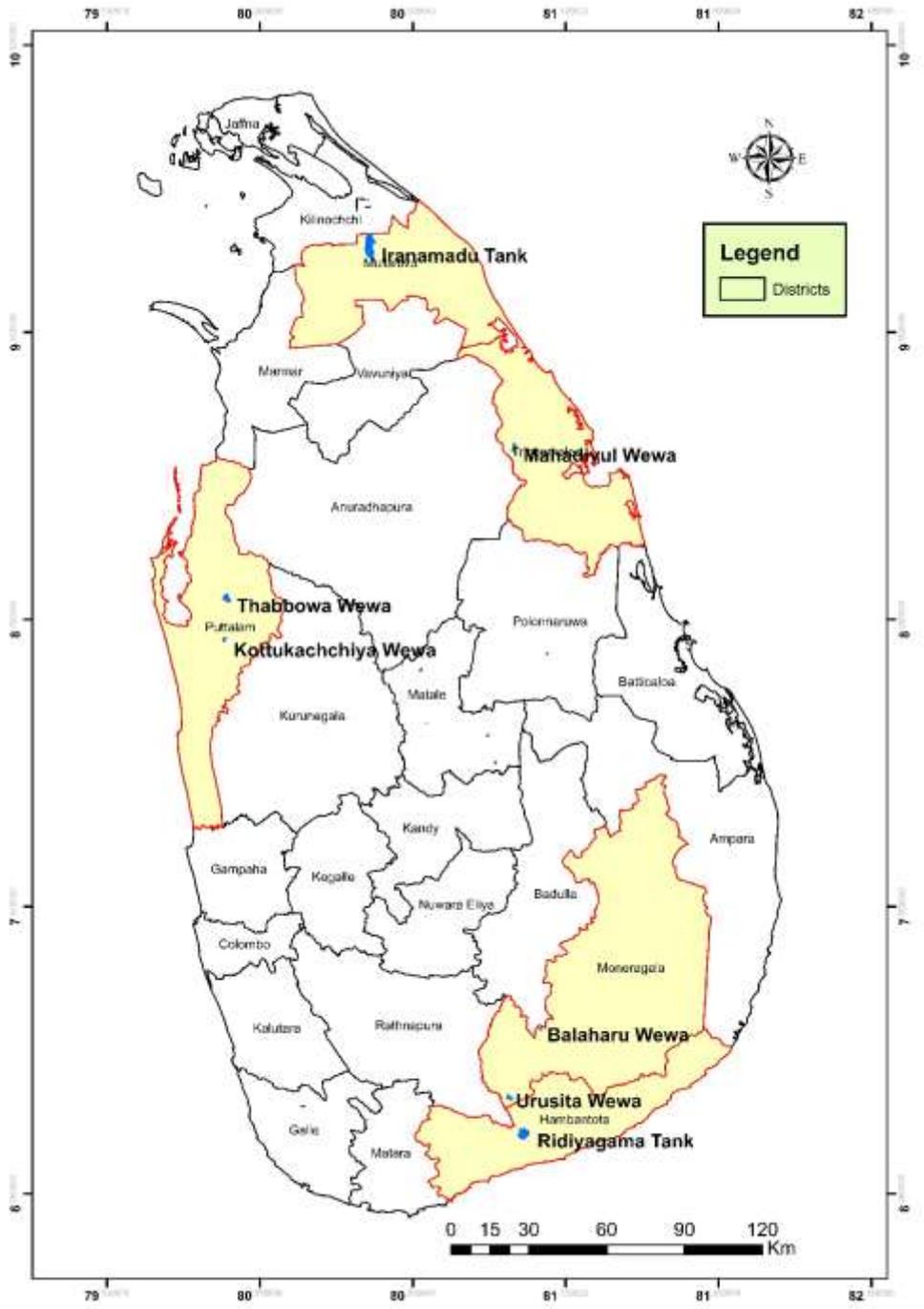


Gender disparities in fisheries can result in lower labour productivity within the sector and inefficient allocation of labour at household and national levels.



To effectively work towards gaining equality benefits in the fisheries sector, the roles of women and their contributions to the sector need to be systematically analyzed

Study Area



Sampling plan

Type of Reservoir	District	Name of the Reservoir	Women Involvement Direct/ Indirect	Total number of Fishing households	Sample	
					Fishing	
					Female	male
Major (02)	Mulathiv	Iranamadu	Direct	197	20	21
	Hambantota	Ridiyagama	Indirect	156	16	17
Medium (03)	Monaragala	Urusitawewa	Indirect	43	10	10
	Puttalam	Thabbowa	Direct	135	31	31
	Trinco	Mahadivulwewa	Direct	130	30	30
Minor (02)	Monaragala	Balaharuwa Wewa	Indirect	33	5	6
	Puttalam	Kottukachchiya	Direct	30	05	05
Total				724	237	

Sample 32.7% of total fishing households. The distribution of sample based on gender Men 50.4%
Women 49.6%

Gender roles define the expectations for men and women in economic, social, and domestic spheres. These roles often dictate:

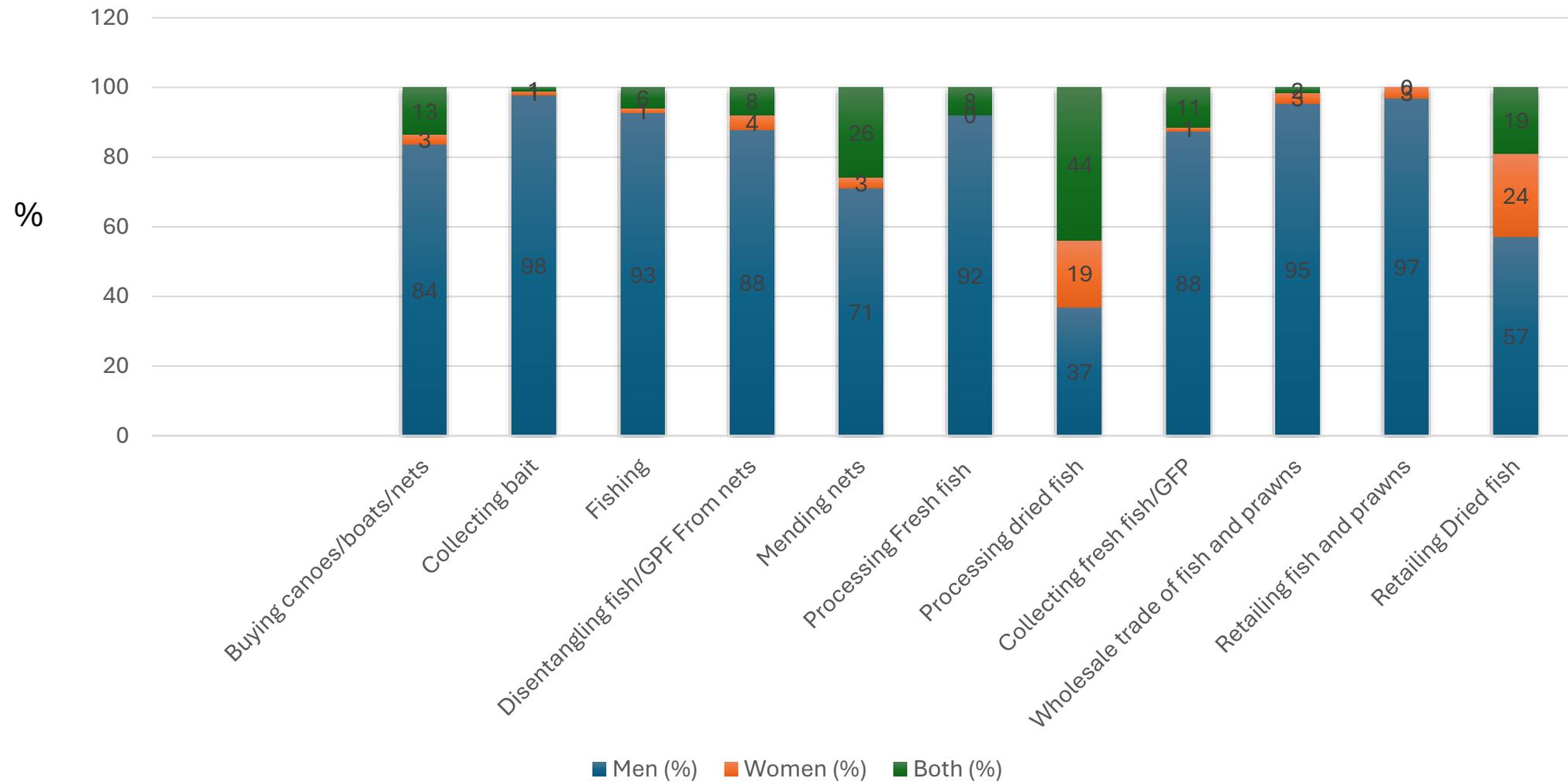
Division of labour: Men often work in formal jobs, commercial farming and fishing, or other income-generating endeavours, while women handle childcare, housework and subsistence farming or fishing-related activities.

Access to resources: Generally, men tend to have greater control over land, credit, and technology, while women may have limited decision-making power in household and community matters.

Income generation: In most societies, men dominate formal employment and entrepreneurial activities, while women engage in informal or unpaid labour.

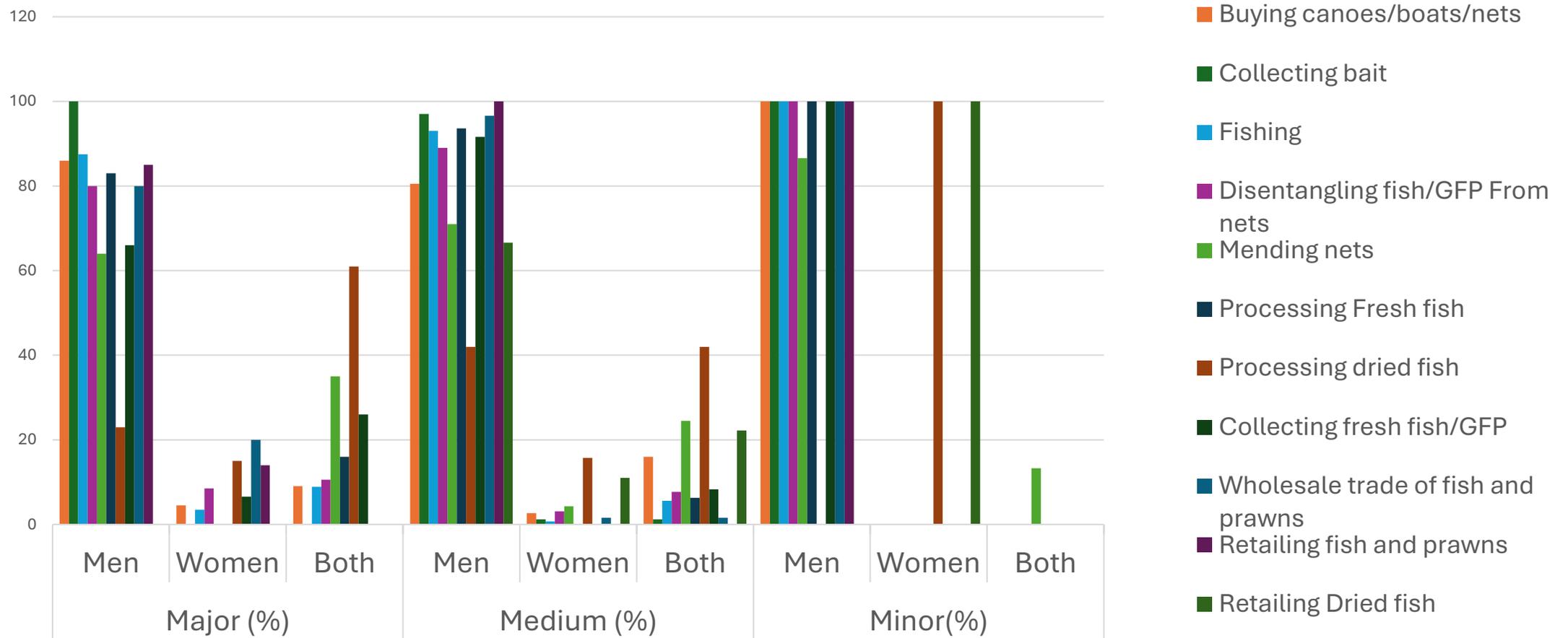
Decision-making power: Men often engage in household and community decision-making, while women's voices may be marginalized.

Gender division of labour in culture based fisheries



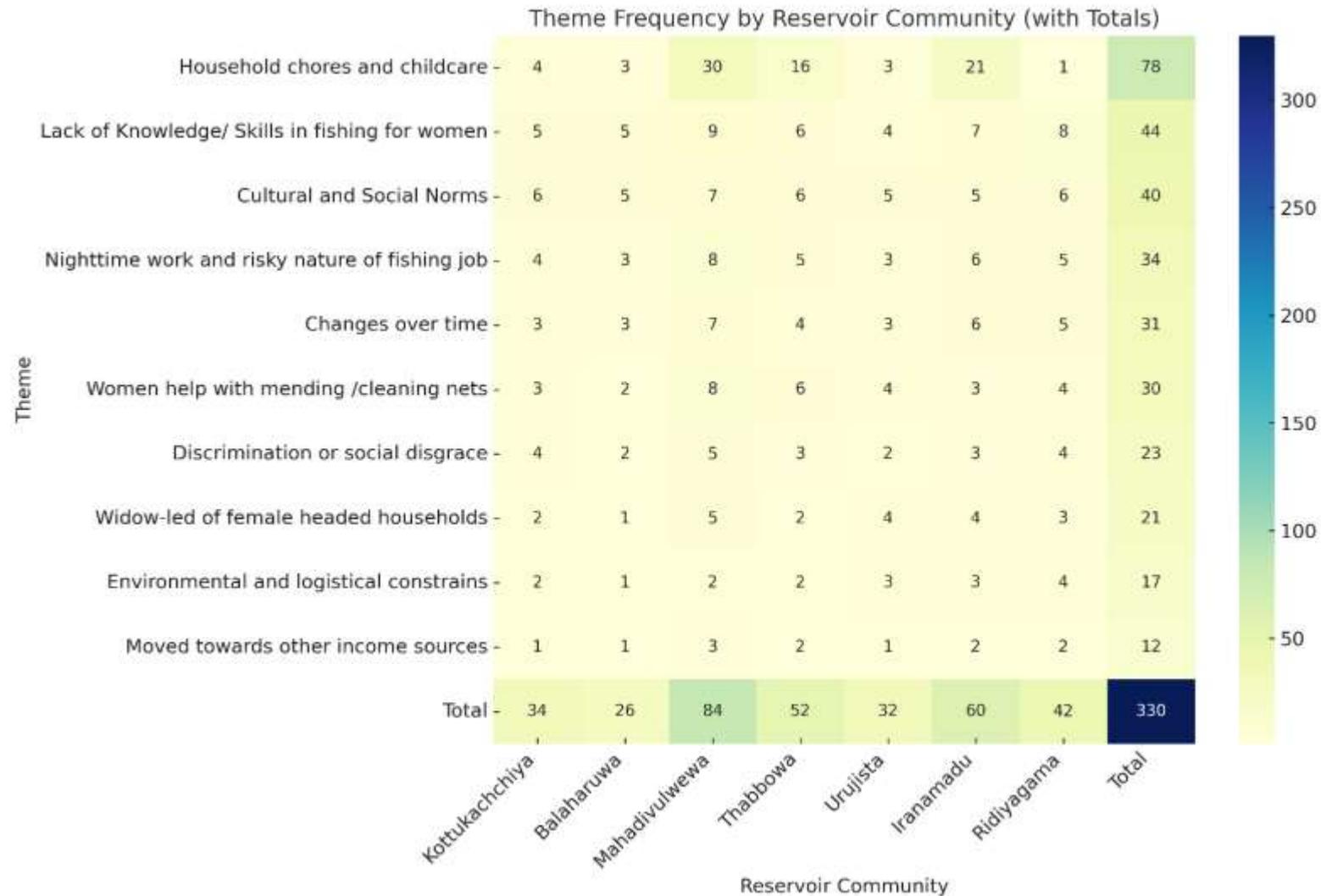
Source: Field survey data, 2023/2024

Gender division of labour in CBF activities in fishing households; Subject to the type of reservoir



Source: Field survey data 2023/24

Constraints/challenges to women's participation in fisheries across reservoirs: Frequency of responses by theme



Source: Field survey data 2023/24



Dry fish processing by women

Discussion

- The persistence of traditional gender roles in Sri Lanka's CBF communities aligns with global evidence that identifies fisheries as a male-dominated livelihood, with women relegated to post-harvest or unpaid domestic tasks (Bennett, 2004; Frangoudes et al., 2019)
- International literature increasingly explores shifts in gender roles such as women taking up new responsibilities in response to socio-economic change (Kusakabe, 2003; Frangoudes et al., 2019).this study found such transformation to be limited in Sri Lanka's CBF settings.
- Cultural and religious norms, combined with safety concerns and a lack of institutional support, continue to restrict women's entry into more profitable nodes of the value chain. World Economic Forum. 2006, 2024. *The Global Gender Gap Reports 2006, 2024*. Geneva: WEF

Conclusion

- In all spheres of Sri Lankan society, a traditional division between men and women is clearly evident.
- However, this is pronounced in the fisheries industry, especially culture-based fisheries, perceived as a male-only job, which is not appropriate for women to be involved.
- In this context, social norms are a serious constraint to which activities are considered appropriate or not for women. Thus, the research findings confirm the socio-cultural norm that women should stay at home, especially to take care of children.
- Moreover, in today's complex and competitive society, the need to focus on education and teach children to excel has gained prominence

Recommendations

- Increased participation of women in CBF needs to be accompanied by equitable benefits sharing
- Enhance women engagement in governance structure by increasing membership of women and their contribution to decision making in fisheries societies
- Address cultural and structural barriers
- Implement relevant gender awareness and training programmes related to CBF for both men and women.
- Strengthen policy and institutional Support

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Thank you

