



TRADITIONAL FISHING PRACTICES AND INDIGENOUS TERMINOLOGY IN BIEN UNIDO, BOHOL

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ABSTRACT

This study documented and analyzed the traditional fishing practices of local fishers in Bien Unido, Bohol, focusing on fishing methods, tools, techniques, processes, and indigenous terminology. Using a qualitative Type 2 Developmental Research Design (Richey et al., 2004), eight to ten purposively selected key informants identified as experienced fishers and community knowledge holders participated in the study. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews integrated with cultural mapping, field observations, audio recordings, and photographs. The data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis informed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Findings revealed three main fishing methods, bunsod, pasol, and kitang, each characterized by distinct tools, techniques, and structured sequential processes reflecting environmental adaptation and accumulated local knowledge. Indigenous terminology was found to encode fishing actions, gear usage, environmental conditions, and experiential outcomes that guide fishing practices. The study concluded that traditional fishing systems in Bien Unido were structured, knowledge-based practices, while local terminology functioned as an integrated cultural system for transmitting fishing knowledge. The findings supported the documentation of community heritage and provided a basis for developing culture-based educational materials.

Keywords: *Traditional fishing practices, Local terminology, Bien Unido, Bohol*

INTRODUCTION

Bohol, the Philippines' first UNESCO Global Geopark, is known for its karst landscapes, the Chocolate Hills, and the Danajon Double Barrier Reef, one of only six in the world (UNESCO, 2023). Within this ecological and cultural setting, Bien Unido maintains active community engagement in marine conservation (CCEF, 2024) while sustaining traditional fishing livelihoods that have been transmitted across generations.

According to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, knowledge is constructed and shared through social interaction within communities (McLeod, 2025). In Bien Unido, traditional fishing practices are transmitted within families and local networks, embedding ecological understanding, technical skills, and indigenous terminology. Systematic documentation of these practices contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage and provides a clear account of how ecological and technical knowledge is socially transmitted over time.

National and local policy frameworks likewise support the preservation and sustainable use of fishing knowledge. The 1987 Philippine Constitution (Art. XIV, Sec. 17) recognizes the rights of indigenous and local communities to preserve their cultural heritage. Republic Act No. 10654 (2015) strengthens sustainable fisheries management, while Bien Unido Municipal Ordinance No. 2021-01 promotes conservation and equitable use of coastal resources, thereby protecting small-scale fishers and traditional fishing practices. These legal instruments underscore the importance of documenting fishing tools, techniques, processes, and indigenous terminology within the community context.

Previous studies in Philippine coastal communities provide insights into traditional fishing methods, ecological knowledge, and, in some cases, cultural values, as reflected in the works of Alibin and Rabago (2025), Cabigunda-Gordon (2025), and Barbarona et al. (2025). These studies demonstrate how coastal fishers integrate local knowledge systems with environmental conditions to sustain livelihoods and resource use.

Despite these contributions, systematic documentation of Bien Unido's fishing practices and indigenous terminology remains limited. This gap highlights the need for a focused and context-specific study. Accordingly, this research aimed to document the traditional fishing practices of Bien Unido, with emphasis on tools, techniques, processes, and local nomenclature. The study contributes to the preservation of local heritage, supports future research, and strengthens understanding of community-based ecological knowledge systems.

Research Questions

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the traditional fishing practices in Bien Unido as characterized by tools, techniques, and processes?
 - 1.1 What fishing methods are practiced by fishers?

- 1.2 What tools are used in each method, and how are they employed?
- 1.3 What techniques are applied in each method?
- 1.4 What are the sequential processes involved in each method, from preparation to post-fishing activities?
2. What local terminology and indigenous nomenclature are used by fishers in Bien Unido?
 - 2.1 What are the local terms used by fishers?
 - 2.2 What are the contextual meanings of these terms?
 - 2.3 How are these terms applied in fishing practices?
 - 2.4 How do these terms reflect the cultural, ecological, and technical knowledge of the community?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative Type 2 Developmental Research Design (Richey et al., 2004) to systematically document and analyze the traditional fishing practices of local fishers in Bien Unido, Bohol, focusing on tools, techniques, processes, and indigenous terminology. The research was conducted in selected mainland barangays of Tuboran, Puerto San Pedro, Nueva Estrella, and Poblacion, where fishing remains a central livelihood and cultural tradition. Eight to ten key informants were purposively selected based on at least five years of active fishing experience and recognition by the community as knowledge bearers, ensuring cultural credibility and authenticity.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews integrated with cultural mapping, field observations, audio recordings, and photographs. All procedures were conducted under strict ethical guidelines to safeguard participants' confidentiality and cultural integrity. A researcher-designed interview guide and an adapted mapping template were used to capture detailed information on fishing methods, tools and techniques employed, sequential processes from preparation to post-fishing activities, and local terms and indigenous nomenclature within the fishing community. Field notes, recordings, and photographs complemented these instruments by providing contextual and visual documentation.



Collected data were systematically transcribed, organized, and thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns corresponding to tools, techniques, processes, and local terminology, informed by the analytical approach of Braun and Clarke (2006). These were then categorized and interpreted to represent the community's traditional knowledge. The study was limited to actively practiced, culturally significant fishing methods performed manually or with minimal mechanization, using locally crafted gear and reflecting community-validated traditional knowledge. Historical or discontinued practices and fishing methods outside the selected barangays were excluded. Additional limitations include constraints related to time, weather conditions, and participant availability, which may have influenced the scope of data collection.





RESULTS




The findings of this study are organized according to the research questions on traditional fishing practices characterized by tools, techniques, and processes, and on local terminology and indigenous nomenclature. The results are presented through narrative descriptions supported by thematic tables.



Tools, Techniques, and Processes. The analysis of interviews, cultural mapping, and field observations revealed that fishers in Bien Unido employ distinct fishing methods that integrate specific tools, techniques, and sequential processes. Each method reflects manual skill, environmental adaptation, and indigenous ecological knowledge rooted in long-standing community practice. Table 1 summarizes the fishing methods documented, including their corresponding tools, techniques, and processes.

Table 1. Traditional Fishing Practices of Bien Unido: Tools, Techniques and Processes

| Fishing Method | Tools | Techniques | Processes |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Bunsod: A stationary trap-based fishing method constructed from bamboo poles and netting and installed in deeper nearshore waters to capture fish, shrimp, and crabs.</p> | <p>a. bunsod</p>  | <p>Passive trapping where fish, shrimp, and crabs naturally enter the submerged bamboo-and-net structure and are manually retrieved using scoop nets (sibot).</p> | <p>I. Preparation Phase</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gather Equipment: Assemble the primary tools, specifically the sibot and sibot-sibot. 2. Ensure Visibility: Prepare and test flashlights to ensure readiness for the environment. <p>II. Fishing Phase</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Passive Trapping: Wait for fish, shrimp, and crabs to naturally enter the submerged traps. 4. Collection: Use the <i>sibot</i> [scooping net with a handle] and <i>sibot-sibot</i> [without a handle] to manually scoop and retrieve the catch from the traps. <p>III. Post-Fishing Phase</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Gear Maintenance: Organize and store all |
| | <p>b. sahid (net)</p>  | | |
| | <p>c. sibot</p> | | |

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| |  | | <p>equipment to maintain its condition.</p> <p>6. Yield Management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Commercial: Sell a portion of the fresh catch. ○ Preservation: Dry or ice the remaining catch for future sale or use. ○ Domestic: Prepare a portion for immediate household meals (sud-an). |
| | <p>d. sibot-sibot</p>  | | |
| | <p>e. flashlight</p>  | | |
| <p>Pasol: A hook-and-line fishing method using baited hooks (paon) deployed from a boat to catch individual fish in deeper waters.</p> | <p>a. pasol</p>  <p>b. paon (bait)</p> | <p>Active hook-and-line fishing involving bait deployment, monitoring, and retrieval upon fish strike.</p> | <p>I. Preparation Phase</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bait Preparation: Prepare the paon (bait) to be used for the session. 2. Vessel Readiness: Inspect the boat and ensure there is sufficient fuel for the trip. 3. Gear Setup: Organize the lines and hooks to ensure they are untangled and ready for deployment. <p>II. Fishing Phase</p> |

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| |  | | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Deployment: Upon reaching the fishing ground, set the baited hook (pasol) into the water. 5. Monitoring: Wait for a fish to strike or take the bait. 6. Retrieval: Once a fish is hooked, carefully pull in the line to collect the catch. <p>III. Post-Fishing Phase</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Inventory Storage: Clean and store the fishing tackle, boat, and remaining fuel. 8. Distribution: Allocate a portion of the catch for commercial sale. Reserve the remaining portion for household consumption. |
| <p>Kitang: A multi-hook line fishing method deployed from a boat in deeper waters, typically conducted at dawn.</p> | <p>a. kitang</p>  <p>b. bato (rocks)</p>  <p>c. paon (bait)</p> | <p>Coordinated multi-hook deployment and retrieval involving simultaneous handling of multiple baited hooks.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Preparation Phase <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure lamp is ready and functional for dawn deployment and low-visibility fishing conditions. 2. Vessel & Propulsion: Prepare the boat and ensure both the paddles (bugsay) and fuel (gasolina) are ready. 3. Tackle Preparation: Organize multiple hooks and systematically bait each one with paon. II. Fishing Phase <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Strategic Setting: Deploy the baited hooks at targeted locations, typically timed for dawn to maximize the catch. 5. Team Coordination: Work in tandem with a partner |

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| |  | | <p>to drop the hooks into the water efficiently.</p> <p>6. Active Monitoring: Keep watch over the deployed lines while they are submerged.</p> <p>7. Coordinated Recovery: Collaborate with the partner to retrieve the hooks and secure the catch.</p> |
| | <p>d. lamp</p>  | | <p>III. Post-Fishing Phase</p> <p>8. Equipment Security: Collect all gear, paddles, and remaining fuel.</p> <p>9. Storage of Catch and Equipment: Store the catch and equipment systematically to prevent any loss or damage.</p> |

Local Terminology and Indigenous Nomenclature. Participants identified local fishing-related terms that reflect both functional and cultural dimensions of fishing practices. Table 2 presents the terms, their contextual meanings, and English translations.

Table 2. Local Terminology and Indigenous Nomenclature Used by Bien Unido Fishers

| Local Terminology | Definition (Contextual Meaning) | English Translation |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Arya / Mag-arya | The act of casting or deploying fishing gear strategically in the water. | Deployment |
| Ayaay | The half-moon phases with weak water currents, generally unfavorable for bunsod and kitang but favorable for pasol fishing. | Half-moon phases |
| Bukad/Bukaron/ Magbukad | The act of retrieving or collecting catch from bunsod traps. | Retrieval/ harvest |
| Bunsod | A passive, stationary trap made of bamboo poles and screen, submerged in deeper water, designed to guide fish into a chamber; the term also refers to the fishing method using this trap. | Bamboo-enclosed fish corral |

| | | |
|-------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Dumpil | A passive, bamboo-and-net trap similar to bunsod, but installed in shallow waters and exposed during low tide; the term also refers to the fishing method using this trap. | Bamboo-enclosed shallow fish trap |
| Ilagak / Maglagak | The act of placing or positioning fishing gear in the water. | Deploying gear |
| Ilas | A condition of unfavorable or “bad luck” in fishing, characterized by little to no catch. It is believed to disrupt fishing success due to unseen environmental or spiritual factors. | Bad luck condition |
| Kitang | A set of multiple hooks and lines used simultaneously to catch fish; the term also refers to the fishing method using this gear. | Multi-hook line system |
| Magkulyada | Windy and turbid sea condition that enhances bunsod effectiveness, resulting in higher and more diverse fish catch; without this condition, catches are generally low and mostly consist of shrimps. | Turbid/windy condition |
| Palangre | A set of multiple hooks and line similar to kitang, but using larger hooks designed to catch bigger fish species; the term also refers to the fishing method using this gear. | Multiple large-hook line system |

The findings demonstrated that fishing practices in Bien Unido are structured, methodical, and knowledge-driven systems rather than informal or purely experiential activities. Likewise, indigenous terminology functions as an integrated system of ecological, technical, and cultural knowledge that guides fishing practice and preserves community-based understanding across generations.

DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the traditional fishing methods in Bien Unido, detailing the tools, techniques, and sequential processes employed by local fishers. The identified methods bunsod, pasol, and kitang demonstrate distinct yet systematic approaches shaped by environmental conditions, resource availability, and accumulated local experience. Bunsod, a stationary trap-based method constructed from bamboo poles and nets, exemplifies passive fishing in which fish, shrimp, and crabs naturally enter the structure and are manually retrieved using scoop nets (sibot and sibot-sibot). This method follows an organized sequence of preparation, fishing, and post-fishing activities, highlighting

Careful planning, minimal disturbance to the marine environment, and efficient yield management.

Pasol, in contrast, represents an active hook-and-line technique that requires direct engagement from fishers. The use of baited hooks (*paon*), combined with strategic deployment, monitoring, and retrieval, reflects manual skill, attentiveness, and adaptability during fishing operations. Similarly, *kitang*, a multi-hook line method, emphasizes coordination and precision, as multiple baited hooks are deployed and monitored simultaneously, often involving teamwork and timed execution. The structured phases observed in these methods, from preparation to post-fishing, demonstrate procedural consistency and technical organization in local fishing practices.

These findings are consistent with the study of Alibin and Rabago (2025), which highlights that traditional fishing methods follow systematic processes, incorporate specific tools, and are guided by environmental awareness such as wind, water conditions, and seasonal patterns. Likewise, Barbarona et al. (2025) note that fishing techniques in coastal communities vary depending on time, environmental conditions, and target species, reflecting adaptive strategies and accumulated experiential knowledge. In a similar context, Cabigunda-Gordon (2025) describes how fishers employ diverse methods such as hook-and-line, traps, and nets, each involving specific tools and procedures suited to varying fishing environments.

Overall, the results indicate that traditional fishing practices in Bien Unido are structured, methodical, and knowledge-based rather than random or purely experiential. The integration of tools, techniques, and sequential processes reflects a high level of technical and ecological understanding, reinforcing their role as organized and adaptive livelihood systems.

Table 2 presents the local terminology and indigenous nomenclature used by fishers in Bien Unido, providing both contextual meanings and English translations. The terms reflect how language is used to encode actions, tools, methods, environmental observations, and fishing outcomes within the community. Action-based terms such as *arya/mag-arya* and *ilagak/maglagak* describe the act of deploying or positioning fishing gear, while *bukad/magbukad* refers to the retrieval or harvesting of catch. These terms demonstrate that local language directly represents procedural knowledge embedded in fishing activities.

In addition, several terms simultaneously denote both fishing gear and method, such as *bunsod*, *dumpil*, *kitang*, and *palangre*. This dual function of terminology indicates that indigenous nomenclature encapsulates both the material and operational aspects of fishing practices, reflecting an integrated understanding of tools and techniques. The presence of terms such as *ilas*, which refers to unfavorable or unlucky fishing conditions, further shows how experiential outcomes are linguistically represented within the community.

These findings align with Alibin and Rabago (2025), which emphasize that fishing knowledge includes not only techniques and tools but also beliefs, observations, and culturally transmitted practices shaped by environmental conditions. Similarly, Barbarona et al. (2025) highlights that fishing communities maintain culturally embedded knowledge systems, including beliefs and practices that influence fishing outcomes and decision-making. Cabigunda-Gordon (2025) also supports this perspective by noting that fishing practices and decisions are influenced by environmental conditions, resource patterns, and accumulated local knowledge, even when not always formally codified.

Overall, the terminology presented in Table 2 demonstrates that indigenous nomenclature in Bien Unido functions as a structured system of knowledge capturing procedural actions, technical understanding, and experiential insights. This linguistic system serves as a practical guide for fishing activities while preserving culturally embedded knowledge across generations.

Conclusions

This study specifically addressed the research questions outlined in the Introduction. Fishers in Bien Unido practice traditional methods such as bunsod (stationary trap), pasol (hook-and-line), and kitang (multi-hook line), each adapted to environmental conditions, target species, and available resources. These methods employ specific tools, bamboo poles and nets with sibot and sibot-sibot for bunsod, baited hooks (paon) and lines for pasol, and multiple baited hooks for kitang that are systematically applied to ensure efficiency and sustainability. Techniques vary across methods, ranging from passive trapping in bunsod, active monitoring in pasol, to coordinated deployment in kitang, reflecting procedural planning and adaptability. Each method follows a structured sequence of preparation, fishing, and post-fishing activities, demonstrating consistent application of technical and ecological knowledge.

Local terminology in Bien Unido further encodes procedural, technical, and environmental understanding. Terms such as *arya/mag-arya*, *ilagak/maglagak*, *bukad/magbukad*, *bunsod*, *kitang*, *dumpil*, *palangre*, and *ilas* describe fishing actions, gear-method combinations, and environmental conditions. These terms are actively applied during fishing, guiding the deployment, retrieval, and adjustment of gear, while terms like *ilas* indicate unfavorable conditions and inform decision-making. The use of indigenous nomenclature reflects the integration of technical skills, ecological awareness, and cultural values, supporting intergenerational knowledge transfer and reinforcing the adaptive and sustainable nature of traditional fishing practices in the community.

Recommendations

The findings of this study support the development and institutionalization of a culture-based pedagogical framework grounded on the documented fishing practices and indigenous ecological knowledge of Bien Unido. This framework may be utilized to strengthen the integration of local knowledge systems into instructional design and cultural education. In line with this, validated lesson exemplars may be produced and

implemented by integrating local fishing methods and indigenous terminology, aligned with Senior High School curriculum standards to enhance contextualized learning. Furthermore, expanded community-based documentation and expert validation are recommended to further strengthen cultural authenticity, ecological representation, and educational applicability across barangays in Bien Unido.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The researcher complied with all ethical requirements mandated by the College of Education (COED) and the Holy Name University Ethical Review Board (ERB). Ethical clearance was obtained prior to fieldwork, and informed consent was secured from all participants after the study procedures were explained in the local dialect. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. The confidentiality and anonymity of participants were strictly maintained through the use of pseudonyms, removal of identifying details, and reporting of fishing locations only at the general or barangay level unless explicit permission was granted. All data, including audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes, were securely stored in encrypted devices with restricted access and will be retained for academic purposes only before secure deletion within the prescribed period. The study ensured cultural sensitivity by recognizing fishing knowledge as community-owned and intergenerational, and member checking was conducted to validate the accuracy of cultural descriptions.

Barangay officials assisted only in participant identification and had no involvement in selection, data collection, or access to responses. The researcher confirmed that there was no conflict of interest and that the study was conducted without financial, personal, or institutional bias. Although the study involved minimal risk, any potential discomfort was addressed through breaks and voluntary participation, with tokens of appreciation provided without coercion. The researcher also declared the use of ChatGPT, an AI-assisted writing tool, solely for language refinement, editing, and formatting purposes, while affirming that all data collection, analysis, interpretation, and conclusions were independently conducted and fully under the researcher's responsibility.

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