


Chapter 9

Outlook on Aquaculture Community–Based Projects for Socio–Economic Development: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Few studies have explored the perceptions-behavior relationship and outlook towards the sustainability of community-based agricultural projects, especially the aquaculture. Understandings the outlook and perceptions for different stakeholder groups in community-based projects can clear misconceptions, identify factors that can unleash the full potential of the community-based projects, so as to achieve sustainable societal development. In Namibia, four out of six community-based fish farm projects have failed. Hence, there is a need to explore stakeholder perceptions for improvement. Adopting a qualitative research method with an interview guide to collect primary data, the aim of the study is to understand the status quo, re-define stakeholders' roles, expectations, and perceptions about consultation, participation, empowerment, ownership, etc. of community-based aquaculture projects improvement and sustainability in Namibia.

INTRODUCTION

Perceptions and expectations are integral aspects which affect people's decision making to support community-based development programs (Levitt & Dubner, 2005; Evan & Garling, 1991). Few studies have explored the perceptions-behaviour relationship in the aquaculture policy field, as well as respondents' perceptions of the relationship between task and social cohesion and performance in the cooperative movement (Chu et al., 2010; Nash, 2004; Mazur & Curtis, 2008; Mohd, 2012). However, stakeholders' perceptions towards the sustainability of community-based agricultural projects have been

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largely neglected (Chu et al., 2010; Nash, 2004; Mazur & Curtis, 2008). An understanding of perceptions for different stakeholder groups in community agricultural setups can help to clear misconceptions, as well as to identify important factors that can assist to unleash the full potential of the community agricultural projects, particularly in the aquaculture sector, while still achieving social, economic and environmental sustainability (Bacher et al., 2014). Perceptions theory helps to understand and predict the responses of different stakeholders to new or existing programmes or initiatives (Bockstael et al., 2016). Perception includes people's interests, social values, experiences, interpretation, and evaluation (Jefferson et al., 2015; Bennett, 2016). Thus, considerations of perceptions towards community-based aquaculture project sustainability are essential. The concept of the community-based development approach became popular in Namibia soon after independence in 1990. The primary focus was to educate and involve rural communities in the planning, decision-making processes, and implementation of rural development programs and for them to share benefits but community-based development initiatives have been hindered by top-down approaches in many instances (Sebele, 2010).

The aim of this study is to understand the status quo, re-define stakeholders' roles, expectations, and perceptions about consultation, participation, empowerment, ownership etc., community-based aquaculture projects improvement and sustainability in Namibia. Hence, adopting qualitative, interpretive and descriptive approach with purposive sampling data collection is with interview guide from key stakeholders' namely staff and owner/members. Respondents include 16 staff members of Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) directly involved in the project and 18 members of Mpungu Community Based Fish Farm project (MCBFFP) who were workers, supposedly owners and the direct beneficiaries of the project. A sample of fourteen (14) respondents was interviewed. Of these, five (5) are MFMR staff members, (two biologists, two technicians and one technical assistant). These were purposely selected based on their experiences on this farm. Nine (9) MCBFFP members were also interviewed, and of these, three (3) are members of the MCBFFP Management Committee, while six (6) are ordinary members. The primary data was, however, collected through semi-structured interview, at the Mpungu Community Based Fish Farm, in Nkurenkuru, Siurungu and Kakuro villages in Kavango West Region and secondary data from published sources. The researcher took notes, recorded answers on an interview guide and recorded observations. After data cleaning to ensure that all errors were eliminated, content analysis was used to simplify data and make it easier to understand and interpret. Content analysis involved counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context. Responses were then themed to enable an analysis of these descriptions and allow for inference.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study is grounded in stakeholder perceptions (Case, 2017; Davis, 2017), community-based aquaculture enterprise (CBAE) and rural community development theories (Teerakul, Villano, Wood & Mounter, 2012; Islam & Morgan, 2012). Hörisch et al. (2014) stressed increased efforts in education for sustainability are necessary, as knowledge to be a key to more sustainable business practices including community-based enterprises. It has been argued that studying community-based organizations facilitate the connection between practice and theory and fosters critical thinking to addresses community-identified needs through the integral involvement of community members and development partners (Meyer, Armstrong-Coben & Batista, 2005). In many instances limited community participation contributed to

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