

# Negotiating Communication in Work Relationships: The Experiences of Woman Fishmongers in Lewoleba City

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**Abstract.** Working in the public sphere while carrying domestic responsibilities is a burden for women fishmongers. The lack of support from their husbands and the high level of competition require negotiation skills to gain acceptance from the work environment. This qualitative research aims to construct the way women fishmongers negotiate. The results of in-depth interviews and observations with ten women fishmongers in Lewoleba city were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model. Accommodative strategies were found in relationships with husbands. Meanwhile, with fellow female fishmongers, they apply an avoidance strategy. Relationships are prioritized in negotiations. Revitalization of women's empowerment can be done by directing advocacy not only on skills training, fisheries work facilities and infrastructure. The state and organizations that conduct advocacy can start focusing on women's relationships. In relationships, there is a perspective of women about their daily work, which is relevant to improve the quality of empowerment.

**Keywords:** women fishmongers; negotiated communication, work relations

## 1 Introduction

The presence of women fish marketers is an important part of the small-scale fisheries marketing chain. Data on fisheries business actors based on gender issued by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the Republic of Indonesia in 2022 showed that there were 24,892 women fish marketers, more than men who only amounted to 13,735 people [1]. This is also the case in Lewoleba city, Lembata district, NTT province. It is easy to find women fishmongers selling in traditional markets, busy crossroads, overhangs of shops in trading areas, and they even sell fish while walking around villages or residential areas [2]. Women's involvement starts from the stage of catching, processing and distributing the catch. All of these have an impact on family economic income, the fulfillment of protein consumption for the community and the sustainability of the economy [3], [4], [5], [6]. Some of the themes that have been studied in

research on women fishmongers include the role of women in the marketing system [7], [8], [9], [10], [11] and the role of women in fishing families [12], [13]. Research was also conducted to explore the difficulties experienced by women fisheries workers [14], [15].

Working as a fishmonger is followed by various problems involving other parties, for example in interpersonal relationships with husbands and with fellow women fishmongers. The lack of support from husbands and the assumption that women who work as fishmongers are limited to helping their husbands creates its own problems [16]. The burden of responsibilities in the domestic sphere followed by work responsibilities in the public sphere [17], [18], [19], [20], leaves further demands for women. The ability to adjust followed by arguments for offers that accommodate the interests of housewives and workers in the public sphere are important things that women are expected to have [21], [22], [23]. In relations with fellow women fishmongers, job competition seems to dominate the conflicts that occur between them [9], [10]. Some research shows the complexity of the problems experienced by women, such as a decrease in income due to the intervention of development programs that are not pro-gender [24], [25] and women's limited access to empowerment programs [26].

Whatever method women fishmongers use to obtain fish, it has the potential to become a source of arguments, quarrels and misunderstandings, especially about the selling price of fish. Conflicts often arise over the determination of the selling price of fish between women who sell family-caught fish and those who sell fish owned by financiers. Women selling family-caught fish are usually not bound by the time of sale, for example when they have to get the fish to be sold and when they have to go to the market. They tend not to care about the market price because they do not need capital to get the fish. For them, the most important thing is that the fish is sold quickly, because the price of the fish is entirely theirs. This is different from women fishmongers owned by investors. Without monetary capital, this category of women fishmongers usually negotiate with the owners of capital to allow them to sell the fish entrusted to them first at a certain price. In this context, they will rely heavily on good relations and mutual trust with the capital owners. For this category of fish sellers, they sell fish not just to make a profit but mainly to pay back the price of the fish according to the previous agreement. That is why determining the selling price of fish is very important for this group.

In the midst of these challenges, an exploration of the negotiation skills of women fish sellers is needed. The discussion of negotiation is needed to explain how individuals manage various tensions in communication, which affect the existence of their presence. Whatever type of relationship is built by individuals, there are various dynamic interactions of contradictory forces. Individuals will negotiate what Baxter calls "the power of coexistence" [27], which is to find common ground over the various discourse forces that exist in the relationship. This research is intended to construct the ways in which women fish sellers negotiate communication. The negotiations involve their husbands and fellow fishmongers in their daily work. Such scientific information is useful for advocacy to improve the quality of life of women and fishing communities. To achieve this goal, the guiding question in this study is how do women fishmongers negotiate communication with their husbands and fellow women fishmongers to assert acceptance of their presence in fisheries marketing?

## 2 Research Method

The reality of the ways in which women fishmongers negotiate their various interests with their husbands and fellow women fishmongers was used as a single case study [28], [29]. Communication negotiations in this study are explored through the framework offered by J. Kevin Barge, including the framing stage, the strategizing stage and the managing relationships stage [30]. In Barge's perspective, negotiation finds its meaning especially when it involves the co-construction of the various parties involved. Negotiation research in the context of fisheries shows some salient elements, such as pro-social behavior and bargaining [31], women's creativity to deal with local patriarchal structures [21], and the role of culture, identity and family structures involving women [22].

The emphasis on negotiation as a process of co-construction in this study is primarily about the meaning of women's involvement in small-scale fisheries. This requires an exploration of the ways in which they realize and understand the difficult situations that accompany their work. These ways will involve cognitive mechanisms observed in the substance of their conversations, both intra-women fishmongers and with other individuals. Cognitive mechanisms relate to their activities in seeking information and choosing strategies, for example through the development of arguments, narratives, and justifications for what they consider to be their personal strengths as fishermen and fish sellers. Examination of the resources they use, especially in terms of argumentation materials in convincing others of the benefits of their presence.

Strategies in negotiation are traced through an individual's choice of style when facing problems in their relationships with others. The relationship itself is dynamic, and requires individual readiness to approach each existing problem. Style as an orientation of individual behavior towards conflict [32] is dynamic, because in the same conflict situation, people can change behavior according to the demands of the situation. The application of three conflict styles recommended by Blake, Mouton and Jay Hall [32], namely competing style, avoiding style, and accommodating style. In the competitive style, individuals focus more on themselves, tending to hide information that could weaken their bargaining position. The focus on personal goals causes people with this style to avoid sacrificing their personal goals and refuse to acknowledge control with others. Two variations of this style are forcing and contending. Competition involving formal authority can be effective only if it is followed by an explanation of why the decision should be taken. Neglect of formal responsibility will only serve to weaken the involvement of others [30]. Emphasis on objective considerations based on norms will be more acceptable than the preferences of decision-makers. Overuse of this competitive style will reduce relational satisfaction and weaken participants' bargaining power. In the avoidant style, people tend to show low concern for their own and others' interests. As a result, problems are not addressed properly, and can become a burden to the relationship in the future. The three variants of this style are protecting, withdrawing and smoothing. With low activeness, apathy, avoidance of talking about the conflict at hand, this style tends to inhibit relationship development. Avoidance, especially in the setting of a crisis situation, tends to weaken the adaptive capacity that requires mutual concern from all parties involved [33]. The accommodation style is chosen when people value the relationship more than the problem they are facing. There is a tendency to prefer to improve or maintain the relationship. This is done by being willing to agree and accommodate the demands of others by changing their own demands. The weaker party will reduce their concessions for the sake of mutual benefit in the future. Two variants of this style are yielding and conceding. But the choice of this style runs

the risk of being perceived as weak and compliant, so others will take a different style that tends to be more provocative.

The choice to make women fishmongers the subject of this research is mainly because the state has an agenda to empower women in small-scale fisheries work. Scientific information about the negotiated communication of women fishmongers is relevant to this agenda, so that their presence is no longer conflicting with local government policies, including spatial planning and management of market activities, which will always involve the presence of women fishmongers. Data collection [34] was conducted through in-depth interviews, which focused on the ways in which women fishmongers engage as workers in small-scale fisheries, manifested in the discourses built into their daily activities as part of the fishing village community. Interviews were conducted face-to-face with unstructured and open-ended questions, with the aim of obtaining the views, opinions and historical information of women fish sellers about various issues they face. Meanwhile, observation was conducted in a participant as observer model, with the aim of obtaining information about the variations in the forms of involvement of women fishmongers in their daily work, and how they have to deal with other individuals or groups who are also involved in small-scale fisheries. The research involved ten women fishmongers in Lewoleba town, who were considered competent to share their personal experiences in carrying out their daily work. The competence in question is a combination of really knowing the problems in daily work activities, the challenges of working in a patriarchal system and competition among fellow women fish sellers. There was involvement from the village officials where this research was conducted, who provided data on fishermen's families, namely husbands working as capture fishermen and wives working as fish sellers. Then from the data, informants were obtained using snow-ball techniques, while adjusting to the development of research, data needs and representation of concepts needed in this study. Data analysis used the interactive model initiated by Miles and Huberman [35]. First, the data reduction stage is to simplify the potential tendency of the data according to the research objectives. Data from interviews and observations were grouped based on the theme of negotiation communication, including strategies in managing conflict and relationship management models built by women fish sellers. The process of grouping such data was used as an initial step to explain the data patterns that emerged. Second, the data presentation stage includes the use of structured summaries in the form of tables that present data in the thematic category of negotiation communication. In the thematic category of framing the content of negotiation messages, data on individual motivations in creating bargaining positions and ways of seeking and using information as negotiation materials are presented, in their capacity as autonomous individuals, wives, housewives, small-scale fisheries business actors and as community members of the fishing community. The theme category of negotiation strategy selection contains data on the choice of competing, avoidance, and accommodation styles in overcoming various problems in relationships with husbands and fellow women fishmongers. Finally, in the category of relationship management themes, data presentation is categorized to show women fishmongers' understanding of involvement in maintaining relationship existence, maintaining relationship quality in interdependence and the ability to bring mutual satisfaction in relationships with other actors. Third, the stage of drawing and testing conclusions to determine the meaning of the relationship between concepts in the construction of communication negotiation. Explanative interpretation is framed to understand the data findings and their relevance to the concept of communication negotiation in this study. Accountability for data quality is carried out by re-examining the data base from different sources, namely the results of interviews and observations to strengthen the themes of communication negotiation in the findings of this study. Researchers also involved informants to discuss the accuracy of

qualitative findings based on interviews that had been conducted previously. Informants' comments can be in the form of questions, criticism, feedback, affirmation and collaboration on the data analysis and research conclusions. The same procedure was carried out for selected themes in the data analysis, both involving women fishmongers and their husbands.

### **3 Result And Discussion**

#### **3.1 Profile informan**

The educational background of the informants in this study is generally no schooling and not graduated from junior high school. They are married women with a family size of between four and seven people, including their husbands, children and other family members who live together. The husbands are generally small-scale fishermen who own at least a canoe or motorized boat with a size below 10 Gross Tonnage (GT) (Regulation of the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the Republic of Indonesia No. 58/2020). Some of the husbands who fish and do not own their own boats generally work as crew members. Work equipment commonly owned by informants include dulang or trays as a place to put fish to be sold, ice flasks to store fish and round buckets, ranging from small to large sizes, as part of the fish storage equipment. Not all women have colling boxes, as a means of preserving fish, because the price is relatively expensive. If there is still fish that has not been sold, many of them choose to sell fish on the side of the road and shopfronts. Such activities of selling fish outside traditional markets contradict local government regulations related to public order and trading facilities. In terms of markets, there are three traditional markets: Pada market in Lewoleba Barat sub-district and Lamahora market in Lewoleba Timur sub-district. Both markets are usually busy from morning to noon. In the afternoon and evening, fish and vegetable sales activities are centered at the fish market in the Central Lewoleba sub-district, usually called the 'twilight market'.

#### **3.2 Description of interview results**

The presentation of data relates to the ways in which women fishmongers present themselves in relationships with their husbands and fellow women fishmongers, through the delivery of opinions and arguments that represent their interests as fishmongers. The negotiation process is traced through arguments in verbal language and nonverbal action choices in the main themes of conversation with other actors. To demonstrate the process of bargaining and disagreement, the empirical data was presented by juxtaposing arguments and action choices between the women fishmongers and their husbands and among themselves. The exploration of message content was obtained through interviews, while the choice of action was observed in observations. Data presentation is presented anonymously to respect the requests of informants who do not want their identities published.

##### **3.2.1 Positioning oneself in the responsibility of earning a living**

What was observed was the tendency of women fishmongers not to consider their husband's support as an initial condition for being involved in earning a living. Whether or not their husbands support them, they still earn a living because they realize the urgency of the family's economic needs. As informant #1 revealed: "yes, my husband is very supportive, as long as the work is halal", or informant #2: "all the responsibilities end up being shouldered by the wife, my husband does not work and he does not care whether we have money or not to fulfill the needs of this family". But on the other hand, for husbands, women's involvement in earning a living is considered a normal thing and therefore they get help from them only if there is a situation of urgency: "if I feel sorry for my wife, for example, there are still many fish that have not been sold, I have to intervene to help so that they can be sold quickly" (Husband #X1).

### 3.2.2 Perspectives on togetherness in managing a household

Both women fishmongers and their husbands have different perspectives on the need for togetherness in managing the household. Although not all, there are some women fishmongers who consider that educational background also determines the quality of the family. Others prefer to concentrate on the problems within their family, especially the husband's apathy towards the family's needs. Meanwhile, the husband emphasizes the importance of his presence in traditional affairs in the family. This situation can be seen in the following statement: "being a housewife cannot only think about eating and drinking, because in the future everything is sophisticated" (informant #3). The husband's preference can be seen in the following comment: "matters involving cultural customs, then I get involved, while household matters, children's education, family savings, are all the wife's responsibility" (Husband, X2).

### 3.2.3 The importance of engagement in groups

The idea of the need for women fishmongers to be involved in organized groups received different responses. Women fishmongers generally see it as important for the continuity of their work. However, the potential for misunderstandings that might occur between them also received attention, both from the women fishmongers and their husbands. As can be seen from informant #4's statement: "we don't have a paguyuban, everyone is busy selling fish from morning to night, we can't force people to join a paguyuban" or informant #7: "beach people are stubborn, so it's difficult for us to join a group, we can't listen to each other, each one feels the most righteous".

#### 3.2.3.1 A perspective on putting personal interests against the common good

The different ways of obtaining fish for sale creates its own potential for conflict among the women fishmongers. There is a different orientation on the personal right to determine the selling price of fish between the group of women who sell family-caught fish and those who sell fish owned by financiers. The first group generally prioritizes the goal of selling fish in a short period of time at a price they set themselves. The latter group, on the other hand, prefers to use the market price as a benchmark because they have an interest in making a profit. This situation is illustrated, for example, by informant #6: "I don't want to depend on other people, the important thing is that the fish must be sold out at the price I set myself", or informant #9: "I usually look at the prices of other friends first, then I follow them, because if they are too cheap or expensive, we ourselves will feel bad about our friends". The arguments and insinuations between them regarding the price fixing that is considered detrimental will usually subside on their own, as both parties refrain from getting involved further. Walking away without saying much or being silent as if there was no argument before, they usually do to restore the atmosphere between them. As informant #10 explained:

*"Those who sell their own fish are stubborn, they don't want to know about other friends. We have tried to talk to them but to no avail. We yell at them and they remain silent. We yell at them, but all we do is remind them to keep the selling price in line with the market price".*

Likewise, informant #9: "As angry as we are, we are still in the same region, so we just give in, wait until they go home, then we continue selling fish so that we only get the remaining buyers".

This article aims to construct the negotiation skills of women fishmongers to ensure acceptance of their involvement in work, both before their husbands and fellow women fishmongers. The involvement of individuals in interpersonal relations is often followed by uncertainty that must be overcome to produce a shared construction. This uncertainty finds its form in encounters and conversations between individuals [33], where background differences in situations and

interests become the shaping elements. In this study, the effort to produce co-construction involves the communication negotiation ability of women fishmongers, amidst various situations that do not support their presence in small-scale fisheries work. The three communication negotiation activities recommended by Barge can be described as follows:

### 3.2.3.2 *Framing: the bargaining position of a female fishmonger before her husband*

These communication activities relate to the ways in which individuals begin to realize and understand that there are difficult situations that follow their presence in a given situation [31]. An exploration was made of the ways in which women fishmongers realized the consequences of working as fishmongers in the public sphere and at the same time still assumed domestic responsibilities as desired by the family and community. The substance of conversations between women fishmongers and their husbands, and amongst other women fishmongers, reveals how they seek and develop relevant information. The activity of searching for and the ability to use information is an important stage for developing arguments in offering ideas about their choice to work as women fishmongers.

Women fishmongers' decision to get involved in helping the family economy seems to be the beginning of their involvement in working as fishmongers. Conversations with their husbands show that they are both aware of the economic difficulties faced by the family and have a strong desire to overcome this difficult situation. The realization of the women fishmongers and their husbands was motivated by different perspectives on the consequences of working outside the home. For example, women fishmongers see themselves as capable of working and can adjust to the demands of the job. The husband, on the other hand, accepts his wife's background of being accustomed to working and having her own income as normal and positive for the family economy. The bargaining can be traced from the message content argumentation scheme between them in Table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Women's Bargaining Position before Husband

| Female Fishmonger  | Husband   |
|--|---|
| Can't sit idly by as family needs increase                     | Wife is used to working so she doesn't want to stay at home                         |
| Husband's income is insufficient                               | Allowing wives to work for additional income  |
| No one else will help, so the wife must be involved in working | Wives may work as long as they do not neglect the domestic affairs of the household |
| Accustomed to working since young and when not married         | Entrusting his wife to prepare funds for customs affairs in his hometown            |

Source: primary data, 2023

The scheme of the family relationship, in this case husband and wife, for Koerner and Fitzpatrick, will determine how they communicate in an “interdependent and reinforcing” process in dealing with issues that require joint handling [36]. The content of the conversation between the female fish seller and her husband shows that the element of interdependence between them is fulfilled, in the form of the husband's support for the wife's decision to work. Likewise, the wife's desire to work is supported by her husband in order to achieve the common goal of securing the family's economic needs. However, the function of mutual reinforcement seems to be a problem for the relationship between them. This can be seen in the way wives and husbands accept the consequences of their choice to work as fishmongers. As can be seen in Table 2, the following ways of accepting responsibility in the public sphere.

**Tabel 2.** How to Accept Responsibility in Public Spaces

| Female Fishmonger  | Husband  |
|--|--|
| Use any means as long as they can pay back the price of the financier's fish | How the wife will sell fish is entirely her own personal decision  |
| Unsold fish will be preserved by salting so that it can still be sold        | All household financial matters are the responsibility of the wife   |
| If there is no money, they are forced to borrow from moneylenders            | Wives must understand that as a fisherman, their husbands may not be able to catch as much as expected every day |

Source: primary data, 2023

Table 2 shows that husbands' involvement in providing support to their wives who work as fishmongers is realized by giving full responsibility and trust to their wives to manage family finances. What the wife experiences when working as a fishmonger, with all the consequences of capital and loan repayment responsibilities, does not seem to be a concern for the husband. This also includes concern for unpleasant behavior from debt collectors or capital owners who do not give their trust anymore, if the wives cannot pay the price of fish according to the previous agreement.

To understand this dynamic, Folger recommend that the tendency to avoid confrontation between husbands and wives is done by developing unique communication between them. What Folger call “avoiding unnecessary arguments” can be used to explain the background of the situation of the imbalance in the views of wives and husbands about the wife's choice to work to earn a living for the family. On the one hand, husbands assume that the trust given to their wives to work is automatically followed by the consequences of overcoming all the problems faced as fish sellers (in the public sphere) and as wives/housewives (in the domestic sphere). This perspective is the reason why husbands seem to tend to let their wives independently seek a way out of every problem they face. Husbands do not want to debate the situation experienced by their wives as fishmongers and the burden of responsibility for taking care of the household, because they feel they have given their trust.

In terms of social and economic responsibilities, women fish sellers fulfill their role to “serve the household” by carrying out domestic obligations. Meanwhile, her role to “serve the hometown” is manifested in her choice of action to borrow money from a moneylender, so that the obligations of the traditional procession in the hometown can be fulfilled. In this context, the wives chose not to debate the various forms of difficulties they faced when working as fishmongers as well as wives and housewives. A situation they experienced without the equal involvement of their husbands.

This fact is also part of what is recommended by Locke et al [23] who through their research on gender-based innovation and negotiation from six small-scale fishing communities in Cambodia, the Philippines and the Solomon Islands found that gender-based family relationships play a major role in fostering motivation to innovate in fishing communities. Husband and wife “joining hands” and working together will indeed lead to better results. But “supporting each other in managing the increasing workload” has more potential to increase the benefits of innovation for fishing families. This finding also confirms what is experienced by women fishmongers in Lewoleba town. If only there is mutual support between husband and



wife that is manifested in real behavior, for example, both actively seeking sources of family financing, it will provide benefits for the sustainability of the economic life of fishing families.

### *3.2.3.3 Strategizing: Negotiating between women and their husbands: accommodating in silence*

This stage is concerned with the interactive development of bid proposals in the manner, symbols, messages and language used by the negotiating parties to reach agreement [30]. That is, the argumentation in the offer is traced through the content of verbal and nonverbal communication messages related to the interests of the parties involved and the choice of actions to express the content of these messages. In such interactions there is a realization that the parties involved are actually interdependent on each other to achieve personal and shared goals. That is why there is the potential for conflict between them regarding the achievement of these personal goals, objectives and values [36]. Faced with this potential conflict, each individual will make certain choices of action to manage what is perceived as a conflict in opinions, ways of thinking, points of view, behavioral orientations and expectations. The choice of action can be understood as a strategy, which is likely to change with the dynamics of the conflict in the negotiation [32].

The passivity of husbands in overcoming economic difficulties cannot be separated from the division of roles and responsibilities in the family. The husband generally acts as the main breadwinner, while the wife is responsible for organizing household affairs, including managing family finances. Facing such a situation, there are several forms of negotiation between women and their husbands, for example, to overcome family financial difficulties, husbands allow their wives to work but with a number of requirements that must be met, especially taking care of domestic household needs. This concession is accepted by women as long as their offer to be involved in helping to earn a living for the family is also acceptable to the husband. The background of being accustomed to working since before marriage is the main argument behind the offer. Meanwhile, husbands require that they do not neglect their responsibilities as wives and housewives, especially because of the prevalence in society in general, that it is the wife who takes care of the house while the husband earns a living outside the home.

In this negotiation process, women use more accommodation strategies, where the relationship between them is considered more important than the problems they face in the household. Women's good intentions to create, maintain and maintain relationships with their husbands are the goals behind the accommodative behavior they display. This accommodative behavior can be seen from the tendency of women to accept the consequences of the responsibility of taking care of domestic affairs as a way of maintaining the trust of their husbands who have allowed them to work in the public sphere. From a communication point of view, both women and men (wives-husbands) do not seem to treat communication as a joint activity that can help them achieve creating mutually supportive relationships. Everyone involved in a communication relationship, whatever it may be, basically aims to "send messages about experiences or perceptions and express points of view about those experiences and perceptions" [37]. Sharing personal experiences and opinions about the difficulties of managing family finances has not yet become an internal conversation between women and their husbands. As a result, women's perspectives on family finances, which should be a shared responsibility, are neglected. Meanwhile, husbands also have their own preferences about the responsibility of choosing to work. Hubley [37] asserts that communication is essentially a complex process because it involves many elements, including people, messages, media and interference. In women's capacity as communicators, they have direct control over three components, namely themselves, the choice of how to communicate (whether directly or through silence) and the message itself.

The lack of optimal interpersonal communication between women fish sellers and their husbands indicates the strong role of these three components. Women's silence about the pressure they experience in managing family finances results in the message not being conveyed to their husbands. Women's resilience to survive in difficult situations to get money to fulfill all family needs is received as a message that is not understood by the husband.

In the accommodative style, women show flexibility by agreeing to their husbands' demands not to neglect domestic affairs. But at the same time, they are also flexible in changing their own position by taking on the burden of the family's economic responsibilities, no longer merely for leisure or because they have been accustomed to working since before marriage. This also indicates a high potential for cooperation in the accommodation style, albeit with a tendency to negate self-control.

Folger outlines that "an accommodating style can be perceived as a sign of weakness or compliance, so that the other party can take a more competitive approach". The assessment that wives have concern for the needs of their husbands and families seems to follow the choice of women's accommodative style in the issue of division of labor and family financial responsibility. Unfortunately, this assessment is not matched by the husband's concern. What happens in the domestic sphere, including finances and relationships with others, is fully considered to be the responsibility of the wife.

#### *3.2.3.4 Competing while withdrawing in relationships with fellow female fishmongers*

In the relationship between women fish sellers, the issue that arises is the fixing of selling prices by those who sell fish caught by the family, which is considered to undermine market prices and disadvantage fish sellers from capital owners. This situation applies to both those selling inside and outside the traditional market. There are several forms of conflict that arise in relation to this situation, for example, mutual accusations and insinuations and suspicions between them. Negotiations to overcome fluctuations in the selling price of fish that are considered unprofitable are conducted using different styles. Women selling family-caught fish generally use an avoiding style in the variation of withdrawing. Avoidance while withdrawing is done by keeping the subject matter out of the conversation, ignoring criticism or asserting that the issue being tried to be addressed is not the authority of the person withdrawing [32].

In general, women selling family-caught fish try to justify their choice to set the selling price of their fish according to their own preferences, usually at a price that is far below the market price. Their aim is to sell the fish more quickly without the additional cost of preservation, so that they can return home more quickly. This group often ignores criticism from fellow female fishmongers. This is evident from their tendency to remain silent and choose to walk away if they are in a heated situation with other female fishmongers. But this choice of style actually creates arguments between them. There is dissatisfaction felt by other parties involved in the negotiation. For example, women fishmongers belonging to financiers perceive this avoidance as a form of indifference from fellow women fishmongers. As a result, it is difficult for them to reach an agreement on what to do together if they want to overcome the problem of low fish selling prices.

It is different with women fish sellers outside the traditional market. There are several forms of conflict that arise, for example, price disagreements, rejection if there are new people who try to sell in a way that is considered to provoke the anger of Pamong Praja Police Unit (Satpol PP), and hesitation to join selling in the TPI market. These issues seem to be negotiated in an avoiding

but protecting style. In this style, people insist on avoiding conflict at all costs, building power around them and even refusing to acknowledge that conflict exists.

How fish are obtained for sale is an important aspect in determining the selling price. Selling fish caught by families is generally done without considering the operational costs of obtaining the fish, so they are not burdened with the amount of price set. Meanwhile, this is the most important part for fish sellers owned by financiers. This is where the negotiations between them reached an impasse, because one of the parties, namely the women selling family-caught fish, refused to acknowledge that the issue of determining the selling price of fish existed in the relationship between them. However, from the perspective of the women fishmongers, it is a way for them to protect themselves from price competition with other women fishmongers. As for women fish sellers owned by investors, the unfavorable situation for them because the price of fish is mostly determined by women fish sellers caught by families, is faced in accommodating ways. This can be seen in their flexibility to adjust to market prices and willingness to change their orientation in selling fish. It often happens that they will wait until the women selling the family's catch have finished selling their fish, and then they will take advantage of the time and number of buyers left. When that happens, they usually offer a lower price.

One of the supporting conditions for willingness to communicate is familiarity between participants [38]. That familiarity will determine how a person treats messages received during communication with others. The messages received, on the one hand, can validate, change or limit one's own feelings and desires, and on the other hand can give an idea of what might happen [39]. The negotiation process of women selling family-caught fish seems to be in line with this theoretical argument. Through information exchange, they know and understand the importance of selling price to their fellow female fishmonger friends. However, they have their own definition of what it means to sell fish quickly, which serves as a reference to keep applying a selling price that allows them to complete the sale transaction more quickly. For this reason, negotiations about the selling price of fish always clash with each female fishmonger's construction of the calculation of the selling price of fish.

#### *3.2.3.5 Managing the relationship: maintaining the existence of the relationship*

The conflict resolution strategies and styles that each party employs exist within a framework that describes the organization of the relationship between them. Different meanings can in fact determine how a relationship is formed and characterize it [40]. This stage explores how the interconnection between communication and relationship building itself becomes part of the negotiation of women fishmongers. The concept of relationship management is understood as “the actions or activities that individuals use to maintain desired relational conditions (e.g., closeness and/or intimacy)” [41]. This means that communication negotiation can also be traced through an exploration of how individuals define relationship management as a way to develop the relationship itself. One aspect that marks negotiation as part of relationship management is the way participants maintain the existence of the relationship itself. According to Kathryn Dindia and Daniel Canary [41], maintaining relationship existence refers to the ways that individuals routinely use to ensure the relationship goes as they usually do. If that happens, then they can ensure the existence of the relationship built in the future. Women who sell family-owned fish generally rely on family members to fish. They may use privately owned sampans or motorized fishing boats under 3 GT, work as crew members on fishing boats or work as “pohe” (a local term referring to people who work as daily casual laborers on fishing boats). To maintain the continuity of the relationship, there are aspects of control over family members' pre-fishing work routines, for example, fishing hours, logistical needs for fishing, rest time after

fishing and other personal activities that are considered to interfere with the health of family members. Women, whether as mothers, wives or family members of the men who fish, will usually watch closely and ensure that all these things are well taken care of. This includes, for example, anxiety if a family member, usually a child, cannot go to sea because he or she has been drinking with friends. If this happens, then women usually understand that there is no daily income and must work to ensure that the family's food and water needs can still be met.

Control in a relationship indicates inter-participant understanding of their desires for each other and sensitivity to achieving shared goals [36]. It indicates individual interpretations of the behaviors needed to achieve those shared goals. Openness and cooperation, for Nicotera, are part of the message production that determines the existence of the relationship. In this study, openness and cooperation appear to be the glue that holds the relationship between women fishmongers and the family members responsible for getting the fish together. Women exercised limited control over their family members, making the content of messages about their dependence on work and catch a central part of the conversation between them.

Meanwhile, for women fish sellers owned by financiers, the choice of accommodative style can be interpreted as a way for them to maintain the relationships that have been built previously with fellow women fish sellers, even though these choices do not always support the achievement of their personal goals. This situation emphasizes the element of women's flexibility to build cooperation with other individual members of the social network, as a way to maintain togetherness among them [42]. This finding can be understood from the perspective of women that one of the strategies in communication is to rationalize [43], a condition where women generally have alternative explanations about the reasons behind each of their action choices. This study found that when experiencing challenges in interaction, it is possible that individuals will rationalize, for example by not distancing themselves from each other and continuing to believe in the importance of the continuity of the relationship between them.

The construction of knowledge about how women fisheries workers manage relationships with their husbands cannot be separated from the patriarchal cultural background [44], [45]. The choice to accommodate the various difficulties faced as a wife, housewife and worker in the public sphere, seems to be a way for women to balance the responsibilities between the three roles. But on the other hand, the power dynamics in the household centered on the husband's authority, weakening women's bargaining position. The findings of Salmi and Sonck-Rautio's [46] research show that to a certain extent, women become conduits for the rejection of their own presence. Silently accepting various negative assessments and rejection of their decision to work, ultimately weakens women's bargaining position. Salmi and Sonck-Rautio emphasize what they call "tacit knowledge" that exists in "silence and is learned through experience and oral tradition". Tacit knowledge emerges along with the tendency for women to experience various forms of rejection, so that their role as working women in the public sphere is built on a very limited understanding of gender equality. This situation ultimately makes women increasingly marginalized in relations with dominant groups, including their husbands [47].

## **4 Conclusion**

Barge's recommendation on the need for co-construction as a marker in communication negotiation helps to understand how women fishmongers present themselves in relationships with their husbands and among fellow women fishmongers. First, in relations with their husbands, attachment to patriarchal culture dominates thinking and choices of action. The

tendency to make compromises to get around a weak bargaining position [45] does not seem to be practiced by women fishmongers in Lewoleba. They tend to be more accommodating in dealing with situations of imbalanced responsibilities in the household. Allowing themselves to carry domestic and public responsibilities, as fish sellers, simultaneously, is also part of the accommodative tendencies of women fish sellers. The choice to secure a relationship with their husbands seems to be the beginning of the formation of shared meanings, according to the understanding of the women fishmongers, about their roles and responsibilities in the family. Second, in the relationship between fellow women fishmongers. The choice of women who sell fish caught by their families to avoid and withdraw in situations of conflict over the price of fish is a way for them to secure their relationships with women who sell fish owned by financiers. On the one hand, it seems to show their choice to prioritize their personal goals, getting money quickly by not following the market price. But on the other hand, the choice of strategy also shows that there is an awareness about fish pricing that requires their concern and involvement. The inability to cope with high competition among women fishmongers seems to be the reason why they tend to avoid situations of uncertainty in determining market prices. Making room for co-construction also manifests in the choice of women fishmongers owned by financiers to accommodate the difficult working situation due to differences in fish selling prices. To get a stable selling price, they will wait until the fish owned by the women who sell the family's catch is sold. Although this is often a source of conflict, it seems that women fishmongers owned by financiers still prioritize relationships between fellow women fishmongers. Co-construction as the main part of negotiation is not easy, because each participant has different interests. This research shows that the way each individual interprets the relationships built with others will determine their involvement in negotiations to obtain concessions according to personal and common goals. That means there is an emphasis on the power of relationships as the key to negotiation. It is true what Poulakos [48] recommends that the relationship is not simply the sum of the individuals involved, as the relationship itself embodies the "human forces that sustain dialogue". Relationships are central primarily because they involve encounters between participants, with the nature of the encounters between them being a force for the relationship itself [49].

The meanings given by fishmongers to relationships involving their husbands and fellow fishmongers also indicate a belief in the existence and sustainability of the relationship. Each party is consciously involved in maintaining the existence of the relationship that is the main support for their presence, both as part of a fishing family and as a small-scale fishery worker. The choice of action of women fish sellers to maintain and sustain the sustainability of the relationship can be understood according to Cocjin's [50] idea of interactional experience as capital to understand social reality. The burden of domestic work as a housewife who also works outside the home, has consequences for women to adjust to what their husbands demand. Likewise, the difficulties they face as fish sellers require them to adjust to the pressures of the work environment. As active participants, women fishmongers use their subjective experiences as wives, housewives and workers in the public sphere as a basis for choosing actions in managing work relations.

Scientific information on the construction of negotiation communication of women fishmongers like this, requires further research that specifically investigates women's bargaining power before the state or other institutionally relevant agencies. The completeness of scientific information about the negotiation skills of women fishmongers will help policy makers to advocate for fisherwomen and families. The essence of empowerment is not always about

technical skills or the facilities and infrastructure needed by the assisted group. Advocacy can also be directed at helping women to speak up for their own interests.

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