



Figure 1: Location map of the study area (Source: Google Earth).

A qualitative study was performed for a period of three months, from September 2016 to December 2016. A draft questionnaire was prepared, pretested, and finalized by including needed relevant new information with the objectives of this study. Primary data were gathered by providing questionnaires from randomly selected pet fish owners ( $n = 70$ ) in the selected study area. More detailed information were collected from books, journals and NAQDA station. The collected data were represented in the form of pie charts and tables by using Microsoft Excel (2013) analytical tool.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following results were obtained during the current study.

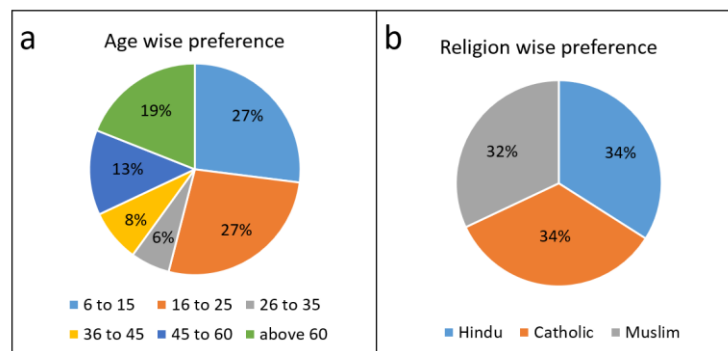


Figure 2: Preference of housekeeping aquaria according to age (a) and preference of housekeeping aquaria according to the religion (b), in 2016.

#### *Age-wise preference*

The study found that those in age group category 6 - 25 (27%) preferred to have a home aquarium (Figure 2a). This age category mainly includes school going and university students where they are interested in aquarium keeping as a hobby and leisure time activity. 19% of the elders (above 60) are interested in housekeeping aquaria. Most of them are pensioners and senior citizens, who spend their time on household aquaria for their relaxation. The lowest percentage (6%) falls into the age category 26 to 35, as they spent more time on their profession.

#### *Religion-wise preference*

The present study revealed that housekeeping aquaria are popular among the different religious people as it is a stress relief and enjoyable hobby (Figure 2b). Almost all individuals have the same involvement in keeping household aquarium.

#### *Type of water medium*

It was found that freshwater was the most desired medium for keeping aquarium fish in the studied area, the percentage was 100%. The home aquarium owners are not interested in keeping marine or brackish water fish because of the problems in accessibility, proximity and transportation of water. Groundwater is the only freshwater resource in the Jaffna peninsula which is readily available. Kidd and Kidd (1999) found that marine aquaria are expensive, time consumable and need wide knowledge and skills to operate and maintain at home.

#### *Types of fish*

The studied population (Figure 3a) were interested in keeping as pets Goldfish (17%), Guppy (15%), Dwarf Gourami (15%) and Angel (14%) in housekeeping aquaria. The preference is ordered according to the colour, size, price, performance, sex and food and feeding. The lowest demanded was shown for Lucky fish, because of its highest price. Wijesekara and

Yakupitiyage (2001) reported that in the Sri Lankan local market, the highest demand is for goldfish, followed by swordtails, guppies, carps and platies. Fighters, sharks and catfish are in less demand, mainly due to their high prices. Marine fish breeding is a difficult task to achieve at breeding centers, because of that they mainly depend on the wild catch. Due to this limited supply of marine ornamental fish their price is high, because of that there is a low local demand for such fish and only a limited number of people in Sri Lanka keep them at home.

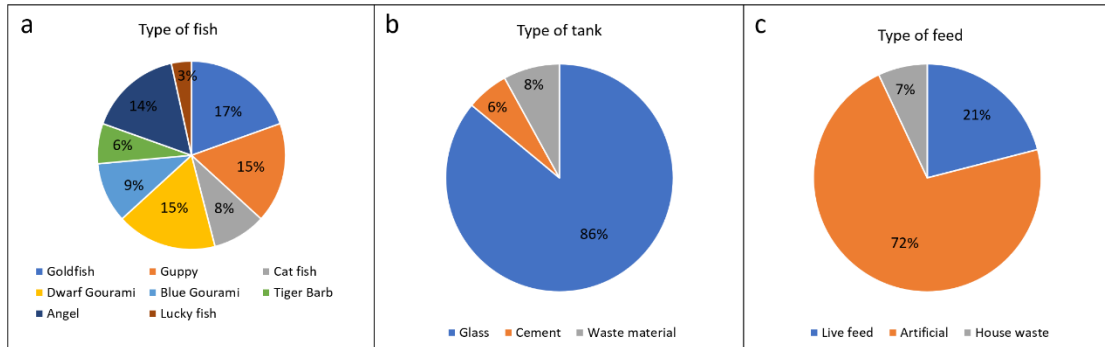


Figure 3: Types of fish kept by respondents (a), Types of tanks kept by respondents (b) and Types of feed used by respondents (c) in 2016.

#### *Types of tanks*

Most of the surveyed preferred glass tanks (86%) for housekeeping aquaria (Figure 3b) because of accessibility, transparency, ease of maintenance and less construction cost. A smaller proportion (6%) used cement tanks, due to high construction cost, immobility and the non-visibility of fish.

#### *Types of food and methods of feeding*

Most of breeders chose artificial feed (72%) (Figure 3c) because of its feed-ability, presence of adequate nutrition availability and accessibility in the market. 7% of the target group used house waste as feed for a variety of fish due to lack of knowledge.

#### *Reasons for keeping fish as pets*

Table 1: Reasons for keeping fish as pet

Reasons	Percentage (%)
Attraction	18
Hobby	66
Health	05
Education	03
Suitability	08

Most of the participants engage in fish ownership as a hobby (Table 1), because it gives happiness, calmness, peace and escape from the competitive challenging world. Miller – Mogan (2010) listed fish keeping as the second most popular hobby in United states. The changes in human lifestyle, availability of ornamental fish, less initial installation and maintenance cost are the reasons for the fondness of aquarium keeping as a hobby. Aquariums have become a sought-after hobby in the world as limitations on keeping pets such as cats and dogs in concentrated apartments (Dey, 2016) have posed a challenge for its popularity.

### *Identified Constraints*

Fish owners who responded to the survey reported that diseases, lack of proper knowledge in maintenance of aquarium fish especially monitoring the changes of water quality, proper interval feeding, cleaning and requirement of cost for purchasing accessory equipment such as aerators and filters are the major challenges faced in pet fish ownership.

### *Solutions for identified Constraints*

Providing proper awareness for home aquarium owners through brochures, leaflets, videos and newspapers, creating paid jobs related to fish tank maintenance to provide a worthy service for pet owners, promoting animal welfare and health and functioning a separate unit at pet shops to educate buyers regarding management and maintenance of aquariums in the home will be the possible solutions to overcome the challenges faced by the pet fish keepers.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This study has found that fish pet owning is a popular hobby practiced in Jaffna. The findings reveal that people of the younger age category choose to be involved in this ornamental fish guardianship. This study leads to the understanding that most of the surveyed prefer freshwater glass tanks, artificial feed and low-cost fancy fish in home aquarium.

## **5. REFERENCES**

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