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*Laurent BAHOU\**

## ABSTRACT

The study was carried out in February, March and August 2021, using a questionnaire intended for the professionals working for the benefit of the marine artisanal fishery located at Sassandra. The interviewees (220 persons) were approached at the landing site and principal marketplace of Sassandra. After a brief inquiry about the different types of activities in which they engaged and the number of people within their respective corporations, each interviewee was to give personal view on health conditions and safety at work, financial support displacement for his/her activity, as well as on childhood education. The results indicated that people who engaged in fishery-related activities comprised experienced men and women having knowledge and skill acquired over many years. They served their apprenticeship with members of their family. They would also work with apprentices of the same ethnic group or with fellow countrymen and countrywomen. A large part of the fishery's workforce rests in the family circle.

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**Keywords:** ethnic patterns, financial support displacement, fishery's workforce, health conditions, landing site, members of family, safety-work conditions, sassandra.

**Author:** Department of Research on the Biology, Ecology and Population Dynamics of Aquatic Living Resources, Centre for Oceanographic Research, Fishers Road, Treichville, Tel : (225) 20 21 35 58 80, BP V18 Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. E-mail: lbahoucrothon@yahoo.fr

## I. INTRODUCTION

As component parts of activities of vital importance to food security and employment generation, fishing and post-harvesting tasks plainly contribute to people's welfare and the economy of the African countries. Yet, they do not always benefit from financial support, since they would lack consistent financial displacement in any form. In Côte d'Ivoire, fishing and aquaculture are believed to generate up to 70000 direct jobs, while about 400000 people and more would make a livelihood, essentially with artisanal fishing and processing of fishery products (**Document COMHAFAT, 2014**).

Unfortunately, in the coastal areas of Côte d'Ivoire, particularly those in the southwestern part such as Sassandra and San-Pédro, marine artisanal fishing has long been considered as unpopular profession by the natives. It can currently be regarded as an area of activity over which migrant fishers of Ghanaian-origin have influence. Today, a progressive change in people's thinking and behaviour is

quite noticeable about the previous commonly-held opinion on fishing at sea. For the substantial revenue derived from fishing and trading for fish aroused the natives' consciousness in such a way that they would resort to fishing as a promising way out for their increasing needs for animal proteins of fishery source. **Delaunay (1991)** recalled a certain number of historical events (in the eastern, central and western parts of Côte d'Ivoire) that contributed to the setting of influence of Ghanaian migrant fishers on the marine artisanal fishing domain, comparing such a situation to a « colonization of fishery-kind » (**Delaunay, 1989**). Additional facts are presented by **Bahou et al. (2022)**, enhancing readers' comprehension of the particular set of circumstances that existed at a period of time starting from 1893, especially when European countries established a former colony in Côte d'Ivoire. That situation led to the Ghanaian migrant fisher flocks becoming dominant in the field of marine artisanal fishing.

Sassandra, southwestern Côte d'Ivoire, is known for its virtually thriving fishery-related facilities region-wide. However, the lack of financial support, which can be viewed as an impediment to fishery-related activities' takeoff, created persistent setbacks that need be dealt with. The overall objective of the current study was to show that problems facing the fisher flock and the professionals working for the benefit of the marine artisanal fishing sector of Sassandra are real. A specific goal was to enumerate the facts, which generally account for reasons for financial Institutions' cautiousness.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study design was not quite different from the previous ones by **Bahou (2022)** and **Bahou et al (2022)**. The study was carried out, arranging for individual interviews, using a questionnaire to which the professionals of the marine artisanal fishing sector of Sassandra submitted themselves. In particular, people were to answer the following questions: 1. How long have you been carrying out this type of activity? 2. Do you work on your own? 3. With whom did you serve your apprenticeship? 4. How many apprentices do you have? 5. What is your nationality? People were asked extra questions about problems facing them in their efforts to carry out their fishery-related activities. Those series of questions, which were wishes-like, were recorded in a Table as shown below:

Type of wishes intended for the professionals of the marine artisanal fishing sector of Sassandra	Would rather benefit from.... / Get constructed nearby work places....
Wish Number 1.....	An Hospital / A free health centre
Wish Number 2.....	A primary school constructed for your kids' benefit
Wish Number 3.....	Benefit from Insurance services
Wish Number 4.....	Benefit from Bank services / Get financial support
Wish Number 5.....	Get life jackets for fishers' safety at sea

Respondents' answers were taken in note form on duly-designed sheets of paper. In total, 220 people submitted themselves to the questionnaire. Yet, 206 respondents did participate in the interview throughout, answering all questions and giving helpful additional details to enhance the interviewers' comprehension. These people talked about their fishery-related activities and year of experience, indicating their age and what they needed most to further their activities. The estimated age at which the professionals commenced their jobs was determined making a subtraction between their present age and year of experience. Age classes of 5 intervals were determined. The data collected were registered in an Excel file to facilitate processing the data and making calculations, while figures and tables were used as illustrations.

### III. RESULTS

#### 3.1 Work Environment

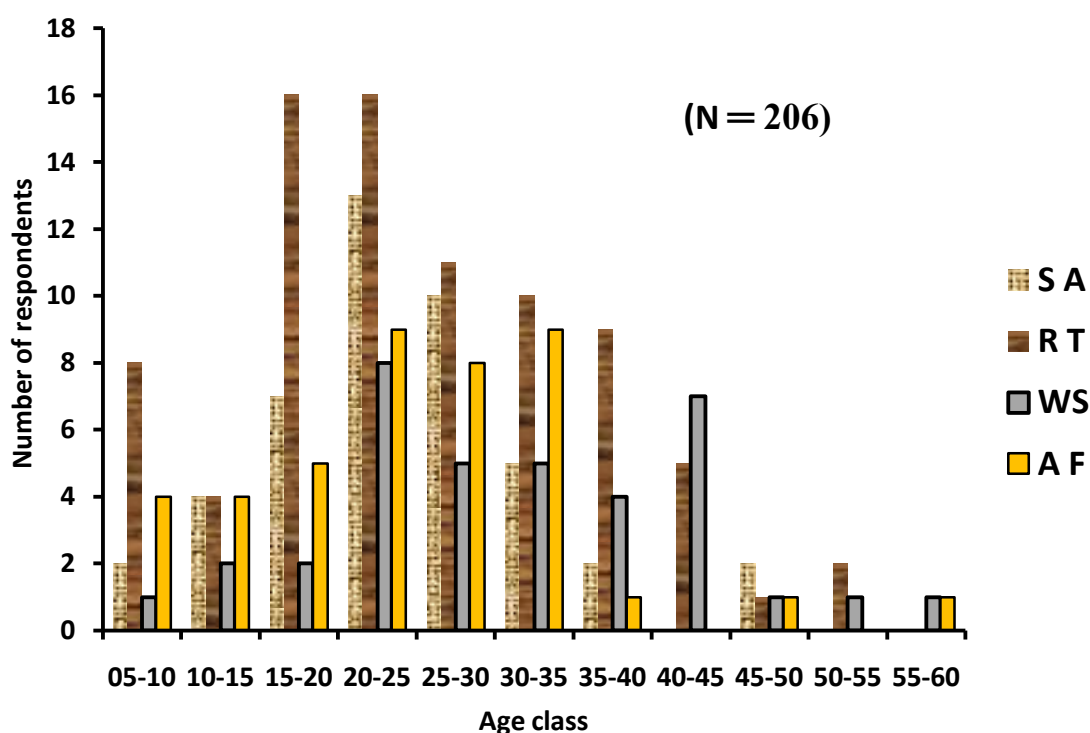
Table 1 indicates that 60% of smoke-curing agents, 30.49% of retailers and 27.03% of wholesalers served their apprenticeship with their mothers. Likewise, 59.52% of the marine artisanal fishers did learn fishing working at their fathers' sides, while 19.05% of them served their apprenticeship with their uncles. However, some other professionals got involved in fishery-related activities on their own initiative, without the guidance of anyone for their early beginnings. That was the case of male and female wholesalers as well as retailers, of whom 51.35% and 52.43% among the interviewees respectively confirmed the fact (Table 1). Overall, fathers and mothers undoubtedly played key roles in teaching and showing guidance to 13.11% and 30.10% of early beginners respectively, when these ones started their activities, based on the four types of activities listed in Table 1. Some other 37.38% of the professionals, however, admitted that they just started working on their own to reach the current stage of their careers.

**Table 1:** Professionals' opinions about their early beginning and the persons with whom they served their apprenticeship in the marine artisanal fishing sector of Sassandra, southwestern Côte d'Ivoire

Professionals	Admitted that they served their apprenticeship with	Responses obtained from the interviewees	Percentages relating to the corporations	Percentages obtained, considering a total of 206 respondents
Smoke-curing agents (N = 45)	Aunt	1	2.22	—
	« Fanti » people	1	2.22	—
	Sister	3	6.67	—
	O I	13	28.89	—
	Mother	27	60.00	—
Retailers (N = 82)	Aunt	2	2.44	—
	« Fanti » people	2	2.44	1.46
	Friend	2	2.44	0.97
	Sister	8	9.76	—
	Mother	25	30.49	—
	O I	43	52.43	—
Male and Female Wholesalers (N = 37)	"Father's marriage-matè	1	2.70	0.49
	Cousin	1	2.70	0.48
	Sister	1	2.70	5.83
	Father	2	5.41	—
	Aunt	3	8.11	2.91
	Mother	10	27.03	30.10
	O I	19	51.35	—
	Brother-in-law	1	2.38	0.48
Artisanal fishers (N = 42)	O I	2	4.76	37.38
	Friend	2	4.75	0.97
	Brother	4	0.52	1.94
	Uncle	8	19.05	3.88
	Father	25	59.52	13.11

Note: O I = the interviewees admitted that they started their activities (or their jobs) by their own initiative.

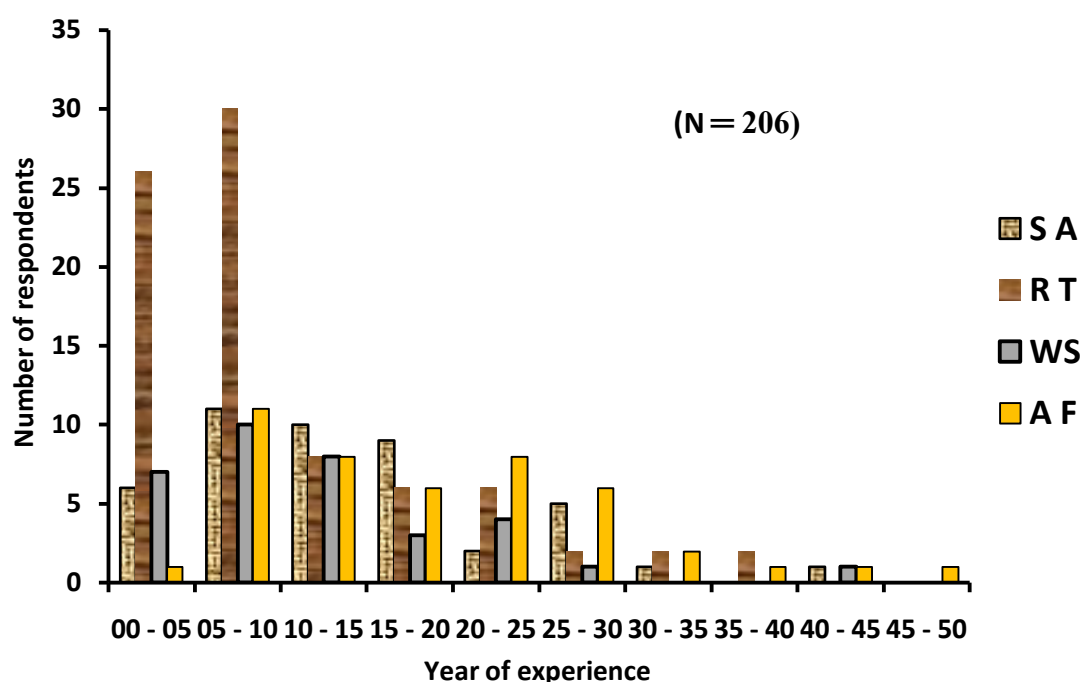
Figure 1 shows in each corporation the approximate age the professionals reached when they engaged in their fishery-related activities. For instance, smoke-curing agents ranged in age from 7 to 48 years, while retailers were 5 to 54 years old, as beginners. In addition, some wholesalers engaged in their activities when they turned ten, while others completed their 58 years old. Likewise, fishers got involved in fishing activity at early age (sometimes when they were 7 years old) to learn how to make their first appearance in a job that is premised on the knowledge that older fishers pass on to younger ones, so that they may likely become fully competent before they reach 56 years old. Overall, age range varied according to type of activity, but it was not necessarily linked up to the age of the people. For instance, 13 smoke-curing agents admitted that they started that job when they were 20 to 25 years old, in stark contrast with what other 2 smoke-curing agents said; for they made their first appearance in that job when they were 7 and 10 years old, respectively. A large number of retailers (16+16) admitted that they began their activities when in the age brackets of 15-20 and 20-25, respectively. Only one person of that corporation said that he started that job when he was 49. A female wholesaler revealed that she started the business of buying the fish in large quantities and selling them especially to retailers for resale, when she was 10; whereas another wholesaler told that she began showing interest in that business when she turned her 58. Four persons revealed that they began learning fishing at an early age (when 7 to 10 years old), while more than half of fishers (9+8+9) started fishing when in the age bracket of 20-35 (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Histograms showing the approximate age in each category of professionals when they started their fishery-related activities in the marine artisanal fishing sector of Sassandra (southwestern Côte d'Ivoire). Note: **SA** = smoke-curing agents; **RT** = retailers; **WS** = wholesalers; **AF** = artisanal fishers.

Figure 2 shows years of experience of the people working for the benefit of the marine artisanal fishing sector of Sassandra, as revealed by the interviewees. Overall, year of experience varied from 1 to 50. Within each corporation, people with greater years of experience were fewer than those who had less experience. For example, smoke-curing agents ranged in experience from 2 to 45 years, with many people (11 + 10 + 9) who had 5 to 20 years of experience. A large number of retailers (26 + 30) had 2 to 10 years of experience while years of experience within that corporation ranged from 1 to 35. A large

majority of wholesalers (7 + 10 + 8) had between 4 and 15 years of experience, though years of experience within that corporation varied from 2 to 45. Younger fishers (and consequently the less experienced) were more numerous than older ones who were more experienced. Based on the four fishery-related activities, fishers represented the only corporation that had the highest year of experience (50 years), whereas wholesalers and smoke-curing agents, in addition to retailers, had the lowest years of experience (1 to 2 years, Figure 2).



*Figure 2:* Histograms showing the year of experience in each category of professionals who engaged in fishery-related activities in the marine artisanal fishing sector of Sassandra (southwestern Côte d'Ivoire). Note: **SA** = smoke-curing agents; **RT** = retailers; **WS** = wholesalers; **AF** = artisanal fishers.

### 3.2 Behaviour and social characteristics

Table 2 indicates the responses of the professionals while they were telling about their work conditions. Those responses can be likened to scores. Surprisingly, we expected that all respondents rush the opportunity to express wishes, without someone to show no interest in the wishes listed as a proposal. Overall, the interviewees responded favourably, enabling us to rank their wishes this way:  $W_1 > W_2 > W_4 > W_3 > W_5$ , taking into account the number of people who showed a remarkable interest in the wishes. In fact, the scores attributed to wishes were the more so high that the wish included the ambitions and desires of professionals of all kinds. Therefore, wishes  $W_1$  and  $W_2$  had the highest scores and percentages (Table 2). In addition, wish  $W_4$ , which deals with the commonest desire all the professionals have in focus (i.e. get financial support from the Bank or from any other financial Institution), gained collective interest because it seems more inclusive. However, the specific nature of some other wishes, which seem exclusive, like wish  $W_5$  dealing with an equipment intended for fishers and canoe-owners, allows for a distinction to be made as regards safety-work conditions. All respondents told us about the Bank and Insurances' cautiousness, the former refraining from placing financial support at their disposal, and the later generally seeking more trust.

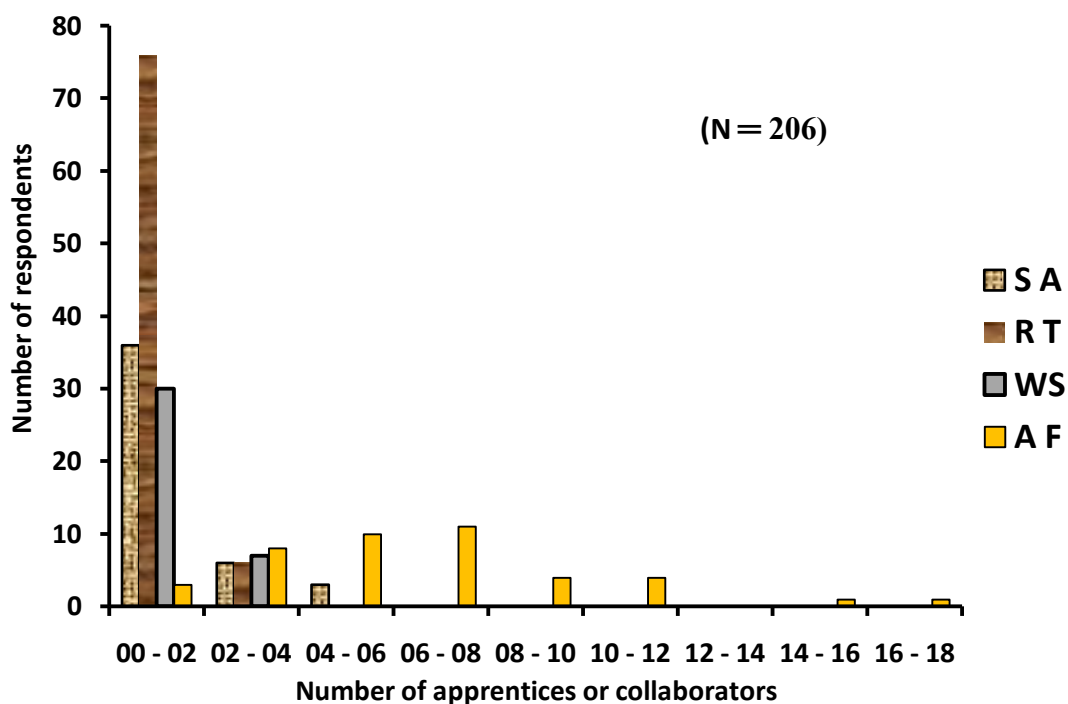


**Table 2:** Professionals’ opinions about issues concerning their health and security at work, schooling of their children, Insurance services, financial support displacement and fishers’ safety at sea

Opinions of people engaged in the different types of activities observed at Sassandra	Number of responses	Percentages ( $P_i$ ) relating to type of responses	Percentages obtained, considering a total of 220 respondents
People who showed no interest in the wishes	4	1.82	0.79
Positive responses to the 5 wishes at a time	8	3.64	1.57
Positive responses to the first 4 wishes at a time	21	9.55	4.13
Positive responses to the latest 4 wishes at a time	4	1.82	0.79
People who showed interest in wish Number 1	149	67.73	29.27
People who showed interest in wish Number 2	121	55.00	23.77
People who showed interest in wish Number 3	74	33.64	14.54
People who showed interest in wish Number 4	103	46.82	20.23
People who showed interest in wish Number 5	25	11.36	4.91

*Note: Percentages in the fourth column were obtained respectively, dividing each percentage ( $P_i$ ) by the sum of all percentages ( $\Sigma P_i$ ). Wish (W1): **An Hospital / A free health centre** ; Wish (W2): **A primary school constructed for your kids’ benefit** ; Wish (W3): **Benefit from Insurance services** ; Wish (W4): **Benefit from Bank services / Get financial support** ; Wish (W5): **Get life jackets for fishers’ safety at sea**.*

Figure 3 shows the number of collaborators in each corporation. Overall, number of apprentices or collaborators is dependent on type of activity. For instance, smoke-curing agents, retailers and wholesalers would work with 1 to 4 persons. In stark contrast, fishers would work with as much as 2 to 18 collaborators, though number of collaborators would vary according to factors such as the type of fishing gear, which may need that fishers work as a team or not (e.g. line, hooks, gillnet, or seine) and according to title of the fisher (e.g. chief of fishers, canoe-owner, a mere member of the fishing-crew). Nearly all smoke-curing agents (80% of them) worked with 1 or 2 persons, as 92.68% of retailers and 81.08% of wholesalers did (Figure 3). However, cases in which the professionals worked alone were reported among smoke-curing agents (35.56% of them), retailers (53.66% of them), and wholesalers (21.62% of them). Overall, 68 persons (33.01% of the interviewees) admitted that they usually work alone.



**Figure 3:** Histograms showing the number of apprentices or collaborators in each category of professionals who engaged in activities relating to the marine artisanal fishing sector of Sassandra (southwestern Côte d'Ivoire). Note: **SA** = smoke-curing agents; **RT** = retailers; **WS** = wholesalers; **AF** = artisanal fishers.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Some specific circumstances people go through generally served for a driving force behind their choosing a particular type of fishery-related activity. As for the youths, their early beginnings taking on the fishery-related activities were a manner for them to serve as a helping hand for their mothers and fathers, especially when those youths who were scholars spent a holiday. In such a case, their involvement in fishery-related activities is on a part-time job basis. However, some other youths' taking part in those activities was dictated by their parents' will to early initiate their offspring into them. It is obvious that at an early age, the choice for a particular activity may not be definitive. Adult men and women would however willingly decide for themselves and choose the type of activity they prefer. Talking of artisanal fishing in Guinea (a West African country), **Koita (2017)** said that it is carried out by men and women, even by teenagers engaged in such an occupation as a job, describing it as a type of activity where knowledge is passed on from a father to a son. In fact, for the jobs that do not require any particular time for training (e.g. smoke-curing, retailing and wholesaling), the hardships people went through sometimes forced them to make a choice. For some women we interviewed told us that their choice was dictated by circumstances they faced after they became widows or divorced, in order to make both ends meet as single parents, being alone to care for their children's needs and schooling. In such cases, whether they turned their forties or fifties, people could choose a type of activity, without prior requirement for training.

To reach the actual stage of their careers, the professionals of the marine artisanal fishing sector of Sassandra did work hard, seeking guidance and accepting to learn, generally at their parents' side. Yet some of them did progress by their own efforts. Others acknowledged that some of their first efforts at retailing or wholesaling were pretty awful. In each corporation, people customary work with members of family or persons of the same ethnic group. By so doing, the knowledge of fishing for instance rests



concealed in family circle, being passed on to the new generations with the passing of the years. This undoubtedly contributed to the success migrant fishers generally had in the fishing activities. Moreover, as the Ghanaian fisher flock is quite dominant, they do have influence over almost all fishery-related activities (**Delaunay, 1991; Bignoumba, 1998**), which confirm the view of « colonization of fishery-kind » **Delaunay (1989)** held. It seems that for some types of activity, there is no need to rely on guidance from former trained-persons. That was certainly what justified the cases in which the professionals worked alone. Additionally, as in the case of the marine artisanal fishery of Pointe Noire, Congo (**Gobert, 1985**), where the fisher flock originated from Benin has influence over the activities, a large part of the fishery's workforce at Sassandra rests in the family circle. Consequently, when the period for fishing for tunas and Sardinellas or that for festivals usually held at regular intervals in Ghana are drawing closer, many fishers would return to Ghana (their home-country) with their families. This situation reinforces the unsteadiness of the fishery-related activities at Sassandra, southwestern Côte d'Ivoire.

Within the fisher flock, the wishes seem to be tied in priorities set by the professionals of the fishing sector, mainly according to their professional needs and daily life conditions. In fact, most of the professionals have to care for their families and at the same time pay for their children's schooling and face current expenditures; which need be put above all other things. Yet, the professionals are aware that they can successfully face dependents if only their activities flourish. That is why they look to the Banks or any financial Institution, expecting them to provide financial support for the furtherer of their activities. In this regard, are there any sound reasons for financial Institutions' cautiousness? In fact, financial problems facing people working in the artisanal fishing sector are widespread in West Africa, as discussed by **Bignoumba (1998)**, referring to the marine artisanal fishery of Gabon. The lack of financial support displacement for activities was the main problem the professionals of the fishing sector of Sassandra have in share. Apparently, people carrying out the four types of fishery-related activities the current study deals with are unaware that features pertaining to their behaviour and work conditions are the main reasons for financial Institutions' and Insurances' cautiousness. For instance, work condition was shaped by three outstanding facts: (i) unsteadiness of the fishery-related activities, (ii) a strong tendency towards informal work, and (iii) equipments for fishing are very expensive and fishers prefer to buy cheaper ones in Ghana. As regards behaviour and social characteristics, three remarkable facts generally occur: (i) the high proportion of migrants, (ii) the lack of truthfulness and reliability, and (iii) most professionals regard themselves as temporary residents, preferring making investments in their home-country (i.e. Ghana). Overall, these are the main reasons why the Banks and Insurances are cautious, refraining from engaging their responsibility and money in a risky adventure (i.e. fishery-related activities) that is not constant in purpose or actions, lacking reliability as a result, and showing no steady and maximum profits ahead.

Finally, features we discussed in the current study are not specific to the marine artisanal fishery of Sassandra, southwestern Côte d'Ivoire. They are common elsewhere, namely in Gabon (a West African country), where the artisanal fishery is mainly characterized by the weakness of its production tool, the supremacy of migrant fishermen and a strong tendency towards informal work (**Bignoumba, 2011**). Additionally, involvement of members of family in the fishing business was observed elsewhere. In Senegal (another West African country), **Cormier (1981)** noticed that within the "Lébou" community, fishers at times would trade for the fish, which was an activity ordinarily carried out by their sisters or by fishers' wives.

## V. CONCLUSION

The professionals of the marine artisanal fishing sector of Sassandra, southwestern Côte d'Ivoire, actually range in year of experience, according to type of fishery-related activity. They generally worked

alone or with few people as collaborators, except the fishers. Most of them have served their apprenticeship with members of their family, or tried to work on their own initiative to achieve goals. As the professionals prominently worked with members of family, the fishery's workforce would rest in the family circle, making the work environment be shaped by persistency of ethnic patterns. Consequently, this situation resulted in an impediment to financial sustenance in favour of the fishery-related activities as regards financial help from the Banks and other financial Institutions whose cautiousness was plainly supported by actual facts.

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