

## **Employment Opportunities and Challenges in Fisheries Sector: South Sharqiyah Region, Sultanate of Oman**

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**Abstract:** The aim of the research is to explore the available job opportunities in the fisheries sector and also to understand the challenges faced by the employees in the sector. Thus, to provide suitable suggestions on the challenges faced by the employees.

A structured questionnaire was prepared to study the impact of fishery sector on employment generation, Awareness about the fisheries sector and its contribution towards the economic development of Oman and challenges faced by the fisheries sector in Oman. For the study purpose 50 questionnaires were distributed and collected from employees of fishing companies and industries in South Sharqiyah Region. The respondents were selected using convenience sampling technique method.

In this research, it was found that, fisheries sector is able to generate opportunities in transportation of fish and fish food products, fisheries sector was able to contribute much towards GDP in Oman. Moreover, if people are more aware of the fisheries contribution to the community then it would help them to avoid the hindrances and the problems of the fisheries sector.

**Key Word:** fisheries Sector, Opportunities & Challenges, South Sharqiyah Region, Oman

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### **Introduction**

The main issue that Oman faces today's is unemployment. According to statistical research done by World Bank, the unemployment rate was at 17% in 2017 (Qposts 2017). The government of Oman has supported non-oil sector, which in turn can contribute in employment of job seekers. Fisheries sector play an important role in employment of job seekers. Fisheries sector is one of the most important sector in Sultanate of Oman. It contributes to the provision of food and employment opportunities. The diversity in marine and fisheries resource contributed to the establishment of the fish industry and provided many opportunities for the investment in this field.

Oman is one of the largest producers and consumers of fish in GCC. Fisheries and aquaculture are most ancient job sectors in Oman. Agriculture and fishing was the livelihood of 80% of the population in the country before oil discovery. People do not take up profession in fisheries sector as it is not economically productive. Fishermen are not involved full time as their income is less even after the government subsidy. To improve the sector a collaborative effort involving Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Wealth (MAFW) and the World Bank along with fishery stakeholders was undertaken which has laid the development and implementation of Fisheries and Aquaculture Vision 2040: "To create a profitable world-class sector that is ecologically sustainable and a net contributor to Oman's economy." Along with an implementation plan to achieve these goals were framed. (Setlur & Arbuckle, December 2015).

### **Context of the study**

Unemployment has turned into a noteworthy worry for the strategy producers in Oman. Unemployment rate has expanded to 16 percent in 2017 from 15.80 percent in 2016 (<https://tradingeconomics.com>). With high unemployment rate, the government has chosen fisheries also as a key sector for economic diversification. Concentration on these sectors will reduce the country's dependence on hydrocarbon. The driving factors which encourages the fisheries development are increase in population, preference of protein – rich food, government boost, etc. The major problems faced by the sector are lack of regulation and knowledge sharing as it is an informal sector. The purpose of this study is to identify the opportunities and challenges in the fisheries sector. The results of the study can help the citizens who are looking for opportunities in this sector and also the government to achieve its 2040 goal decided on the fisheries sector.

### **Objectives of the Study**

To find solution to the questions the following research objectives were framed.

1. To explore the available job opportunities in the fisheries sector.

2. To understand the challenges faced by the employees in the sector
3. To understand the relationship between job opportunities, challenges and awareness about the fisheries sector
4. To provide suitable suggestions on the challenges of employees.

### **Research Questions**

The researchers need answers for the following questions to successfully complete the research work.

1. What are the job opportunities available in the fisheries sector? (objective 1)
2. Does the job need any prior experience or qualification? (objective 1)
3. What are the problems faced by the fisheries sector? (objective 2)
4. How can the problems or challenges have rectified? (objective 2)
5. What support does the government provide to the people engaged in fisheries sector? (objective 2)
6. What is a relationship between job opportunities, challenges and awareness about the fisheries sector? (objective 3)

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study has the following limitations:

1. Lack of adequate studies on the chosen topic in Oman has been a limitation in collection of literature review from Oman.
2. Due to time and location constraints the number of respondents selected were only 50.

### **Literature Review**

In Oman, studies on fisheries are very much limited. Studies on employment opportunities and challenges faced by fisheries sector during the past period has been listed below.

Al-shahi (2012) stated the challenges and constraints of fisheries sector at Bakha. The fisherman is the key element in fisheries sector. The government seeks to reduce obstacles and provide all supports for this sector to maintain its continuity. There are many challenges faced fisher sector such as fisheries prefer individual work, inability of fishermen to own boats and large fishing vessels and weakness of infrastructure such as landing place where fishermen gathering and the markets. Governments try to provide the latest technology for the fishermen and provide fishing equipment in order to increase the quality of exported fish to the internal and external markets and provide a high quality product with high economic returns.

Chaudhry (2017) stated the millennium perceptions related to the opportunities available in the fisheries sector and identifies the challenges faced by fishermen. The results of the study supported the fishermen to develop their profession and explained the opportunities provided by the government, such as the provision of modern services and techniques, facility funding, training and labour. The most important challenges faced by fishermen are the high competition in the international markets, lack of marketing skills, lack of adequate services and facilities from banks and financial institutions. The study presented some recommendations to the authority in the fishing sector in Oman.

Al - Kalbaniyeh (2016) stated The fisheries sector is an opportunity for entrepreneurs to carry out a major achievement. There are some challenges that referred to the natural fisheries and the reduction of production to less than half during the summer months, due to the factors of the weather, winds and high waves, especially in Al Wusta governorate and part of Dhofar and South Al sharaqyia. The Sultanate of Oman can provide opportunities to work in fisheries sector because it still needs factories to process fish processing before exportation, targeting aquaculture projects, As well as identifying opportunities for taxonomic rings for value-added fish. The minister pointed out that the development will work to provide new job opportunities for developing the fisheries sector, especially in investment fields, to reach about 29 thousand new job opportunities.

Al habsi (2012) stated that the original place for fishermen is Al Batinah, representing 26% of the total number of fishermen in Oman. The region is experiencing a decline in fisheries due to some social and economic disturbances and increased fishing pressure. The study found that most fishermen are elderly and low-income people with long experience but most are illiterate. Some government laws and regulations have led to conflicts between fishermen. The results of this study showed the need to review fishery policies and the necessity of involving fishermen in decision-making. Among the suggestions that can contribute to improving, the efficiency of policies is the necessity of government involvement with fishermen.

AL Zadjali (2015) mentioned in the article the Challenges in fisheries sector in Arab countries. He said that challenges facing fisheries sector in Arab nations are similar. The most vital challenges are traditional fishing strategy and technical gap. Almost Arab fishing fleets focus on coastline because they are not equipped to fish in deep waters. In additional, there is lack in harbour infrastructures for fishing sector such as

maintenance workshops, cooling store, etc. The writer pointed out some of challenges may be faced by angler's societies are weak financial, technical and organizational capabilities. Moreover, weakness in research and services in all fields related developing and misusing the fish resources (fishing, aquaculture, transportation, managing, processing, quality control, marketing, etc.).

**Research Instrument**

The study has used primary data collected from the respondents using questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of two sections. Section 1 covers the demographic factors like age, gender, level of education and experience. Section 2 covers questions related to the impact of fisheries sector on employment generation, its contribution towards the economic development and challenges faced by the sector.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation:**

The information collected from 50 respondents through structured questionnaire were processed and analyzed in tune with the study objectives. The following tools were used to support the objectives of the study:

- Mean
- Standard deviation
- Correlation

**Inferential Statistics**

Table 1: Impact of fishery sector on Employment Generation

Particulars	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Supportive in creating Employment	1.82	.748	Agree
Manufacture of fishing vessels	2.40	1.178	Agree
Fishes packing and Selling	2.08	.695	Agree
Fish food products selling	2.02	.654	Agree
Repair & maintenance of fishing inputs	2.56	1.110	Agree
Transportation of fish and fish food products	1.76	.687	Strongly Agree

1.00 – 1.79 SA  
1.80 – 2.59 A  
2.60 – 3.39 Undecided  
3.40 – 4.19 D  
4.20 – 5.00 SD

Source: SPSS Results

The respondents tend to agree to most of the statements that the fisheries sector is supportive in creating employment. There is a strong agreement on the statement that fisheries sector is able to generate opportunities in transportation of fish and fish food products. In addition, the respondents agreed that the fisheries sector has impact in generation of employment in manufacturing of fishing vessels, fishes packing and Selling, fish food products selling and repair & maintenance of fishing inputs.

Table 2: Awareness about the fisheries sector and its contribution towards the economic development of Oman

Particulars	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Awareness about the public about fisheries sector	1.84	.370	Agree
Sufficient allocation of resources by the ministry to the fisheries sector	2.36	.942	Undecided
Promoting the food security through fisheries sector	2.12	1.206	Agree
Fisheries sector helps to Maximize the contribution towards GDP	1.52	.646	Strongly Agree
Fishing and added value industries	2.16	.817	Agree
fish exports	2.04	.781	Agree
Awareness on Commercial aquaculture	2.32	1.236	Agree

Source: SPSS Results

The respondents tend to agree to most of the statements in awareness. There is a strong agreement on the statement that fisheries sector was able to contribute much towards GDP. Also the respondents agreed that they are aware of the commercial aquaculture, fish exports, fishing added value industries, food security promotion dealings in the fishery sector. Some who answered the questionnaire seemed to doubt that there exist sufficient allocation of resources by the ministry to the fisheries sector, as they are undecided about this statement.

Table 3: Challenges faced by the fisheries sector in Oman

Particulars	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Lack of specialized knowledge for manpower	1.70	.763	Strongly Agree
Lack of marketing network	2.30	1.432	agree
Less information about the aquatic and fisheries resources	2.42	1.372	Agree
Not having enough support on the upcoming projects	2.42	1.162	Agree
Increase in water pollution affect the environment	2.40	1.125	Agree

The respondents tend to agree to most of the statements in challenges. There is a strong agreement on the statement that there is lack of specialized knowledge for manpower requirements in fisheries sector. In addition, the respondents agreed that the challenges such as, lack of marketing network, less information about the aquatic and fisheries resources, not having enough support on the upcoming projects and increase in water pollution that affects the environment and fisheries sector.

Table 4: Results of Correlation

Particulars		opportunities level	awareness level	challenges level
OPPORTUNITIES LEVEL	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	50		
AWARNESS LEVEL	Pearson Correlation	.540**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	50	50	
CHALLENGES LEVEL	Pearson Correlation	-.633**	-.406**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.003	
	N	50	50	50

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There is significant relationship between opportunities and awareness, with  $r = 0.540$ , which connoted a moderate relationship. This implies that the more people are aware of fisheries sector, the value added industries, the promotion of fisheries sector, the food security, and the allocation of resources, the greater it would be for people to grab the opportunities open to the fisheries sector.

The negative correlation between opportunities and challenges,  $r = -0.633$ , tends to indicate that challenges may have hindered the growing opportunities for fisheries sector. This suggests that challenges mentioned in the questionnaire are faced by the government or the authorities in the fisheries sector. Improvement in these areas will provide opportunities for its success and employment of more people.

The link between awareness and challenges is provided by  $r = -0.406$ , which indicates that if people are more aware of the fisheries contribution to the country's economic development and the community then it would help them to avoid the hindrances and the problems of the fisheries sector.

### Conclusion

This research has been conducted to study the Employment Opportunities and Challenges in Fisheries Sector: South Sharqiyah Region, Sultanate of Oman. It was found that the fisheries sector is able to generate opportunities in transporting fish and fish food products which in turn generates employment opportunities. The fisheries sector earns higher revenue hence enhancement of employment opportunities and other resources by the ministry will pave way for economic development. New business opportunities can develop commercial aquaculture, fish exports, fishing added value industries, food security promotion dealings in the fishery sector. It is necessary that the adequate training and information on aquatic resources and its marketing would increase employment opportunities in this sector.

### Recommendations

The following are the recommendations based on the results of the study:

- Proper logistic facilities should be provided between the production sites and basic marketing outlets.
- All the procedures issued by the ministry to regulate the fisheries sector must be communicated to employees in fisheries sector.
- Less salary is an important problem faced by employees in fisheries sector.
- Financial resources and training should be provided to the employees
- To reduce competition of illegal workers in fisheries sector, new ministry regulations to be issued.

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