

Gender Participation of Dried Boneless Siganids, *Siganus Puellus*

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ABSTRACT

This study examined gender participation in the dried boneless siganid (*Siganus puellus*) value chain, focusing on the roles of men and women in harvesting, processing and marketing within coastal fishing communities. Data were collected through field surveys, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions with 60 participants engaged in siganid production in Taboan Market in Cebu City, Philippines. Results showed that men were primarily responsible for capture fishing and initial handling, while women dominated post-harvest processing, deboning, drying and retail marketing. Shared decision-making was noted in household-level financial management, though women exercised greater influence in pricing and local market transactions. Findings highlight the complementary roles of men and women in sustaining siganid-based livelihoods and underscore the need for gender-sensitive fisheries development programs.

Keywords: Gender participation, Siganids, Dried Fish, Value Chain, Fisheries, Post-Harvest

Introduction

Small-scale fisheries are integral to coastal food security and household income across Southeast Asia. Among these, the siganids (*Siganus* spp.), locally known as “rabbitfish,” represent a high-value species harvested for fresh consumption and dried-fish products. The dried boneless form of *Siganus puellus* is particularly favored in local and export markets due to its taste, convenience and reduced waste [1,2].

Gender dimensions in fisheries have been increasingly recognized as critical for sustainable development. Men typically dominate capture fisheries, while women’s contributions in processing, preservation and trade often remain undervalued despite their centrality to addition (Harper et al., 2020). Gender participation in the siganid value chain, however, has received limited

academic attention, particularly in the Philippines where dried siganid is both a livelihood source and a cultural staple [3-5].

This study addresses this gap by analyzing gender roles in the production and marketing of dried boneless siganids (*S. puellus*). Specifically, it aims to:

- Identify the division of labor between men and women across production stages.
- Assess women’s and men’s participation in decision-making and income management.
- Provide recommendations for gender-responsive policies in fisheries development.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Daan Bantayan, Cebu, Philippines, coastal community recognized for siganid harvesting and dried-fish production. Fishing households in this area rely heavily on seasonal siganid abundance, typically peaking [6-10].

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Result

Demographic Profile

Table 1: Presents the demographic profile of respondents

Variable	Male (%)	Female (%)	Overall (%)
Primary role in value chain	Fishing (20)	Processing (75)	-
Secondary role	Marketing (20)	Marketing (65)	-
Average household size	6	5	5.5
Siganid income share	55	50	52.5

Gender Division of Labor

Table 2: Summarize gender division of labor in dried siganid production

Activity	Male Participation (%)	Female Participation (%)	Shared (%)
Capture Fishing	100	0	0
Initial cleaning	60	40	0
Deboning	5	95	0
Salting	15	85	0
Drying	10	90	0
Bulk transport	45	20	35
Retail selling	20	80	0

Decision- Making and Income Utilization

Table 3: Presents household decision-making patterns

Decision Area	Male-led (%)	Female-led (%)	Joint (%)
Fishing investments (gear, fuel)	80	10	10
Processing methods	20	70	10
Retail pricing	15	65	20
Household budgeting	20	30	50
Education & food expenses	10	25	65

Discussion

The findings reaffirm the gendered nature of fisheries, where men dominate resource extraction and women contribute significantly to post-harvest processing and trade. This aligns with regional studies (Weeratunge et al., 2014; Kleiber et al., 2015) highlighting women's invisible yet substantial roles in fisheries value chains [14-16].

The gender complementarity observed in dried siganid production underscores the interdependence of men's and women's labor.

While men's fishing activities provide raw materials, women's processing ensures higher value and marketability. Importantly, women's control over retail sales and financial management indicates their agency in livelihood sustainability.

Visual Summary

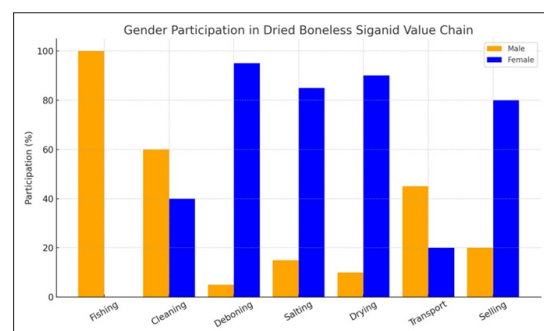


Figure 1: Shows gender participation across siganid value chain activities.

These results suggest that fisheries development programs should integrate gender-sensitive strategies, such as supporting women's roles across the value chain, ensuring their access to resources and decision-making spaces, and addressing labor burdens through appropriate technologies and infrastructure.

- Fisheries are gendered:
- Men = resource extraction
- Women = value addition & marketing
- Women influence household finance & stability.
- Their role often undervalued, but critical.
- Need for gender-sensitive policies:
- Credit access
- Training
- Cooperative representation

Conclusion

The study revealed that gender participation in dried boneless siganid production is complementary: men dominate capture fishing while women drive value addition and marketing. Women also play a decisive role in financial management, reinforcing their importance in household and community economic stability. Policies and programs promoting gender equality in fisheries must acknowledge women's labor contributions and ensure equitable access to resources and benefits.

These results further suggest that fisheries development programs should integrate gender-sensitive strategies, such as providing women with access to credit, training in product innovation, and representation in fisheries cooperative. Recognizing women as co-equal contributors can enhance household resilience and community-based fisheries governance.

- Men dominate fishing; women dominate processing & selling.
- Women play a key role in financial management.
- Gender participation is complementary, not competitive.
- Policies must recognize and empower women's contributions.
- Gender equality → stronger & more sustainable fisheries.

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