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Urban Fishing as Informal Leisure and Psychosocial Coping: A Case Study from Bandung, Indonesia

Obi Pratama[1*]
[1]International Women University, Bandung, Indonesia
[1]Political Science, Graduate School, Dong-A University, Korea

[*]Corresponding author: obipratama96@yahoo.de

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ABSTRACT
This study explores urban fishing as a form of informal leisure and psychosocial coping among residents in Bandung, Indonesia. Employing a mixed methods approach, data were collected through a survey of 60 respondents and in-depth interviews with 15 participants. The findings reveal that most participants engage in fishing to find calm, alleviate stress, and foster social connection. Fishing commonly takes place in informal urban spaces such as riverbanks and community ponds, indicating a grassroots reappropriation of urban space beyond official planning. The analysis draws on theories of informal leisure (Stebbins), everyday practice (de Certeau), non-clinical emotional coping (Lazarus & Folkman), and the capabilities approach in human development (Sen & Nussbaum). The study concludes that urban fishing functions as a strategic practice for psychosocial resilience, social cohesion, and spatial negotiation in the urban environment. It recommends that policymakers recognize informal recreational practices as part of inclusive, human-centered urban development.

Introduction

Urbanization in the Global South, including Indonesia, has accelerated dramatically over the past two decades, bringing complex consequences for social life and psychosocial well-being. Beneath the narrative of economic growth and infrastructural expansion lies a chronic structural stress experienced by urban residents manifested in congestion, density, pollution, labor competition, and the scarcity of accessible public spaces (Akanji et al., 2020; Akins, 2022).

Bandung exemplifies these dynamics. With a population exceeding 2.5 million, the city faces increasing spatial and social pressure: green space conversion, uncontrolled private vehicle growth, and unequal access to recreational areas. In this context, informal recreation emerges as a social adaptation to the absence of inclusive emotional recovery spaces (Kota Bandung…, n.d.; Soeherman et al., 2023). One of the most notable informal leisure practices is urban fishing—conducted in rivers, canals, ponds, and semi-commercial fishing grounds. This activity cuts across class and age boundaries, is voluntary, and performed regularly. In leisure studies, such practices fall under the category of *casual leisure*: spontaneous,

intrinsically rewarding activities pursued for relaxation and psychological restoration (Bates & Moles, 2024; Jones et al., 2020).

Despite its social prevalence, academic research rarely addresses the psychosocial and cultural dimensions of urban fishing in developing contexts. This study therefore explores fishing as a coping mechanism for urban stress and as a reflection of bottom-up resilience shaped by everyday cultural and class dynamics.

Theoretically, this research is grounded in the concept of *everyday life practices*. Stebbins (2007) classifies leisure into serious, casual, and project-based types, where casual leisure can build social identity and community interaction beyond formal institutions. Similarly, Michel de Certeau (1984) conceptualizes everyday acts like walking or fishing in unplanned spaces—as "tactics" through which ordinary citizens negotiate control over urban spaces. Thus, fishing is not merely recreational but symbolically political: a form of reclaiming humane time and space amid accelerated urban rhythms (de Certeau, 2021; Wild, 2021).

In the Global North, urban fishing is often analyzed ecologically or economically. In contrast, within the Global South, it represents a contextually grounded survival strategy—an *everyday resistance* against spatial exclusion and psychosocial pressure. Psychosocially, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of coping provides a relevant lens. Urban stressors—competition, crowding, and sensory overload—are chronic and often unresolvable, requiring emotion-focused coping strategies. Fishing, by creating calmness, rhythm, and connection to nature, exemplifies such non-institutional coping (Akanji et al., 2020; Dubow et al., 2024; Hussam et al., 2021; Vizzotto et al., 2020).

Research in *urban studies* underscores that even brief interactions with nature sitting in a park or hearing water—reduce rumination and stress (Bratman et al., 2015). In Bandung, fishing replicates these restorative experiences: tranquility, repetition, and a focus on process rather than productivity (Hussam et al., 2021; Upton, 2020b).

Importantly, fishing introduces an alternative temporal structure that resists capitalist efficiency. Its perceived "unproductiveness" offers space for emotional recalibration and bodily reconnection. It is thus a form of temporal and affective management essential for psychosocial sustainability rather than mere escapism.

Given the limited and stigmatized access to mental health services in Indonesia, urban residents often rely on culturally accepted, low-cost recovery mechanisms. Fishing serves as an inclusive, non-clinical medium embedded within daily life, social networks, and shared cultural norms. The capability approach developed by Amartya Sen (1999) and expanded by Martha Nussbaum (2011) further contextualizes this phenomenon. Development, from this perspective, is not solely economic growth but the expansion of substantive freedoms to live a meaningful life. Leisure, rest, and psychosocial well-being are central to human capabilities that should be supported by public policy (Raymond et al., 2023).

In this light, fishing embodies the capability to rest, manage emotions, and form social bonds while accessing urban space. Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities of *play*, *emotions*, and *affiliation* align closely with the multidimensional experiences of urban fishing—demonstrating its developmental value beyond material indicators.

However, city planning and development policies in Indonesia remain dominated by economic metrics. Non-economic dimensions—informal leisure, emotional balance, and meaningful use of time—are largely excluded, resulting in the marginalization of everyday practices that sustain human well-being.

Spatially, Henri Lefebvre's (1991) *right to the city* articulates that citizens have not only the right to inhabit but to produce and appropriate urban space. Fishing along rivers and reservoirs embodies this right, manifesting grassroots spatial agency beyond technocratic design (Ratnafury & Rahmafitria, 2018).

The concept of *informal resilience* helps explain how such practices strengthen social cohesion. Urban resilience emerges not only from formal governance but from communities' capacity to build networks of support, collective routines, and local recovery systems (Wilkinson, 2005; Hendriani, 2016; Isnutomo, 2012). Public fishing sites become microcosms of interclass and intergenerational exchange. Anglers share information, negotiate informal norms, and co-produce social bonds—fostering social capital that enhances collective well-being (Ayuningsasi et al., 2023; Budisetyorini et al., 2022; Kustianingrum et al., 2013; Suherlan & Pramesti, 2017; Hasanah, 2024; Yofianti et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, informal recreation is often perceived by urban authorities as a disturbance to formal spatial order, leading to exclusion or eviction. Yet UN-Habitat (2020) emphasizes that sustainable urban development requires acknowledging local social practices that nurture cohesion and well-being. In response, this study poses three key questions: What motivates urban residents in Bandung to engage in fishing as informal recreation? How does fishing function as a psychosocial coping mechanism against urban stress? And what social and cultural meanings does this activity carry in relation to informal uses of urban space?

The study contributes theoretically by extending leisure and urban studies in the Global South, empirically by demonstrating that coping and resilience can take collective, non-clinical forms, and practically by highlighting the need for human-centered urban policy that integrates informal leisure into city planning. Ultimately, urban fishing in Bandung represents more than a pastime—it is a socially embedded, psychosocially restorative, and spatially expressive practice. It bridges the gap between formal urban systems and lived realities, asserting citizens' right to reclaim space, time, and emotional balance. Recognizing such informal leisure as essential urban infrastructure is vital for building inclusive and resilient cities.

Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques to obtain both breadth and depth of understanding regarding urban fishing practices in Bandung. The combination of survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews enabled comprehensive triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings (Majumdar, 2022; Smith, 2024; Squires, 2023; Supriyati, 2017). The quantitative component was designed to capture general patterns and behavioral profiles of urban anglers, while the qualitative component provided a deeper exploration of the social, psychosocial, and spatial meanings embedded in fishing as an informal leisure activity.

The research adopted an explanatory case study design focusing on urban fishing as an informal recreational practice and psychosocial coping mechanism. Bandung was selected as the study site due to its high level of urbanization, limited public spaces, and the notable growth of informal fishing communities across the city. Three types of fishing sites were purposively selected to represent spatial and socioeconomic diversity: (1) natural public spaces such as Cikapundung River and Situ Ciburuy; (2) community-based informal fishing ponds located in peri-urban areas; and (3) low-cost commercial fishing ponds owned by private operators but accessible to the public. This typology allowed for the examination of

how accessibility, spatial context, and social interactions shape the meanings and experiences of urban fishing.

Data collection consisted of two complementary methods. The quantitative survey included 15 items combining closed-ended (multiple-choice and Likert scale) and semi-open questions, distributed purposively to 60 respondents who met the inclusion criteria: aged 18 years or older, residing in Bandung, and fishing at least twice a month. The survey captured respondents' socio-demographic profiles, fishing frequency, motivations, perceptions of stress and well-being before and after fishing, and access to other recreational spaces. The qualitative phase involved 15 semi-structured interviews with key informants selected based on age, occupation, fishing location, and personal motivation. Interviews explored participants' reasons for fishing, emotional experiences, perceived psychosocial changes, relationships with other anglers, and views on urban space accessibility. Each session lasted 30–60 minutes, was audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach.

Data analysis and validation were conducted through triangulation between quantitative and qualitative findings. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean) via SPSS to identify general trends, while qualitative data were coded inductively to extract thematic patterns of meaning. To ensure internal validity, member checking was conducted with five participants to confirm interpretive accuracy. External validity was enhanced through theoretical comparison with existing studies from similar Global South contexts (Mishra & Alok, 2022; Vromen, 2018). Ethical considerations included informed consent, anonymity, and the voluntary nature of participation. This rigorous design ensured methodological coherence and strengthened the credibility of the study's findings.

Results and Discussion

Motivation and Patterns of Fishing Activity

The findings show that fishing in urban Bandung is not merely a recreational practice but also contains complex psychosocial and spatial dimensions. Based on data from 60 questionnaire respondents and 15 in-depth interviews, the majority of participants view fishing as a form of self-regulation in coping with the pressures of urban life. This is reinforced by the variety of motivations mentioned by respondents, as shown in the following visualization.

As seen in the graph, relieving stress is the highest motivation (75%), followed by seeking tranquility (63%) and filling leisure time (50%). Some respondents also mentioned wanting to catch fish (42%), socializing (37%), and tradition/hobby since childhood (30%). This distribution of motivations indicates that while the productive aspect (i.e., catching fish) remains, affective and relational dimensions are in fact dominant. This strengthens Stebbins' (2007) theoretical framework of casual leisure as an intrinsically oriented activity aimed at affective restoration. From the interviews, most informants admitted they did not particularly care whether they caught fish or not. One respondent stated:

"What matters is that I can sit, be still, and look at the water. It feels like all the work burdens slowly fade away." (Interview, Informant 03, 42 years old, private employee)

This statement reflects the psychological and meditative function of fishing. For many respondents, fishing is not merely a physical activity but also a space to calm the mind, process emotions, and reset the fatigue brought about by work, traffic, or social pressures.

In terms of frequency, most respondents fish two to four times per month, with an average duration of 2 to 4 hours per session. Some anglers who are retirees or freelance workers reported higher frequencies, even exceeding three times per week. Fishing locations vary—from natural rivers such as the Cikapundung, community ponds on the urban fringe, to low-cost commercial ponds. These locations are chosen not for ecosystem quality but for accessibility, tranquility, and affordability.

One notable finding in fishing patterns is the flexibility of time and place. Some respondents fish after work, on weekends, or when feeling emotional. In other words, fishing is not only scheduled recreation but also a spontaneous response to emotional pressure. This aligns with emotion-focused coping theory, which states that individuals tend to use certain activities to alleviate emotional stress rather than resolve the root problem directly (Kong, 2018; Pchajek, 2020).

Most anglers stated they fish alone, yet many also noted the formation of indirect social ties at the sites. Interactions such as sharing bait, greeting one another, and exchanging experiences create a kind of "temporary community" that is fluid yet functional. One angler said:

"Sometimes I don't know anyone, but if someone catches a fish, others feel happy too. There's a sense of togetherness." (Interview, Informant 09, 35 years old, ride-hailing driver)

This phenomenon shows that fishing has an implicit social dimension that strengthens interpersonal connections outside formal structures. Such practices form weak ties that contribute to a sense of social connectedness, even if they do not always constitute stable communities.

These findings are consistent with practice theory in cultural studies, which emphasizes that everyday actions such as fishing can serve as means to negotiate space, time, and meaning. Respondents use fishing time to renegotiate the rhythm of their own lives—creating pauses from productive routines and establishing personal spaces not controlled by external pressures (Fiske, 2013; Lave, 1988).

These results also reflect findings by Bratman et al., which state that exposure to natural environments and slow activities significantly reduces tendencies toward repetitive negative thinking (rumination) and increases feelings of relaxation. In a city like Bandung—where urban pressures are high and access to professional therapy is limited—activities such as fishing can serve as alternative strategies to support urban mental well-being (Fiske, 2013; Kong, 2018; Lave, 1988; Pchajek, 2020).

This section finds that the motivation to fish is closely tied to residents' efforts to maintain emotional balance, create spaces for reflection, and build minimal social connections. This pattern occurs amid limited access to public spaces and high urban pressures, making fishing an affordable and socially accepted coping mechanism.

Urban Fishing as a Psychosocial Coping Practice

Qualitative results from in-depth interviews indicate that fishing has a functional value as an emotional recovery practice, or what the literature calls non-clinical psychosocial coping.

These findings reinforce the quantitative data obtained through the questionnaire, in which respondents gave high ratings to various statements related to the psychosocial benefits of fishing. The visualization below summarizes average scores for seven psychosocial perception indicators measured on a Likert scale.
The three highest scores are:

- "Would like to fish more often if public spaces were supportive" (4.7),
- "Feel calmer after fishing" (4.6),
- "Feel less stressed" (4.5).

These findings support the argument that fishing is not merely entertainment but has become an informal mechanism for regulating stress in everyday life in Bandung. This is relevant to emotion-focused coping as described by Lazarus and Folkman, in which individuals seek to regulate emotional responses to pressure rather than address the source of stress directly (Fiske, 2013; Lave, 1988).

Many informants conveyed that the process of fishing—sitting still, waiting, observing the water's surface, and listening to the surrounding nature—provides a calming effect not found in other activities. Informant 02, a 34-year-old freelance worker, stated:
"I do odd jobs, sometimes there's a lot of pressure. But if I sit here for 2–3 hours, it feels like the burden in my head slowly disappears. No need to talk; just looking at the water is enough."

These findings show that the slow rhythm and unhurriedness of fishing act as a ritual of self-regulation, helping individuals step out of the city's dense, fast, and pressure-filled rhythms. Respondents described this activity as "an empty space that actually fills," an irony underscoring that internal recovery occurs in calmness.

The majority of respondents also mentioned feeling happier, lighter, and more satisfied after fishing—even without bringing home a catch. In the questionnaire, the statement "Feel happier after fishing" scored 4.2 out of 5. Among the narratives, several informants noted that "satisfaction" comes from the process, not the result. Informant 08, a logistics employee, stated:

"Catching fish is a bonus. But being able to sit in a cool spot, casting the rod and not thinking about work—that's enough."

This aligns with the leisure literature's view that satisfaction in casual leisure derives from intrinsic enjoyment, not output (Stebbins, 2007). The process of fishing creates personal time free from the logic of productivity—a moment when respondents can experience self-presence without social demands.

Although most respondents said they fish alone, nearly all acknowledged light yet meaningful social interactions with other anglers on site. These include sharing bait, offering tips, and forming unofficial communities that gather regularly. Informant 11, aged 52, stated:

"We don't have an official community, but every week we meet the same people. It's like a small family."

Such interactions create forms of horizontal social support that are crucial in contexts of high urbanization and social alienation. Research in urban sociology shows that these weak

social ties contribute to feelings of acceptance and reduced loneliness—factors that strongly influence psychosocial well-being (Jones et al., 2020; Kong, 2018; Lave, 1988).
Interviews also showed that many respondents have a clear perception of emotional differences before and after fishing. Most said they go fishing when they feel "tired," "overwhelmed," or "upset about work." After fishing, they feel more "light," "peaceful," and "more ready for the next day."

This is reinforced by the questionnaire, where the statement "Fishing distracts me from my problems" scored 4.4, and "Feel less stressed" scored 4.5. These data support the notion that fishing functions as a conscious form of emotional recovery, even if not recognized as "therapy" by its practitioners.

The highest score for the statement "I would like to fish more often if there were more supportive public spaces" (4.7) indicates strong potential for expanding access to community-based informal recreation. Several respondents stated that limited space and legal uncertainty regarding fishing locations often pose obstacles. Informant 07 stated:

"Sometimes we're moved because of a project, sometimes prohibited because it's said not to be a public area. Even though we're just sitting and fishing."

This shows that informal coping practices like fishing often lack recognition in urban spatial policy. Yet, within a capability-based development framework (Sen, 1999), the right to spaces for tranquility and recreation is part of a dignified life that needs to be facilitated.

Informal Leisure and Urban Space Reappropriation

Beyond psychosocial functions, fishing also represents citizens' claims to urban space, particularly amid limited public spaces and urban planning that tends to be elitist. In the interviews, nearly all informants stated they choose fishing locations based on physical accessibility, economic affordability, and social comfort, not based on the formal design of urban space. This indicates that fishing sites used by residents are often informal, not designed by city authorities, and sometimes considered "illegal" administratively (Bramham et al., 2017; Parker, 2021).

A concrete form of citizens' negotiation over urban space is the use of riverbanks, irrigation channels, and peripheral lakes as fishing spots. In areas such as the Cikapundung or the periphery of Situ Ciburuy, residents collectively utilize these open spaces for recreation and emotional recovery—even in the absence of supporting infrastructure such as seating, lighting, or shelter.
As stated by Informant 05:

"This place isn't an official park, but it's been used by residents for fishing for a long time. As long as it doesn't disturb anyone, we just carry on."

This statement illustrates the re-appropriation of urban space—how citizens actively claim and use the city according to the logic of everyday social needs. In Henri Lefebvre's theory, this can be categorized as part of the right to the city—the right not only to live in the city but also to shape it through meaningful social practices (Bramham et al., 2017; Parker, 2021).

The data also show that the shortage of formal recreational spaces significantly affects residents' choices of fishing sites. Some respondents reported experiencing eviction, prohibition, or conflict with local authorities because fishing locations were deemed "not for that purpose." Informant 10 recounted:

"We used to fish at a spot near the campus, but now it's fenced off. They said it would be turned into a thematic park, but it can't be used for fishing anymore."

This story reflects inequality in access to public space, where spaces that should be shared become dominated by exclusive development narratives. Such development—emphasizing aesthetics or economic value while ignoring social functions—risks eliminating informal recovery spaces needed by urban residents, especially the lower-middle classes.

Although fishing plays a significant role in residents' well-being, the practice is often unrecognized in urban planning or development plans. City governments generally do not allocate space specifically for this activity, let alone provide supporting facilities. This absence in planning documents places anglers in a legally vulnerable position, despite their active social presence.

This situation indicates a gap between social realities and policy structures, where informal recreational activities are not seen as part of urban planning. In Global South literature, this is known as policy blindness toward everyday citizen practices that do not generate direct economic value, despite high social value (Bramham et al., 2017; Kong, 2018; Kustianingrum et al., 2013; Suherlan & Pramesti, 2017).

The findings also show that fishing sites hold not only physical meaning but also emotional and symbolic value for anglers. Many respondents stated that they "have a relationship" with these locations because they are places where they feel calm, find solitude, or share stories. Informant 13 said:

"When I'm tired or angry, I come here. It feels like a refuge where no one bothers me."

This statement shows how urban space functions as an affective space, not merely a functional one. In this context, anglers not only use space but also shape its meaning and attachment. This concept broadens the understanding of the importance of public space—not only as infrastructure but as a space for emotional recovery.

From a policy perspective, these findings imply the importance of recognizing informal recreational practices as part of citizens' basic needs. A healthy and sustainable city is not only one with wide roads or thematic parks but one that allows residents to live emotionally and socially balanced lives. As UN-Habitat has noted, human-oriented urban development must incorporate well-being and social inclusion into spatial planning processes (Programme, 2005; Svitková, 2021).

Bandung—and other Indonesian cities—can take progressive steps by integrating informal practices such as fishing into spatial policy and the management of open spaces. This can be done by officially recognizing non-formal recreational zones, providing basic facilities without commercialization, and engaging in open dialogue with communities who use these spaces.

Community, Routine, and Resilience

One important aspect of fishing that emerges from this study is how the activity strengthens social cohesion and community resilience informally. Although fishing is often associated with individual activity, field findings show that it actually creates consistent relational structures, forms loose communities, and strengthens horizontal social networks that play important roles in building social resilience (Parker, 2021; Svitková, 2021).
Almost all informants stated that although they initially came to fishing spots alone, in the process they formed interactions with other anglers. These interactions are non-structural yet recurring, creating a stable sense of closeness and connectedness. For example, sharing bait, helping tie hooks, or simply chatting while waiting become parts of a social routine that reinforces informal solidarity.
One informant, 60 years old, stated:

"We don't have an official community name. But if I don't come, friends here will ask why. So it's like we look out for each other."

This phenomenon indicates a recreational community based on togetherness without formality, functioning as a space for exchanging experiences and emotional support. In community leisure studies, such patterns are called informal social capital (Putnam, 2000), namely loose social networks formed through routine participation in shared activities.
The ritual of fishing, though simple, creates a routine structure that helps individuals maintain emotional and social stability. Several respondents mentioned that this activity becomes a "fixed schedule" in their week, helping them cope with work stress, family conflict, or boredom. Informant 06, a factory worker, stated:

"If I don't fish for just one week, my head feels full. So this is like a reset for me."

This routine reflects the role of leisure as a form of life organization that is crucial within the socio-economic pressures of the city. When access to other forms of recovery is limited—such as mental health services, formal recreational venues, or community activities—practices like fishing function as a consistent "social support."

In the sociology of resilience, activities that create a sense of control, predictable routines, and supportive communities have been identified as protective factors in facing crises or chronic stress. In this context, fishing can be positioned as a micro-practice that supports long-term psychosocial resilience (Bramham et al., 2017; Kong, 2018; Svitková, 2021).
A significant finding of this study is the inclusive nature of urban angling communities. Respondents span a wide age range—from teenagers to the elderly—and various economic and occupational backgrounds. There are no formal membership boundaries, and anyone who regularly comes to the fishing spots automatically becomes part of the social circle.
Some younger anglers mentioned that they initially joined because of their parents but then came to enjoy the atmosphere. Informant 12, age 23, said:

"At first I came with my father, but over time I liked it. Here people don't talk much about politics, work, or quarrel. Everything is calm."

This shows that fishing spaces also serve as socially neutral zones where differences in social status, politics, or other identities do not become sources of friction. In polarized urban contexts, the presence of such zones is crucial for strengthening cohesive urban life.

These findings show that anglers are not merely space users but also social agents who shape micro-social orders in the city. They regulate their own interaction rhythms, create shared values (such as mutual respect, keeping sites clean, and sharing information), and build social systems without institutional intervention.

This reinforces the argument for development from below, an approach that emphasizes the importance of citizens' initiatives in creating well-being without reliance on formal structures or the state. In this case, anglers exemplify how society can create its own social support systems through simple, routine activities.

However, as outlined earlier, these communities still operate under structural vulnerability. The absence of formal recognition from city authorities puts them at risk of losing space, facing restrictions, or being overlooked in development policies. Even so, their potential in building urban social resilience is substantial.

Therefore, the results of this study suggest the need for:

- Policy recognition of informal recreational communities,
- Provision of open spaces that support informal community activities without high costs or restrictive regulations,
- Partnerships between communities and local governments in maintaining public spaces.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that fishing in Bandung carries meanings far beyond mere recreation. The activity is undertaken not only as a hobby but as a strategy for psychosocial recovery, an informal interpretation of urban space, and an expression of the need for life balance amid the pressures of urban living. This discussion revisits the main findings by systematically linking them to the theoretical framework previously outlined.

Fishing as Informal Leisure and Everyday Cultural Practice.

The finding that the main motivations for fishing are "relieving stress" and "seeking tranquility" aligns with Stebbins' concept of casual leisure. In this framework, fishing does not require advanced skills, is not competitive, and does not depend on formal infrastructure. Precisely because of its simplicity and spontaneity, it can deliver tangible psychological benefits. Further, it can be understood as an everyday cultural practice—a daily tactic to create recovery spaces within a pressure-filled urban landscape (Bramham et al., 2017; Lave, 1988; Pchajek, 2020; Svitková, 2021).

In many cases, Bandung residents do not access spaces officially designated for recreation. Instead, they create their own—on riverbanks, irrigation ponds, or community lakes—as arenas to recalibrate their life rhythms. In this context, fishing is not only personal but culturally political. It demonstrates a claim to space by groups often unaccommodated in formal urban planning.

Psychosocial Coping and Collective Mental Health.

Fishing's role as a coping mechanism for urban stress strengthens the relevance of Lazarus and Folkman's model in non-clinical contexts. The finding that most respondents feel calmer, happier, and more relaxed after fishing indicates real psychosocial benefits without

medical interventions. This is important in developing-country cities, where mental health services are uneven and stigmatized (de Certeau, 2023; Wild, 2021).

Here, fishing functions as emotion-focused coping achieved through nature-based, slow-paced activity. Bratman et al.'s study supports this by showing that exposure to natural environments can reduce rumination and improve mood. This study adds a new dimension: nature need not mean formal city parks or eco-tourism but can also be socially interpreted open spaces on the urban fringe (De Certeau, 2021; de Certeau, 2023).

The finding that respondents feel more prepared to face life after fishing strengthens the position of this activity as a ritual of affective recovery. Residents use it to recalibrate emotions, restore bodily awareness of slow time, and create psychological transition spaces beyond work pressure and productive routines. Thus, fishing functions as community-based psychosocial resilience rather than mere hobby.

Urban Space Reclaiming and Spatial Inequality.

This discussion also highlights how fishing in Bandung reflects a mismatch between residents' needs and formal spatial planning. Most fishing locations are not included in city planning documents as recreational zones. In some cases, residents face eviction or restricted access due to alleged violations of spatial functions.

This indicates an inconsistency between technocratic planning approaches and citizens' organic social practices. From the right-to-the-city perspective, residents have the right not only to use but to produce socially and culturally meaningful urban spaces. Fishing is an example of how citizens express that right—even without formal support (de Certeau, 2023; Fiske, 2013; Wild, 2021).

Thus, these findings are not only about anglers but about urban society at large seeking spaces to be fully human. Amid intensifying urbanization, the need for calm spaces, reflective time, and connection with others becomes more crucial. Therefore, this discussion proposes that fishing can serve as a micro-indicator of human-well-being-oriented urban resilience.

Urban Fishing in the Perspective of Human Development.

Within the capability approach proposed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, human well-being is measured not only by income or access to consumer goods but by a person's ability to live a life they value (capabilities to function). In this framework, recreation, quiet time, and emotional recovery spaces are highly important capabilities often overlooked in development policies, especially in developing countries (Bramham et al., 2017; de Certeau, 2023; Svitková, 2021).

The study's findings show that fishing is not merely leisure but a realization of human capabilities to organize time, maintain mental health, build social relationships, and re-establish life balance. It serves as a space for both personal and social articulation, where individuals have autonomy to manage pressure and live more humanely.

However, the absence of recognition for such activities in urban planning systems and development indicators indicates a structural bias against life forms that do not produce direct economic value. This is ironic in the context of people-centered urban development. In this sense, fishing can be understood as an unacknowledged capability—exercised by citizens yet not formally recognized in development frameworks.

By integrating this dimension into urban policy, local governments could expand the substantive scope of human development—by acknowledging and supporting informal

recovery spaces as part of the urban well-being system. Such policies would not only improve quality of life but also strengthen social resilience and inter-community relations.

Implications for Urban Spatial Policy and Recognition of Informal Recreation.

One key contribution of this study is to assert that informal activities such as fishing can be important indicators for designing more inclusive urban policies grounded in residents' social realities. In Bandung and other Global South cities, most public-space policies still focus on aesthetics, hard infrastructure, and commercial areas. As a result, informal, low-cost, spontaneous, community-based recreation lacks adequate recognition.

The findings show that the need for calm spaces and organic recreational activities is real and urgent. Accordingly, several recommendations include:

1. Mapping and recognizing informal recreational spaces, including natural and semi-communal fishing zones.
2. Providing basic infrastructure at these sites—such as seating, trash bins, or shade—without eliminating their informal character.
3. Conducting participatory dialogue between angling communities and city government to avoid spatial conflicts.
4. Integrating emotional and social well-being indicators into urban development evaluation systems.

By adopting this approach, governments would not only respond to real community needs but also build cities that are more resilient, just, and human-oriented.

Contributions to Global South Scholarship and Leisure Studies.

Academically, this study contributes in two main areas. First, it expands understanding of leisure studies in the Global South—long dominated by research in advanced societies focusing on tourism, formal sports, or entertainment industries. This study shows that leisure in the Global South can take simple, informal forms rich with social meaning.

Second, it contributes to Global South urbanism discourse, emphasizing the need to understand the city as a result of negotiations between citizens and formal structures. In this context, fishing in Bandung shows how urban residents—without formal support—can form ecosystems of recovery, community, and micro-social spaces that support life balance.

Thus, this study can serve as an important reference for researchers, urban planners, and policymakers seeking to understand recreation, space, and mental health from the perspective of ordinary citizens in developing cities.

This discussion has shown that fishing—often considered trivial—has significant social, psychological, spatial, and cultural dimensions. In Bandung, it functions as:

- An affordable emotional coping mechanism,
- A form of claim to urban space,
- An expression of human capability to maintain life balance,
- A marker of urban community resilience.

Therefore, fishing should be understood not merely as recreation but as a complex and meaningful social phenomenon that demands recognition in theory, policy, and urban development practice in the Global South.

Conclusion

This study concludes that urban fishing in Bandung functions as more than a recreational pastime—it represents an informal yet strategic practice that supports the psychosocial balance and social cohesion of urban communities. Through a mixed-methods

approach, the research reveals strong linkages between fishing and various dimensions of human development, including emotional well-being, spatial justice, cultural expression, and social resilience. Empirical evidence from both surveys and interviews demonstrates that fishing is widely perceived by urban residents as a coping mechanism that provides relaxation, psychological comfort, and a sense of connection amid the pressures of urban life.

Spatially, fishing also embodies citizens' active reclamation of urban space that is often neglected by formal planning. The use of riverbanks, irrigation ponds, and community lakes—spaces created by social need rather than policy—illustrates how residents re-appropriate the city to fulfill psychological and social needs. These informal uses of space challenge the technocratic orientation of urban planning and highlight the importance of integrating human experience into the physical fabric of the city. Furthermore, such practices reflect the "right to the city," where citizens not only inhabit urban spaces but also shape them through everyday social acts.

Socially, fishing activities contribute to the creation of loose yet resilient community structures. The routines of shared presence, storytelling, and mutual assistance at fishing sites strengthen weak social ties that are essential in combating isolation and fragmentation in modern urban life. These micro-level forms of solidarity demonstrate the value of informal social capital and reinforce the idea of community-based resilience. By fostering emotional recovery and collective belonging, urban fishing exemplifies how small-scale, everyday practices can sustain social stability and well-being in the absence of institutional interventions.

In line with Sen and Nussbaum's capability approach, the findings affirm that fishing realizes fundamental human capabilities—such as emotional regulation, social affiliation, and the pursuit of meaningful experiences—that remain underrepresented in development policy. Consequently, this study calls for urban planners and policymakers to recognize informal recreation as an integral element of human-centered urban development. Supporting such practices through inclusive spatial policy, community partnerships, and new indicators of non-material well-being would not only improve quality of life but also advance sustainable, participatory, and compassionate urban futures.

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