

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-58660

Title: KNOWLEDGE TO COPE WITH AND ABILITY OF FISHER FOLK TO ENDURE FISH SCARCITY AT SASSANDRA (SOUTHWESTERN COTE D'IVOIRE).

Recommendation:

Accept as it is

Accept after minor revision.....

Accept after major revision

Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		Good		
Techn. Quality		Good		
Clarity		Good		
Significance		Good		

Reviewer's ID: **JPR- 115**

Detailed Reviewer's Report

Overall assessment:

The manuscript addresses a relevant socioeconomic and fisheries-management issue, namely how artisanal fishing communities in Sassandra, Côte d'Ivoire, respond to fish scarcity. The topic is important, particularly in the context of declining fish stocks, fishing pressure, livelihood dependence, and adaptive strategies. However, several aspects of the manuscript require substantial clarification and improvement before it can be considered for publication.

Major Comments

1. Abstract

The abstract provides useful information but is somewhat descriptive and lengthy.

The sampling methodology, major findings, and principal conclusion should be presented more systematically.

The statement that the study was conducted "shortly before the fishing-closure measures... took effect for the third time in July 2025" requires a clear explanation of the chronology and the exact dates of data collection.

The sample size of 155 respondents should be clearly linked to the sampling design.

2. Introduction

The Introduction contains useful background information, but it is overly long and includes several unrelated details.

The research gap should be stated more explicitly. The authors should explain what is unknown about coping mechanisms among fisher folk in Sassandra and how the present study addresses this gap.

Some statements regarding fish consumption and fisheries sustainability require updated and verifiable references.

The objectives and/or research questions should be presented clearly at the end of the Introduction.

3. Study Area

A separate **Study Area** subsection is necessary.

The geographical location of Sassandra should be described, including coordinates, coastal characteristics, climate, major fisheries, fishing communities, and major fishery resources.

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A location map showing Sassandra and the study area should be provided.

4. Sampling methodology

The manuscript states that respondents were selected “randomly,” but the actual randomization procedure is not explained.

The authors should clarify how the 155 participants were identified and selected.

The sampling frame, inclusion criteria, number of fishing communities visited, and dates/duration of fieldwork should be provided.

The distribution of respondents by occupational category should be clearly reported.

5. Questionnaire validation

The questionnaire appears to have been developed specifically for this study, but there is no information regarding its validation.

The authors should explain whether the questionnaire was pre-tested or piloted and whether modifications were made following the pilot survey.

Information about translation/local-language administration should also be provided because respondents belonged to several nationalities.

6. Ethical considerations

The manuscript does not mention informed consent or ethical approval.

The authors should state whether informed consent was obtained from participants and whether approval/permission was obtained from an appropriate institutional or local authority.

7. Data analysis

The analysis is currently limited mainly to frequencies and percentages.

The authors should consider appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics where applicable.

Relationships between variables such as occupation, nationality, years of experience, fishing frequency, and coping strategies could provide stronger scientific evidence.

Sample sizes differ between figures (e.g., $N = 155$ and $N = 127$). The reason for these differences must be explicitly explained.

8. Consistency of percentages

Some percentages require careful verification against the reported sample size.

For example, the occupational categories and the responses concerning fish scarcity should be checked to ensure that all percentages have the correct denominator and that totals are logically consistent.

The authors should clearly distinguish between **percentage of respondents**, **percentage of responses**, and **percentage within occupational groups**.

9. Results

The Results section frequently interprets the findings rather than simply presenting them.

Statements such as “this quality could be associated with type of activity” should either be statistically demonstrated or moved to the Discussion.

Tables summarizing respondent characteristics and major responses would substantially improve readability.

10. Figures

The figures should be redrawn using publication-quality graphical formats.

Figure legends should be more informative and consistent.

Figure 2B appears to contain incomplete or poorly aligned category labels. The complete categories and corresponding percentages should be provided.

Figure 4C should be properly described in the Results, as the current text does not clearly explain all categories shown in the figure.

Font size, labels, units, abbreviations, and formatting should be standardized across all figures.

11. Interpretation of coping strategies

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The manuscript identifies several coping mechanisms, including searching for new fishing sites, modifying fishing-net mesh size, extending time at sea, reducing fishing frequency, and purchasing fish from cold stores.

These strategies should be categorized systematically as **adaptive, economic, occupational, and fishing-effort-related responses**.

Some practices, particularly changing mesh size or increasing time at sea, may potentially contribute to further fishing pressure. This ecological implication should be discussed more critically.

12. Fishing closure and fish scarcity

The manuscript refers repeatedly to fishing-closure regulations as a possible cause of fish scarcity. This requires careful interpretation.

A temporary fishing closure may reduce short-term fishing opportunities while potentially supporting long-term stock recovery. Therefore, it should not automatically be interpreted as a cause of biological fish scarcity.

The distinction between **perceived scarcity, temporary reduction in fish availability, and actual stock depletion** should be clarified.

13. Discussion

The Discussion largely repeats information already presented in the Results.

It should instead emphasize the significance of the findings and compare them critically with previous studies.

The authors should discuss why different occupational groups adopted different coping mechanisms.

The role of migrant fishers, gender, livelihood dependence, fishing gear, market access, and fisheries regulations deserves deeper analysis.

14. Causal claims

Several statements imply causation, although the study is based on a cross-sectional questionnaire survey.

The authors should use terms such as **“perceived,” “reported,” “associated with,” or “suggested by respondents”** rather than making unsupported causal statements.

15. Gender dimension

The manuscript appropriately identifies the importance of fishers' wives, smoke-curing agents, retailers, and wholesalers.

However, the gender-related findings could be developed further, particularly regarding differences in livelihood strategies and vulnerability to fish scarcity.

A comparative analysis between male and female respondents would strengthen the study.

Conclusion

The Conclusion is generally appropriate but could be more concise.

It should emphasise the principal findings and provide evidence-based implications for fisheries management.

Specific recommendations for participatory fisheries management, livelihood diversification, community engagement, and sustainable fishing practices would strengthen the conclusion.

16. References

The reference list requires careful technical editing for consistency in author names, journal titles, volume/issue numbers, page ranges, punctuation, DOI formatting, and web references.

“FOA” in reference 9 appears to be a typographical error and should likely be **FAO**.

Some references cited in the text should be checked carefully against the reference list to ensure one-to-one consistency.

URLs and DOI links should follow the journal's prescribed reference style.

Minor/Language Comments

21. The manuscript requires **extensive English-language editing**. Several sentences are grammatically awkward and use unnecessarily complex expressions.

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22. Replace phrases such as **“people working for the benefit of the marine artisanal fishery”** with more concise terminology such as **“fishery-dependent workers”** or **“artisanal fishery stakeholders.”**
23. The term **“fisher folk”** should be used consistently throughout the manuscript, or preferably replaced with **“fishing communities,” “fishers,”** or **“fishery-dependent communities,”** depending on the context.
24. Correct typographical and spacing errors such as:
 - “abundanceby” → “abundance by”
 - “socialimportance” → “social importance”
 - “andMethods” → “and Methods”
 - “forquitting” → “for quitting”
 - “Sassandrain” → “Sassandra in”
 - “fishscarcity” → “fish scarcity”
25. The expression **“change in favourable fishing season”** is unclear and should be rephrased as **“change in the duration or timing of the favourable fishing season.”**
26. The term **“corporations”** in the Discussion appears inappropriate in context and should probably be replaced with **“occupational groups,” “categories of fishery workers,”** or **“stakeholder groups.”**
27. The manuscript should clearly define abbreviations such as **OM, FN, and NFS** at their first occurrence in the main text, not only in the figure.
28. The statement that fishers can spend “up to six days” at sea should be supported by either the survey data or an appropriate reference.
29. The manuscript would benefit from a concise table presenting **respondent characteristics, occupational categories, fishing experience, fishing frequency, and major coping strategies.**

Recommendation

Major Revision

The study addresses an important and locally relevant issue and contains potentially useful information for understanding the adaptive responses of artisanal fishing communities. However, substantial revision is required, particularly regarding **study design, sampling methodology, questionnaire validation, ethical considerations, statistical analysis, consistency of percentages, figure presentation, interpretation of fishing-closure effects, discussion of limitations, and English-language quality.** After these issues are satisfactorily addressed, the manuscript could be reconsidered for publication.