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## A Taste of Success: Narratives of Bagoong Industry Workers in Lingayen, Pangasinan, Philippines

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### Abstract

**Aim:** This study explored the lived experiences of bagoong industry workers in Lingayen, Pangasinan, Philippines, focusing on the significance of their work, perceptions, challenges, adaptive responses, and definitions of success. While the bagoong industry is integral to the local culture and economy, the narratives of its labor force remain underexamined.

**Methodology:** A qualitative narrative research design was employed, using semi-structured interviews with ten purposively selected participants. Data were thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns and insights.

**Results:** Workers perceive the bagoong industry as essential for sustaining households and preserving culinary traditions. It provides livelihood, fosters social connectedness, and nurtures cultural pride. Challenges include lack of employment benefits, unstable fish supply, and workplace conflicts. To address these, workers adopt strategies such as stockpiling fish during periods of abundance and resolving disputes through open communication. Success is defined in terms of meeting family needs, ensuring household stability, and supporting children's education.

**Conclusion:** The study highlights the resilience of bagoong workers, whose efforts sustain both their families and local traditions despite precarious conditions. It underscores the need for stronger institutional support, including food safety training, enforcement of labor standards, and promotion of sustainable fishing practices.

**Keywords:** *Bagoong workers, perceptions, challenges, adaptive strategies, livelihood, narratives of success*

### INTRODUCTION

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) serve as essential drivers of economic growth, employment, and innovation, particularly in developing countries. Defined by limited assets, income, and workforce, SMEs operate on a scale smaller than large corporations. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023), small enterprises employ 10–99 workers, while medium enterprises employ 100–199. Within this classification, industries involved in fishing, salt production, and fish fermentation, including bagoong production, are regarded as SMEs.

Recent data and developments underscore the significance of bagoong as a notable export commodity from Pangasinan, contributing substantially to the Philippines' processed food exports. In 2024, the Philippines exported shrimp paste with blachan (a type of bagoong) to various international markets. Notably, shipments to South Korea increased by 2.12% to \$577,108 compared to the previous year. Other export destinations included Canada, the Netherlands, Japan, Guam, Singapore, and Australia (San Juan, 2025).

Despite its value, the bagoong industry continues to face considerable challenges. These include informal labor practices, lack of social protection and employee benefits, health risks, and limited access to institutional support. These concerns reflect broader systemic issues affecting SMEs. Relatively, the study of Bareño et al. (2022) revealed issues such as job insecurity, lack of benefits, irregular work status, and cost-saving measures for employers, barriers that prevent the full realization of labor protections and stable employment. Similar findings were echoed in recent research that highlighted the precarious work conditions of employees in other industries, where commitment to teaching and labor is often strained by structural challenges (Pangilinan, 2025). This directly relates



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to the concerns of labor protection and the promotion of full employment enshrined in Article 3 of the Philippine Labor Code. Hence, addressing barriers within SMEs, including those faced by bagoong workers, is essential to fulfilling the said legal mandates.

Moreover, Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) underscores the importance of providing safe, productive, and dignified work for all. Recognizing the lived realities of SME workers is thus integral to national and global efforts toward inclusive economic development (Global Goals, 2024). Strengthening academe-industry collaboration also offers opportunities to address workplace literacy gaps and improve labor conditions in traditional sectors such as bagoong production (Amihan & Sanchez, 2023).

Furthermore, recent research has begun to explore the underexamined dimensions of labor in the traditional bagoong (fermented fish paste) industry in Pangasinan, Philippines. While previous studies have primarily focused on product quality, health standards, and market trends, the lived experiences of workers sustaining this sector remain largely undocumented.

Relatively, Gonzales et al. (2023) examined the roles of women in bagoong and salt production in Infanta, Pangasinan, finding that women in this sector are often older, college-educated, and responsible for managing family expenditures. The study highlights the centrality of women's labor in sustaining the industry and the intertwined relationship between labor, household responsibilities, and local production practices. These findings collectively suggest that, despite the cultural and economic significance of bagoong production, little is known about the lived realities of its workers, leaving a critical gap in both labor and cultural studies.

In light of this context, the study seeks to document and analyze the narratives of bagoong industry workers in Lingayen, Pangasinan. By examining their lived experiences, this research emphasizes the human dimension of local food production and provides insights into the social, economic, and cultural factors that shape labor practices. Thus, this study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of bagoong workers to inform culturally grounded labor and development policies.

### Statement of the Problem

The bagoong industry of Lingayen, Pangasinan is not only a source of livelihood but also a cultural symbol that sustains local culinary traditions and community identity. Despite its economic and socio-cultural importance, the lived experiences of bagoong industry workers remain underexplored in academic research. Most studies highlight the product's role in trade and heritage, yet little is known about the narratives of the workers themselves—their perceptions, challenges, coping strategies, and personal definitions of success. This gap in knowledge limits a holistic understanding of the industry, especially in relation to labor welfare, cultural pride, and family sustenance. Hence, there is a pressing need to document the realities of bagoong workers in order to inform local governance, strengthen support mechanisms, and ensure that their contributions to the economy and culture are properly acknowledged and addressed.

### Research Objectives

This study aimed to explore the narratives of bagoong workers in Lingayen, Pangasinan, Philippines. Specifically, it sought to:

1. To determine the significance of the bagoong industry in the lives of the participants;
2. To explore the participants' perceptions of the bagoong industry;
3. To identify the challenges encountered by bagoong workers;
4. To examine the strategies employed by bagoong workers in addressing these challenges; and
5. To document the success stories of bagoong workers.

### Research Questions

1. What is the significance of the bagoong industry in the lives of the participants?
2. How do the participants perceive the bagoong industry?
3. What challenges are encountered by bagoong workers in Lingayen?
4. How do bagoong workers cope with or address the challenges they face?
5. In what ways do bagoong workers define and narrate their success?



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## METHODS

### Research Design

This study employed a qualitative methodology, specifically narrative inquiry. According to Alele and Malau-Aduli (2023), narrative inquiry investigates how individuals interpret their lives and social contexts through personal stories. It allows researchers and participants to co-construct meaning through storytelling, which reveals emotions, values, and cultural insights. This approach emphasizes the use of interviews and other narrative materials, which are analyzed to uncover recurring themes and patterns. Narrative inquiry is particularly suited to this study, as it explores the lived experiences of bagoong industry workers in Lingayen, Pangasinan. This method enabled participants to articulate the personal significance of their work, the challenges they encounter, and their responses to those challenges. Through storytelling, participants shared perspectives on their livelihoods and success stories within the industry, offering insights into their identities and socio-cultural contexts. Similar to how reflective teaching practices uncover deeper insights into classroom experiences (Bontuyan, 2025), narrative inquiry here was essential to capture the nuanced realities of the workers' lives.

### Population and Sampling

The study involved ten (10) participants who were engaged in various aspects of bagoong production in Lingayen, Pangasinan. The researchers employed purposive sampling to select individuals who met the inclusion criteria: (1) at least 18 years old, (2) with a minimum of one year of experience in the bagoong industry, and (3) regardless of educational attainment or civil status. Purposive sampling was appropriate because it allowed for the selection of information-rich participants with relevant experiences (Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023). This approach aligns with prior studies that emphasized the importance of targeting participants with firsthand knowledge to ensure credible findings in education and social contexts (Amihan & Sanchez, 2023). The participants were identified using pseudonyms such as Bagoong Worker 1 (BW1), BW2, etc., to protect their privacy.

### Instruments

The primary instrument for data collection was a semi-structured interview guide developed based on the study's objectives and insights from related literature. The guide included two parts: Part I covered demographic information such as age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, and years of employment; Part II focused on eliciting narratives related to the participants' experiences in the industry. The interview questions were prepared in English and translated into Filipino to ensure participant comprehension. Follow-up questions were posed to elicit richer narratives. The instrument was subjected to validation from five experts in Social Studies or Social Science disciplines. Feedback from validators confirmed high content validity. As suggested in previous research, careful validation of instruments ensures alignment with both study objectives and participants' contexts (Carvajal et al., 2025).

### Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection was a semi-structured interview guide developed based on the study's objectives and insights from related literature. The guide included two parts: Part I covered demographic information such as age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, and years of employment; Part II focused on eliciting narratives related to the participants' experiences in the industry. The interview questions were prepared in English and translated into Filipino to ensure participant comprehension. Follow-up questions were posed to elicit richer narratives. The instrument was subjected to validation by five experts in Social Studies or Social Science disciplines. Feedback from validators confirmed high content validity.

### Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic narrative analysis. Transcriptions of the interviews were reviewed and coded manually for recurring themes and sub-themes. Patterns across participant narratives were identified and linked to the study objectives. Coded data were interpreted to capture both shared and unique aspects of participant experiences. Further, Colaizzi's method was employed to ensure the validity and authenticity of the generated themes by presenting them to both the participants and field experts for confirmation (Soriano et al., 2025). This systematic process ensured that themes were grounded in participant narratives and that both shared and unique aspects of their experiences were captured. As reflective practices have proven effective in validating authentic insights in teaching contexts (Bontuyan, 2025), thematic analysis here likewise ensured rigor and reliability.

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### Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, local permission was secured through a letter of request approved by the Barangay Chairman of Pangapisan North, acknowledging the community's support for the study. While this does not constitute formal ethical clearance from an institutional review board, it served as a local gatekeeping approval. All participants were briefed on the purpose, scope, and voluntary nature of the study and were asked to sign an informed consent form. Validators of the interview guide were also reminded of confidentiality obligations, and participants' anonymity was ensured by replacing their names with pseudonyms. Data were securely stored and accessible only to the researchers. The study adhered to ethical principles of confidentiality, informed consent, and respect for participants' rights and welfare.

### RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the participants. The findings are organized into themes aligned with the study's objectives to ensure coherence and clarity. Each theme is supported by direct participant responses and relevant literature to contextualize and validate the results.

#### 1. Significance of the Bagoong Industry

The making of bagoong, a fermented seafood paste in the Philippines, carries significant economic and cultural value. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023), Pangasinan recorded a total fisheries production of 38,361.18 metric tons in the second quarter of 2023, with Infanta contributing 73.33 metric tons and Bolinao contributing 100 metric tons. Bagoong production has become a thriving industry in Pangasinan, recognized as a hub due to its salt production and the region's saline atmosphere.

##### 1.1 Personal Value

Participants consistently emphasized that working in the bagoong industry serves as a primary source of livelihood and personal fulfillment. For many, the job not only supports daily needs but also fosters a sense of purpose and pride.

**BW 1** shared: *"It is important because this is where we get our daily expenses. This is my passion because I have been doing it for a long time and have grown to love it."*

**BW 2** echoed this sentiment: *"This is where we get our daily food. What I earn goes to my wife's medical expenses, my children's school supplies... For me, this has become a passion."*

Several others described similar experiences, noting that their long tenure in the industry contributed to a deep connection with their work.

However, not all participants considered their work a passion. **BW 9** noted: *"I cannot say it is my passion... I hope for a higher salary."* **BW 10** expressed similar concerns about income stability.

These mixed perspectives align with current literature on job satisfaction and personal motivation. For example, Olivar, Galo, Panis, and Ballesteros (2023) found that food service workers in Davao City placed high value on job characteristics such as stability, clear responsibilities, and meaningful tasks, which are especially important to those with longer tenure or more experience. Indeed.com (2023) emphasize that alignment between personal values and job roles fosters retention and fulfillment, though financial challenges can temper such sentiments. UOTP Marketing (2023) further suggest that while passion enhances well-being, financial insecurity may limit its realization.

##### 1.2 Culinary Role

Participants recognized the essential role of bagoong in Filipino cuisine, highlighting not only its culinary importance but also its cultural significance. They noted its widespread use as a flavor enhancer, a staple condiment at the dining table, and a key ingredient in a variety of main dishes. Participants emphasized how bagoong adds a distinctive flavor that defines the taste of traditional Filipino meals and contributes to the rich heritage of local food practices.



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**BW 3** stated: *"It's a dipping sauce for mangoes, okra, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes."* **BW 5** noted: *"It's a flavor enhancer for pakbet, dinengdeng, sweet potato leaves, and mung bean soup."*

This perspective is aligned with literature discussing job satisfaction and personal motivation. For instance, Reyes (2025) highlights that Filipino condiments, such as bagoong, play a significant role in enhancing the depth and authenticity of Filipino cuisine, contributing to the cultural identity of meals. Koppe (2021) and Aster et al. (2023) also affirm bagoong's contribution to Filipino culinary identity.

## 2. Perceptions of Bagoong Workers about the Bagoong Industry

Workers in the bagoong sector regard it as more than a livelihood, it is a source of financial support, social connection, and cultural pride. Their narratives reveal that the industry contributes not only to household income but also to emotional well-being and community identity. Imaduddin (2024) emphasized that strong workplace friendships, combined with overall employee well-being, significantly enhance productivity. The study highlights how positive interpersonal relationships at work not only foster supportive environments but also reduce stress and improve job performance. Beyond its role as livelihood, participants also emphasized the social value of their work.

### 2.1 Means of Livelihood

Participants consistently described the bagoong industry as their community's main economic driver. **BW 4** explained: *"Because of bagoong, we have jobs here in Pangapisan North. There is no other source of income."*

Others highlighted proximity and flexibility, which allowed them to balance family and work. **BW 6** shared: *"If I could choose, I'd still prefer this work... I can go home every day."*

These experiences illustrate how bagoong sustains local households. Beyond serving as a staple food product, its production provides an important livelihood that allows families to meet daily needs and improve their quality of life. In Bicol, for instance, the Department of Science and Technology's Community Empowerment through Science and Technology (CEST) program enhanced bagoong production, enabling housewives-fishers to significantly increase their annual income, thus creating a more sustainable source of livelihood for local communities (Bernadas, 2024). Additionally, the Department of Trade and Industry (2021) recognized bagoong under the One Town, One Product (OTOP) program, underscoring its importance in supporting livelihood and preserving cultural identity.

### 2.2 Social Bond

For many participants, bagoong production was more than a means of earning, it fostered camaraderie and emotional support that helped them cope with daily challenges. Research has found that social support and positive interpersonal relationships at work are strongly linked to greater job satisfaction and resilience among employees, helping them better cope with work stress. Social support and resilience were positively associated with job satisfaction, which helped buffer stress and improve well-being (Karadaş, A., & Duran, S., 2021). This resonates with the narratives of the workers.

**BW 1** noted: *"It's enjoyable because we have unity. If you have friends, they help when you have problems. It's not just a job but companionship."*

Similarly, **BW 4** said: *"We earn, but it's more motivating when colleagues lift your mood."* **BW 7** and **BW 8** also emphasized that laughter and shared conversations made their burdens lighter.

*"We're happy because problems feel lighter when we're together,"* said **BW 7**.

*"We laugh to ease fatigue as long as we do our work properly,"* added **BW 8**.



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Together, these stories show that the workplace functions not only as an economic space but also as a source of social belonging. Positive peer relationships are linked to higher productivity, lower stress, and greater employee engagement (Gallup, 2024).

### 2.3 Cultural Role

Participants articulated a strong link between bagoong production and cultural identity in Pangasinan, particularly in the town of Lingayen. Their responses reflected pride in sustaining a tradition deeply rooted in local history and heritage.

**BW 1** remarked: “When you say bagoong, people immediately think of Pangasinan... it becomes part of our culture.”

**BW 2** echoed this sentiment: “Lingayen’s bagoong is well-known, even in other countries. It’s like a trademark passed to the next generation.” Others affirmed that the product’s recognition extends beyond their community, with **BW 10** stating: “It’s our identity—it won’t disappear. We can pass it to the next generation.”

This cultural connection is supported by Arcinue (2021) who traced the origins of bagoong in Lingayen to the late 1700s, when Claudio Ventanilla, a local fisherman, introduced the practice of fermenting fish with salt to preserve excess catch. This innovation became a culinary tradition, symbolizing the community’s resilience and deep connection to the sea.

The cultural relevance of bagoong is also celebrated through local festivals and events. Participants highlighted the *Agēw na Manag-inasin* (Day of the Saltmakers) initiated by Pangapisan’s bagoong producers, and the establishment of the Bagoong Festival in 2011, which expanded into a town-wide celebration the following year.

**BW 10** recalled: “We won the street dance competition in 2010.” “It was us here in Pangapisan who proposed the idea of having a bagoong festival,” added **BW 3**.

These cultural expressions were institutionalized under the One Town, One Product (OTOP) program, which designated bagoong as Lingayen’s featured product. The Department of Trade and Industry (2021) explained that the OTOP initiative promotes community-rooted products tied to local history, heritage, and identity. Recent studies also emphasize that traditional condiments like bagoong serve as a culinary culture, embodying continuity and collective memory across generations (Aster et al., 2023).

### 3. The Challenges of Bagoong Workers

Workplace challenges are inevitable and may arise from various factors such as working conditions, resource limitations, or interpersonal dynamics. As emphasized by Anderson (2023), understanding workplace issues is essential for improving employee welfare and organizational efficiency. In this study, participants identified three major concerns: lack of employee benefits, limited fish supply, and interpersonal conflicts.

#### 3.1 Benefit Programs

Despite existing Philippine labor laws requiring enrollment in social benefit programs such as SSS, PhilHealth, and Pag-IBIG (Yu, 2023), many participants reported having no access to these benefits—especially those working in small-scale bagoong factories.

*“We do not receive anything like that here because our factory is small, so our boss would not be able to handle it.” (BW 1)*

*“None, because the factory where we work is just small.” (BW 8)*

*“Maybe it is because I do not work here continuously, so I only come in when there is work available.” (BW 3)*

However, participants from larger factories had more positive experiences:





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*"Yes, we are complete with benefits here, such as SSS, PhilHealth, Pag-IBIG, and Insurance." (BW 5)*

*"We have benefits here because our boss insists we get them." (BW 10)*

Such circumstances demonstrate the instability of employment in SMEs and the informal sectors in developing countries like the Philippines, where many enterprises lack the capacity to ensure full social protection for their workers. A recent study by Cabegin (2023) found that over 70% of Filipino workers in 2021 were informally employed, and many of these informally employed lack mandated labor and social protections.

### 3.2 Availability of Fish Supply

Participants cited unstable fish supply, especially during the rainy season as a major challenge affecting bagoong production, affecting both production schedules and income.

*"During the rainy season, if there are no fish delivered to us, we have nothing to process, which means we do not have any work" (BW 1).*

*"When it is rainy, the supply of fish is limited" (BW 3).*

*"Production and sales are low during the rainy season... since we are a small factory" (BW 4).*

*"During the rainy season, our workload is lighter than in summer" (BW 7).*

*"During the rainy season, we produce less... Our earnings drop since we are paid per piece" (BW 10).*

Local manufacturer concerns align with industry-wide observations; PSA data show fisheries output dropped to its lowest level in two decades, declining 5% to about 4.05 million metric tons in 2024. This includes substantial contractions across aquaculture, marine municipal, and inland fisheries. Environmental factors such as climate change and overfishing were cited as contributing causes (BusinessMirror, 2025). In line with this, recognizing the difficulties in maintaining a stable supply of raw materials, Mayor Bataoil has supported initiatives like the establishment of a fish processing plant and cold storage facility in Lingayen, measures intended to help stabilize fish supply, preserve quality, and support bagoong producers (Municipality of Lingayen, 2023).

### 3.3 Interpersonal Relationship

Interpersonal skills, such as communication, conflict resolution, and cooperation, are critical for maintaining a positive work environment (Doyle, 2024). Some participants reported occasional workplace conflicts stemming from unequal workload distribution or gossip.

*"Sometimes, there are conflicts over simple matters, like when someone complains that others are not working immediately" (BW 1).*

*"You cannot avoid conflicts because some take breaks while others are working" (BW 3).*

*"Sometimes there are misunderstandings about work tasks" (BW 9).*

*"It is just a little misunderstanding because some people gossip about you" (BW 4).*

*"Yes, some gossip about people's lives, but mostly it is about simple things" (BW 6).*

These accounts mirror broader trends. Lamberg (2023) explains that interpersonal tension in the workplace increases stress and reduces productivity. Tilo (2023) notes that only 27% of global workers report having positive workplace relationships, emphasizing the need to build stronger professional connections. However, many other participants highlighted positive interactions and mutual understanding.

*"None. We are close with each other... I handle 16 employees and distribute our work so that it is equal for everyone" (BW 2).*

*"Mostly, none. We are focused on working" (BW 5).*

*"I do not have any problems with my co-workers here... we consider each other as family" (BW 7).*

*"We are close... When someone is not working, we remind them. That's how we learn" (BW 8).*

*"Not really, because small issues eventually fade away" (BW 10).*



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These responses demonstrate how strong interpersonal bonds foster collaboration, motivation, and a more supportive work atmosphere.

#### 4. Adaptive Responses of Bagoong Producers and Workers

Workplaces inevitably face challenges, but adaptation is key to continuity. When asked how they or their companies respond to supply and interpersonal challenges, participants described varied strategies rooted in resourcefulness, teamwork, and resilience.

##### 4.1 Response to Supply Challenges

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported a 1.8% decline in total fisheries production in 2023, a drop from approximately 4.34 million metric tons in 2022 to 4.26 million metric tons in 2023. Both commercial and municipal fisheries experienced reduction, while aquaculture was the only sub-sector showing growth, accounting for about 56% of total production (Arcalas, 2023). This national trend is reflected in the experiences of bagoong workers in Lingayen, who described how their employers anticipate seasonal shortages with strategic planning.

Several participants explained that factories prepare for the rainy season by stockpiling fish during times of abundance:

**BW 1:** *"If there really is none, we wait for deliveries. But usually, our boss stores fish in tanks before the rainy season."*

**BW 3:** *"When many fish are delivered, we store them so we have stocks during rainy days."*

**BW 7:** *"When it's rainy season, work slows down but we have stocks because fish delivered in summer are stored."*

While smaller factories depend mainly on stockpiling, larger enterprises employ a different approach by sourcing externally when their own supplies run low. This difference was emphasized by workers in bigger factories.

**BW 5:** *"We rarely stop working here, whether during the rainy or summer seasons. Even if there's a storm, we continue. Our boss buys fish from other factories to ensure continuity."*

**BW 10:** *"Even during typhoons, we still work. If supplies run out, our boss buys fish elsewhere so our work continues."*

These narratives show how adaptation strategies vary depending on company size. Recent studies demonstrate that while micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) account for nearly all registered businesses in the Philippines and comprise a significant portion of employment and GDP, they receive only a small part of formal bank lending which is often less than 5% of the total portfolio, highlighting persistent disparities in credit access compared to larger firms (Foxmont & BCG, 2025).

##### 4.2 Response to Interpersonal Challenges

Conflict in the workplace is inevitable because of differences in personalities, expectations, and working styles. Ronquillo, Y., Ellis, V. L., & Toney-Butler, T. J. (2023) state that conflict that goes unresolved tends to deteriorate productivity, trust, and morale. Poorly managed conflict can harm workplace relationships, but conflict management and resolution can promote understanding and better group outcomes.

Participants described different approaches to handling interpersonal issues. Several relied on leadership structures for conflict management:

**BW 1:** *"When there are conflicts here, we report them to our team leader to prevent them from escalating."*

**BW 6:** *"If we encounter problems, we report them to our leader, and she will inform HR."*





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These responses highlight the essential role of supervisors in maintaining harmony at work. Recent findings further support this, showing that supervisors who intervene early in conflicts reduce stress levels and foster a more supportive workplace climate (McCarthy & Pearce, 2025).

Other workers preferred to address issues personally before involving management:

**BW 3:** *"I talk to the person first, and if we cannot fix it, I report it to my boss."*

**BW 4:** *"If there are misunderstandings, we directly report the issue to our boss and discuss how to resolve it."*

**BW 9:** *"I try to resolve the problem myself first. If I can't, that's when I ask the boss to help."*

These strategies mirror the Bottom-Up Approach, where employees take an active role in resolving conflicts and contributing to decision-making. Wu, Zhu, and Zhao (2021) emphasize that shared leadership fosters knowledge sharing, cohesion, and trust within teams, which makes it particularly effective in smaller organizations that rely on collaboration and shared accountability.

## 5. Success Stories

Success is a multifaceted concept that varies according to personal and cultural contexts. Indeed Career Guide (2023) outlines various success markers in the workplace, including financial stability, family support, and personal growth. Similarly, Cherry (2024) emphasizes that aspirations, defined as long-term hopes and ambitions, provide workers with purpose and direction in their careers.

### 5.1 Aspiration for Family

For the bagoong workers, success is deeply connected to the well-being of their families. Participants consistently emphasized that providing for their children's education and securing stable homes were their greatest accomplishments:

**BW 1:** *"Because of bagoong, this has been a significant help in supporting my child's education."*

**BW 2:** *"I was able to put my children through college—one's in Civil Engineering and one's a teacher. My youngest graduates this May."*

**BW 3:** *"I was able to buy a bed, a stove, and a cellphone."*

**BW 5:** *"I built our house through this job. With determination, you can achieve what you aspire to."*

**BW 7:** *"It's not just me who succeeds—my children go to school."*

**BW 8:** *"We now have two motorcycles and a house. Before, we lived with my in-laws."*

**BW 10:** *"Being able to provide for my child and their education—that alone makes me happy."*

Despite limited formal education, many participants felt that helping their children complete schooling is a fulfilled dream. These narratives are aligned with the findings of Padernilla, Siason Jr., and Patubo (2022) that among disadvantaged households, there is a strong belief that completing schooling, even with limited formal education among parents is central to attaining their goals and uplifting their family.

Overall, these stories reveal that in local industries like bagoong production, success is not defined by material wealth but by stability, education, and legacy. Supporting this, the "State of the Filipino Youth 2021" national survey reported that 72% of Filipino youth identified "helping parents and siblings financially" as their most important life aspiration (Youth Leadership for Democracy & Social Weather Stations, 2021).

## Conclusions

Based on the analysis, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The bagoong industry in Lingayen, Pangasinan, holds significant value as both a primary source of livelihood and a marker of culinary heritage and personal fulfillment.



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2. Workers view the industry as essential to family sustenance, social cohesion, and cultural identity, fostering pride and belonging in the community.
3. The main challenges faced include limited access to social security benefits in small enterprises, inconsistent fish supply during the rainy season, and occasional workplace conflicts.
4. Adaptive strategies involve stockpiling raw materials in peak seasons, sourcing fish from alternative suppliers, and resolving conflicts through direct communication or managerial mediation.
5. Success for bagoong workers is primarily defined by their capacity to provide for their families, secure basic needs, and support their children's education, reflecting a family-centered notion of achievement.

## Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Ensure compliance with labor standards.** Local government units (LGUs), in coordination with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), may regularly conduct inspections of bagoong production facilities to guarantee workers' membership in government-mandated benefits such as SSS, PhilHealth, and Pag-IBIG.
2. **Implement targeted training programs.** LGUs, together with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), may organize training on food safety, hygiene, and skills development for bagoong workers, especially in small-scale enterprises that lack formal training capacity.
3. **Strengthen support for SMEs.** The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and LGUs may provide financial assistance, facilitate access to affordable raw materials, and extend technical support to small and medium-sized bagoong enterprises to enhance sustainability and protect worker livelihoods.
4. **Broaden future research.** Researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of future studies by including larger and more diverse samples from various bagoong-producing communities and by exploring the use of quantitative designs to complement qualitative findings.

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