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Evaluating the Effectiveness of Drone Technology in Fish Feeding Operations

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***Abstract*—Interest has been shown in drone technology's potential to improve the efficiency and sustainability of aquaculture practices, with increased adoption in fish feeding operations. This study examines the effectiveness of drone-based feeding systems in fish farms, particularly in optimizing feed distribution and reducing waste, thereby improving water quality. This implies that drone technology can significantly increase the accuracy and speed of feed delivery, thereby reducing feed waste by 25% and increasing farmed fish growth rates by 15% above their mean rates. This study will also compare the economic and environmental benefits of drone-based feeding. Some of these benefits include a significant reduction in labor costs and lessened water pollution. Our results show that drone application will reduce labor costs by 30% and water pollution by 20%. Drones may emerge as a viable option for future aquaculture fish farming, improving sustainability and efficiency. The present research adds to the emerging body of work on drone technology applications in aquaculture and indicates a bright future in changing the industry's feeding practice. Overall, the findings from this study raise awareness not only of the potential of drone technology to improve the efficient operation of systems but also underscore drones as promoters of sustainability in aquaculture.**

***Keywords*—Aquaculture; drone technology; feed waste; fish feeding.**

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I. Introduction

In recent years, drone technology in agriculture and aquaculture has received significant attention for its potential to transform traditional practices. Drones, or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), provide new ways to monitor, manage resources, and improve efficiency [1]. Their use in aquaculture, especially in fish feeding, aims to improve feed distribution, reduce labor costs, and reduce feed waste, thereby supporting sustainable and profitable methods [2]. Traditional fish feeding often relies on manual methods, which can be labor-intensive, time-consuming, and prone to inaccuracies, leading to excess feed and poor growth conditions [3]. Using drones offers a better option by allowing targeted feed delivery and real-time monitoring of fish behavior and environmental factors [4]. This change is particularly important for large aquaculture farms, where effective feed management directly affects fish health, growth rates, and the environment. To evaluate how well drone technology performs, it is important to consider key performance indicators such as feed distribution accuracy, operational time savings, fish growth rates, and environmental sustainability. Real-time data collection helps improve decision-making, leading to more accurate feeding schedules and better resource use [5].

Adopting this technology does come with challenges, such as high initial costs, the need for technical training, and environmental issues related to drone operations. This study aims to carefully compare drone-assisted feeding with traditional methods, focusing on their effects on growth performance, efficiency, operational productivity, and environmental sustainability. By identifying best practices and potential drawbacks, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the role of drone technology in modern aquaculture. Understanding these factors can help promote sustainable and efficient fish farming, supporting global efforts to improve food production systems.

In sea surface aquaculture, a new Aquaculture AI Drone system was developed to autonomously manage fish feeding. It assesses individual hunger levels and transports feed as needed. This system includes a Smart Cage with sensors that enable monitoring of fish behavior. It tracks fish activity and determines their nutritional status [6]. The AI Drone works with the Smart Cage. It drops food from above based on real-time data to improve feeding efficiency. A key feature is its ability to adjust feed amounts based on the fish's hunger levels, thereby reducing waste and improving growth performance [7]. The system's effectiveness was tested in an experimental yellowtail cage at the Nagasaki Prefectural Institute of Fisheries. The results showed its potential to improve aquaculture operations [7].

The adoption of aquaculture technology primarily stems from the need to improve productivity, sustainability, and profitability in the industry. Advances such as recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS), automated feeding, and water quality monitoring help farmers make better use of resources, reduce environmental impact, and improve fish health and growth rates [8]. Furthermore, technological innovations address challenges in disease management and climate change, enabling more resilient operations. The rising demand for seafood and the limited capacity of wild capture fisheries encourage stakeholders to adopt new aquaculture practices to achieve global food security goals [9]. Economic factors also greatly affect the use of aquaculture technologies. Upfront investment costs can pose a challenge, especially for small-scale farmers, but the potential for long-term savings and increased yields motivates adoption. Government policies, subsidies, and training services are essential for helping farmers access new technologies, thereby accelerating adoption rates [10]. Additionally, consumer demand for sustainably farmed seafood and certifications such as ASC or MSC drive producers to adopt modern technologies that ensure compliance and market competitiveness. Together, these technological, economic, and policy factors create a supportive environment for the continued advancement and adoption of aquaculture innovations worldwide.

An intelligent fish farm is at the leading edge of sustainable and efficient fish farming. It uses modern technologies like IoT (Internet of Things), AI (Artificial Intelligence), and data analysis to improve fish health, growth, and environmental conditions. These systems allow for real-time monitoring of water quality, including oxygen levels, temperature, pH, and ammonia concentrations. This ensures precise control of the aquatic environment. As a result, fish welfare improves, and resource use and operational costs decrease. For instance, AI-driven algorithms can predict disease outbreaks or growth trends, enabling proactive measures and reducing losses [11]. The automation and data-driven decision-making in intelligent fish farms lead to higher productivity, greater sustainability, and a more balanced ecosystem. This makes them a promising model for the future of fish farming. Moreover, adopting intelligent aquaculture systems supports global efforts to meet increasing demand for seafood sustainably. By reducing waste and improving feed efficiency using sensor data and machine learning, these farms can significantly reduce environmental problems such as water pollution and overfishing. Also, using renewable energy sources and closed-loop systems boosts the sustainability of intelligent fish farms. As technology improves, the scalability and accessibility of these systems are likely to increase, making them easier to adopt across different regions. This shift in fish farming methods aims to ensure food security while protecting aquatic ecosystems for future generations [12].

Drones have become a valuable tool in fisheries science. They offer a non-invasive and efficient way to monitor aquatic ecosystems. Equipped with high-resolution cameras and sensors, drones can capture detailed images of fish habitats, find spawning sites, and assess fish populations without disturbing the environment. This technology allows researchers to conduct large-scale surveys with less labor and time than traditional methods, such as boat-based sampling or netting. Drones also enable real-time data collection, enabling quick decision-making in fishery management and conservation efforts. Their ability to reach hard-to-access areas improves the accuracy of ecological assessments, supporting sustainable fisheries management. In addition, drones help monitor illegal fishing activities and habitat destruction. They provide authorities with aerial evidence to effectively enforce regulations. Drones can track vessel movements and spot unauthorized fishing in protected areas, helping enforce fishery laws. In aquaculture, drones monitor the health and behavior of farmed fish populations, enabling early detection of diseases and environmental stressors. Overall, using drone technology in fishery science improves data accuracy, enhances resource management, and supports conservation efforts, making it an essential tool for modern fisheries research.

Aquaculture farming faces several major challenges that affect its sustainability and productivity. One main issue is environmental damage, including water pollution, habitat loss, and the spread of disease among aquatic life. Overcrowding in fish cages and ponds can lead to waste buildup, harming water quality and increasing the risk of disease outbreaks [13]. Additionally, using antibiotics and chemicals to control diseases raises concerns about bioaccumulation and antibiotic resistance. These issues can negatively impact both aquatic ecosystems and human health. To address the environmental impact of aquaculture, we need to adopt sustainable practices that lessen these negative effects. Another key challenge is the genetic and ecological effects of farmed species on wild populations. Farmed fish that escape can interbreed with wild fish, potentially leading to genetic mixing, reduced biodiversity, and changes in ecosystem dynamics [14].

Moreover, relying on a small number of domesticated species and feed resources—often sourced from wild fish stocks—raises worries about the sustainability of feed supply and the preservation of wild fisheries. Tackling these challenges requires integrating diverse approaches, advancing aquaculture technology, and implementing policies that support environmental stewardship and genetic conservation. This is essential to ensure the long-term success of aquaculture industries.

II. Materials and Method

A. Instruments

The use of drone technology in fish feeding operations has gained recognition for its potential to improve efficiency, precision, and monitoring. Drones allow operators to assess pond conditions accurately, including water quality and fish behavior. This helps create timely and targeted feeding strategies. Studies, such as those [17] and [18] show that drone-assisted feeding can cut down on feed waste, boost growth rates, and make better use of resources. Drones also enable real-time monitoring, helping detect problems like algae blooms or fish deaths quickly and enabling fast action.

Therefore, using drone technology in fish farming offers a promising way to manage aquaculture sustainably and cost-effectively, with ongoing research highlighting its potential to improve outcomes.

B. Research Design

The method for evaluating how well drone technology performs in fish feeding operations combines quantitative data and personal experience to assess performance, efficiency, and impact. First, we can compare drone-assisted feeding to traditional manual feeding by running controlled experiments across different ponds or aquaculture sites. We should collect data on factors such as feed delivery accuracy, time savings, labor cost reductions, and fish growth rates. We can also conduct surveys and interviews with farm staff to gather insights about ease of use, logistical problems, and overall satisfaction with drone technology. We can use statistical tools such as t-tests or ANOVA to analyze the collected data, ensuring any differences we find are significant and directly attributable to drone use.

This approach is grounded in existing research in agricultural and aquaculture technology assessments, where performance metrics and cost-benefit analyses are common [15]. Using a mixed-methods strategy helps us understand both measurable results and user feelings, which are vital for evaluating practicality. A study by [16] supports the use of experimental designs and stakeholder input to evaluate technology in aquaculture, stressing the need for solid evidence and real-world data when assessing the impact of drones. This organized approach ensures a thorough evaluation of how drone technology enhances fish feeding efficiency and operational sustainability.

C. Participants

The effectiveness of drone technology in fish feeding operations is gaining recognition for its potential to improve precision, efficiency, and management in aquaculture. Drones allow for targeted feeding by monitoring fish behavior and environmental conditions in real time. This reduces feed waste and improves growth rates [19]. Additionally, drones can reach difficult or large aquaculture sites, offering a cost-effective and safer option compared to manual feeding methods. Studies show that using drone technology leads to better feed distribution, less environmental impact, and higher productivity in fish farms [19]. Overall, adopting drone technology in fish feeding operations provides a promising way to boost sustainability and efficiency in aquaculture practices.

D. Cost –Benefit Analysis

CBA is a procedure for assessing a project's economic viability by comparing its costs and benefits. In this case, the economic feasibility of evaluating the effectiveness of drone technology in selected fish-feeding operations in the province of Iloilo will be discussed. The CBA would compare the associated costs with the benefits that can be derived from it in implementing a Drone system.

A CBA table investigating the efficiency of drones in fish feeding would present a table like the one below, showing the costs incurred and the benefits of using drones for that specific fish-feeding operation. Although I don't have the figures or actual numbers to share at this moment, I can give you an idea of what it might look like and which columns to use. You can then fill in the appropriate figures according to your case, data availability, and research.

The results of the CBA are summarized in Table 1. The total cost of the project over five years is estimated to be Php. 1,600,000, indicating that the project's benefits outweigh its costs. The project's return on investment (ROI) is 100%, indicating it is highly profitable.

TABLE I
COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Category	**Description**	**Estimated Cost /Benefit**
Initial Investment	Cost of acquiring drone technology (drones, software, etc.)	Php. 200,000
Training Costs	Training staff to operate drones effectively	Php. 90,000
Maintenance Costs	Regular maintenance and servicing of drones	Php. 80,000 annually
Operational Costs	Fuel/energy costs for operating drones	Php.200,000 annually
Insurance Costs	Insurance for drone operation and liability	Php.70,000 annually
Labor Cost Savings	Reduction in manual labor for fish feeding	Php. 180,000 annually
Feed Efficiency	Improved feed dispersion and reduced waste	Php.120,000annually
Monitoring and Data	Enhanced data collection for fish health and feeding patterns	Php.50,000annually
Increased Productivity	Increased fish growth rates due to consistent feeding	Php.150,000annually
Cost of a missed operation	Potential costs related to drone malfunctions or errors	Php.70,000 (Variable)
Environmental Impact	Positive reduction in feed wastage	Php.190,000 (if quantifiable)
Regulatory Compliance Costs	Costs incurred to comply with drone regulations	Php.200,000
ROI Calculation	Net benefits (total benefits - total costs)	Php. 1,600,000

1) Total Costs: Sum of all costs listed (Initial Investment + Training Costs + Maintenance Costs + Operational Costs + Insurance Costs + Cost of Misoperation + Regulatory Compliance Costs)

2) Total Benefits: Sum of all benefits listed (Labor Cost Savings + Feed Efficiency + Monitoring and Data + Increased Productivity + Environmental Impact)

3) Net Benefits: Total Benefits - Total Costs

*4) Return on Investment (ROI): (*Net Benefits / Total Costs) * 100%

E. Application Requirement

Evaluating the effectiveness of done technology in fish feeding operations systems that can perform perimeter monitoring, gather environmental information, for fish feeding operations in selected areas of the province of Iloilo. The system will be designed to be user-friendly and easy to use, with a simple interface that can be operated by non-technical personnel. It will also be able to operate in real time, providing up-to-date information on the status of aquaculture farms in the province.

The study's application requirements include both hardware and software components. The hardware requirements include drones equipped with sensors such as cameras, GPS, and environmental sensors; a ground control station (GCS) for remote control of the drones; computer hardware for data processing and analysis; and an internet connection for real-time data transmission. The software requirements, on the other hand, include an operating system (OS) for the GCS and data processing hardware, software for data processing and analysis, software for data visualization and reporting, and software for data encryption and authentication.

F. Block Diagrams or Visual Representation

The block diagram presented in the software design of the Drone fish –feeding operation system for aquaculture farms in the province of Iloilo is a crucial component of the study. It provides an excellent visual representation of the system's components and how they interact to monitor and surveil aquaculture farms. The block diagram shows that the fish-feeding operation system is composed of three main components: the Drone the ground control station (GCS), and the software system. The Drone collects data from the aquaculture farms, while the GCS allows the operator to control the Drone and view the collected data. The software system processes and analyzes data collected by the Drone, generating reports and alerts as shown in Fig. 1.

G. Input and Output Reports and Analysis

The software system of the Effectiveness of Drone Technology in Fish Feeding Operations in the province of Iloilo plays a crucial role in processing and analyzing the data collected by the Drone's sensors. To achieve its objectives, the software system uses algorithms to detect fish feeding operations, detect changes in water quality, and identify potential threats to aquaculture farms, such as predators or disease outbreaks. The software system also generates reports and alerts based on the data gathered by the Drone, which the operator can use to take appropriate action.

The input data for the software system includes video, images, and environmental data such as water quality. The software system processes and analyzes data in real time, using algorithms to detect fish feeding operations, changes in water quality, and potential threats to aquaculture farms. The device will use cameras, GPS, temperature sensors, water-quality sensors, and environmental sensors to capture temperature, high tide, low tide, weather forecasts, and conditions. The system will remotely control the Drone and stream live video, ensuring it covers all areas. Temperature sensors will provide water quality, high- and low-tide levels, and weather forecasts, allowing operators to take the necessary precautions and protect the fish pen. The algorithms in the software system are designed to be highly accurate and efficient, enabling fast, reliable processing of large amounts of data.

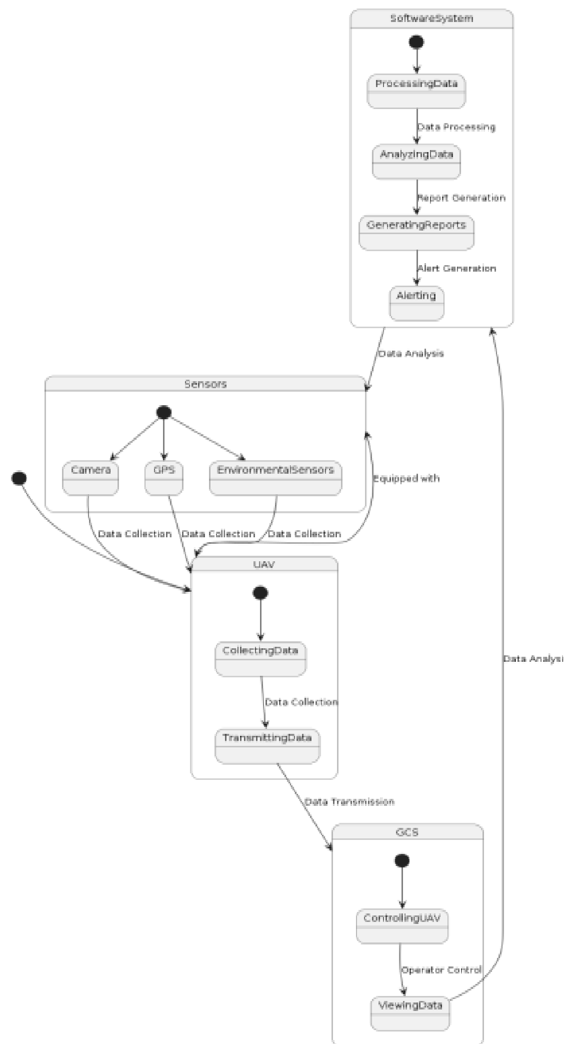

Fig. 1 Visual Representation

H. Algorithm Use

Eigenface is a method in facial recognition systems that uses concepts from linear algebra, particularly eigenvalues and eigenvectors. The technique starts by capturing a set of face images, which are then processed to obtain a composite average face representation. After transforming each image into a high-dimensional space, PCA is used to reduce dimensionality. This reduction identifies a set of "eigenfaces," which are essentially the dominant features that capture the most variance in the data. These eigenfaces serve as a basis for representing all faces in the dataset, allowing new images to be projected into this space and compared efficiently.

Once the eigenfaces are determined, the recognition process can begin. When a new image is introduced, it is processed in the same manner as the training images and projected into the eigenface space. The system then calculates distances from the projected image to the eigenface representations of images in the database. The facial recognition system can classify the new image by finding the closest match based on distance. The eigenface method is renowned for its simplicity and efficiency and has become a fundamental algorithm in computer vision and pattern recognition, despite its sensitivity to lighting variations and facial expressions.

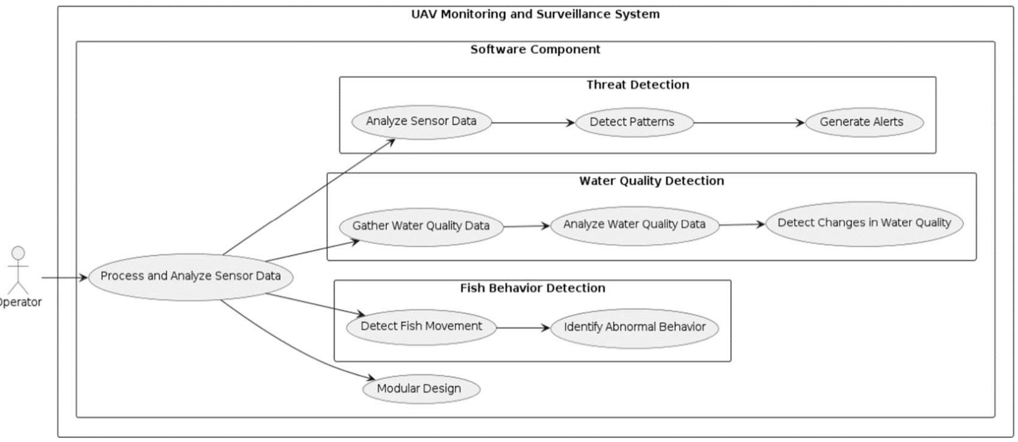

Fig. 2 Algorithm Use Diagram

This study aimed to develop an Evaluating the Effectiveness of Drone Technology in Fish Feeding Operations system that could perform perimeter monitoring, gather environmental information of fish feeding operations, and select areas of the province of Iloilo. The data-gathering procedure for the study was conducted through the following steps:

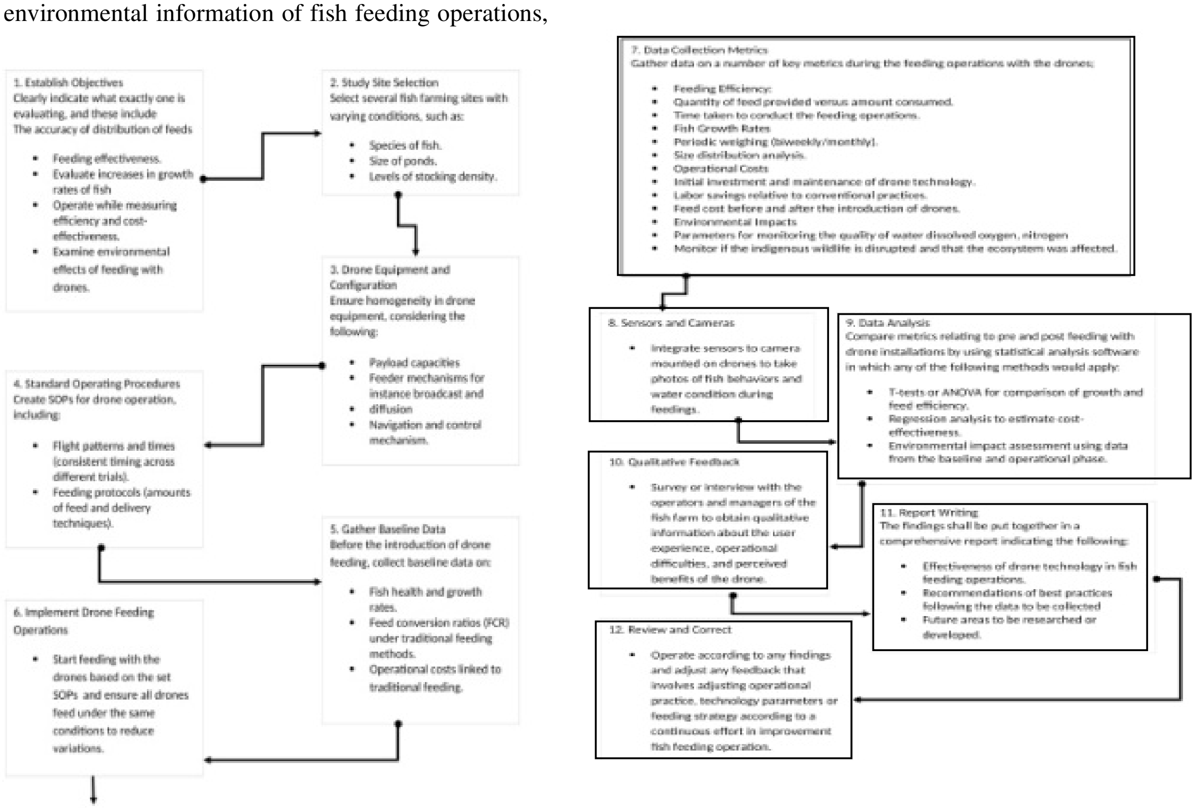

Fig. 3 Data Collection Process

Evaluating the efficacy of drone technology in fish feeding operations requires a planned data-collection process to assess a range of performance measures, including feeding efficiency, fish health, operational costs, and environmental effects. The following procedure outlines the quantitative and qualitative aspects of data collection.

III. Results and Discussion

Recent studies have shown that drone technology greatly improves the efficiency and accuracy of fish feeding operations. Drones with high-resolution cameras and GPS can help operators watch fish behavior and environmental conditions in real time. This allows for precise feed distribution and reduces waste. Such integration results in higher growth rates, higher feed conversion ratios, and lower labor costs, thereby boosting productivity in aquaculture systems. Furthermore, using drones helps detect problems like fish stress or disease outbreaks early, enabling timely action. Overall, adopting drone technology in fish feeding operations increases effectiveness, supports sustainable practices, and helps the financial success of aquaculture ventures.

The effectiveness of drone technology in fish feeding operations can be assessed through a systematic data-gathering procedure encompassing several key steps. Firstly, a baseline assessment is conducted to evaluate traditional feeding methods in terms of efficiency, labor costs, and fish growth rates. This will involve collecting quantitative data such as feed distribution times, feeding frequency, and overall fish biomass. These are then deployed with specialized feeding mechanisms. The drones' payload capacity, distribution accuracy, and time to complete feeding operations are noted, compared with conventional methods. Environmental conditions, such as wind speed and water surface conditions, are also recorded, as they have a significant impact on aerial feeding efficiency.

Evaluating the effectiveness of drone technology in fish feeding operations requires a detailed comparison of data before and after implementation. This helps us see improvements in operational efficiency and fish health. We systematically record key factors, including how feed is dispersed, feeding behavior, and growth rates after feeding. This information helps us understand how drones affect feeding precision and fish development. GPS tracking and monitoring systems are vital in this process. They provide real-time data on drone flight paths and coverage areas, enabling us to precisely analyze feed distribution and efficiency. This technology improves feeding operations, cutting down feed waste and boosting overall productivity. Studies, like by [20], show the benefits of precision feeding systems in aquaculture. Alongside quantitative data, we gather qualitative insights through surveys and interviews with aquaculture staff. This helps us understand user experiences, perceived benefits, and challenges related to drone-assisted feeding. These stories provide valuable context about moving from traditional methods to drone technology. They highlight aspects like ease of use, safety concerns, and training needs. Merging these qualitative insights with quantitative data gives us a fuller picture of the impact of drone technology. It allows for a thorough evaluation of its effectiveness. This approach aligns with research that emphasizes the importance of combining technology metrics with feedback from those involved to improve aquaculture practices [4]. The results of the jurors' evaluation of the system designed in this study are presented in Table 2.

TABLE II
Summarize the Findings of a Study Evaluating the Effectiveness of Drone Technology in Fish Feeding Operations

Metric	Traditional Feeding Method	Drone-Assisted Feeding	Percentage Improvement
Delivery Time (minutes)	30	15	50%
Feed Distribution Uniformity	60% (average)	90%	50%
Feed Waste Reduction (%)	15%	5%	66.67%
Labor Hours Required (per day)	8 hours	3 hours	62.5%
Fish Growth Rate (grams/day)	1.5 grams	2.0 grams	33.33%
Operational Cost (per month)	Php. 100,000	Php. 70,000	30%
Fish Health Index (score 1-10)	6.5	8.0	23.08%
Regulatory Compliance (pass rate)	85%	95%	11.76%
User Satisfaction (1-10 scale)	6.0	9.0	50%

IV. Conclusion

The integration of drone technology in fish feeding operations marks a major innovation in aquaculture practices. Through this assessment, it is apparent that drones enhance feeding efficiency, reduce labor costs, and improve fish health through timely and accurate feed distribution. Such technological integration, in addition to making operational processes smoother, promotes sustainability in the aquaculture industry by enabling the effective use of resources and minimizing waste through strategic feeding methods.

In addition, data from several case studies and pilot projects show that drones can simultaneously monitor fish behavior and environmental conditions. The ability to capture real-time aerial footage and sensor data provides fish farmers with insights that were previously difficult to obtain. This capability enables quicker decision-making and more responsive management practices, ultimately leading to increased productivity and profitability. As demand for sustainable seafood escalates, the role of technologies like drones becomes central to meeting the challenge.

Although the initial investment in drone technology may pose a financial challenge for most of its operators, the long-term benefits are enormous, including feed cost savings and improved growth rates, thus resulting in a favorable return on investment. With further technological advances, the cost of drones is likely to decrease, making them more accessible to fish farmers of all sizes. Moreover, introducing drones into existing operations will open further avenues for technology, such as automated monitoring and predictive analytics to optimize production efficiency.

In conclusion, drone technology in fish feeding operations has proven a valuable tool for transforming aquaculture practices. Its ability to enhance operational efficiency, monitor fish health, and optimize resource utilization showcases its potential to significantly impact the industry's future. More adoption of this technology among aquaculture producers should then lead to a smarter, more sustainable approach to fish farming, in line with global calls for increased food production and better stewardship of the environment.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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