
Impacts of covid-19 pandemic on the fish harvest and the income of the marine fishers in the Chilaw area

Somarathna A.P.H.^{1*} and Jayathilaka N.

Department of Chemistry, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

The marine fisheries industry plays an important role in the social and economic life of Sri Lanka. A sudden decline in the fish harvest in Chilaw was noticed in the years 2020-2021. This study evaluated the relationship between COVID-19 related changes such as lockdowns, mobility restrictions and quarantine periods, and fish harvest and the monthly income of fishers. A sample of 150 participants was selected randomly. Primary data were collected using a questionnaire and face-to-face interviews with the informed consent of the participants following the safety guidelines and regulations. Secondary data were collected from the official website of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Chilaw. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis were obtained using SPSS software. Fish harvest was moderately, negatively related to the lockdown, while monthly income was low negatively related to the lockdown, and mobility restrictions with correlations of -0.412 and -0.293 respectively at $p < 0.01$. COVID-19 impact significantly predicts the fish harvest and the income with 10.329, 6.546 respectively at $p < 0.0005$ and $F(3, 146)$. This indicates the regression model is a good fit for the data. Findings revealed that a sudden decline in the demand of 92% for fish was noticed due to the lockdown. In the 3rd COVID-19 wave, fishers and sellers used to make dry fish as an adaptation strategy to minimize wastage. 75% of the increase in dry fish production in the third wave of COVID-19 was recorded whilst, 80% of fishers were able to distribute fish considering it as an essential service.

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*Corresponding author: pavithrahiru@gmail.com