

Review of: "Mental health in fishing communities: An overview of current knowledge and information gaps for fisheries"

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The paper "Mental health in fishing communities: An overview of current knowledge and information gaps for fisheries" by Beaven Utete is an important contribution to a widely under-studied and frequently neglected aspect of the socio-economics of fishers and fishing communities. It should help to raise awareness of the problem and encourage greater attention to be given to it. There are, however, several areas in which the paper could be improved.

In the Methods, the author refers to 83 studies mentioning mental health of fishers but that 11 papers 'considered the mental health aspects of fishers and fisheries'. This is unclear. From the remainder of the text, it seems that the 11 papers were global reviews or studies and therefore, for the purposes of the hotspot analyses, could not be associated with any particular continent, but this needs to be clarified.

Figure 1 presents a hotspot analysis showing the number of studies per continent but the number given for Europe (23) does not match the number given in the text (29).

The paper consists of the analysis of the locations of relevant studies and also the reviews of selected papers, which are also a part of the Results. That would be clearer if the Results and Discussion sections were combined into a single 'Results and Discussion' section, which could be divided into two sub-sections: i) Regional prevalence of relevant studies and ii) Review of available information by continent (or some such wording).

The Discussion is useful, summarizing the findings of studies across the different continents but without a baseline, it is impossible to know how mental health issues for fishers and fishing communities compare with other professions or regional or global averages, and therefore whether they are more or less prone to problems. The nature of the profession would suggest that they are more vulnerable to such issues but this paper currently does not demonstrate whether that is the case or not.

This question is addressed in one specific case In the Discussion on Asia. Nisar et al. (2004) found that "The prevalence of depressive disorder among adult women of the fishing community was 7.5% which is at a higher magnitude relative to the prevalence rates in the region and the global estimates which are below 5.6%". Such baseline information is likely to be hard to find for other countries, regions or globally, but Utete should attempt to locate and report on whatever is available so that the incidence of mental health issues in fishing can be put in a wider context.

Perhaps also with some bearing on the previous point, relevant results from the 11 non-continent-specific papers do not appear to have been included in the Discussion or Conclusions. While the focus of this paper is on regional differences in the attention being given to mental health, there could be useful information in at least some of those papers that could contribute to the discussion here.

The paper is generally well and clearly written but there are some small editorial or content problems in some places that would benefit from correction or improvement. For example,

- 1st paragraph of the Introduction. It is stated that ‘fishers work for long hours in extreme weather using heavy machinery’. Care must always be taken to avoid making incorrect, absolute statements such as this. It should be qualified to something like ‘as fishers typically work for long hours, sometimes in extreme weather and in certain fisheries using heavy machinery’. There are other examples of similar ‘absolute’ statements that need to be qualified.
- The third paragraph starts “Despite a significant proportion of the global human population being artisanal and commercial fishers...” This statement would have greater impact if more precise numbers were given of the numbers involved available e.g. from the Illuminating Hidden Harvests study <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc4576en>
- p9, 1st paragraph. The sentence ‘This masks, the psychosocial impact of lifestyles on the productivity of the fishers and their adaptability to the vagaries of the Aegean Sea’ is not clear and should be redrafted to convey the intention more clearly and precisely.
- In the next paragraph “High prevalence of mental health disorders indicated high levels of stress...” How high was the prevalence? This statement also illustrates the importance of some baseline to compare levels against – how high is ‘high’?

The above are some examples of minor weaknesses and the author should review the paper carefully to find and tighten-up on any others as well.