
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Analysis of RA 9994 (Expanded Senior Citizens Act): An Experience of The San Vicente Senior Citizens Organization

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| ABSTRACT

A significant number of senior citizens comprising 7.4% or 7,534,306, live in poverty in the Philippines. This Act, with all its built-in care, protection, and a number of social, health, and economic benefits entitling the senior citizen, is considered noble and compassionate. The respondents are all members of the San Vicente Senior Citizens Organization, whose ages range from 60 years old and above. Interviews, both structured and informal, were employed to get into the existent sentiment of the senior citizens through the use of methods such as participant observation and face-to-face interviewing. For a total of 279 respondents, the civil status of the respondents consisted of the married, widower, widow, and single. There were self-employed, pension, and family support as the factors. The financial support from relatives is based on the criteria such as sufficient, good enough, scarcely, little, and none. To most seniors, tricycles, jeeps(PUJ), and buses are common means of transportation. None of the respondents traveled by airplane, boat, or commuter train. Further study of the R.A. 9994, especially on policy and information aspects. Provision on the slot allocation for the recipient/beneficiaries of the Social Stipend/Pension Program, pay out of monthly pension/stipend, provision on beneficiaries under SOCPEN and UCT.

| KEYWORDS

RA 9994, Expanded Senior Citizens Act; The San Vicente Senior Citizens Organizati

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1. Introduction

A country where all Filipino senior citizens are able to live an improved quality of life through healthy and productive aging. This beautiful scenario envisioned by the RA 9257 (The Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2003) and the RA 9994 (Expanded Senior Citizen Act of 2010) is a herald of hope for all the senior citizens of the Philippines.

More than a quarter of the Philippines' 105.7 million people live in dire poverty. The reasons are many: rapid population growth, inadequate social infrastructure, slow growth of rural productivity, and lack of access to credit. (Opportunity International- Report 2019). Given this situation, the elderly people, referred to as the senior citizens whose age is from 60 years old and above, are one of the most vulnerable sectors of the society in terms of health, sickness, hunger, social deprivation, and the other amenities enjoyed of a normal life. The DSWD Memorandum Circular No. 4, Series of 2019 cited that as of August 1, 2015, the Philippines had a total population of 100,981,437 based on the 2015 Census of Population (POPCEN 2015). Out of that population, 7.4% or 7,534,306 comprised senior citizens (SCs). The percentage of poverty in the basic sector is 13.2% which refers to the Senior Citizens. The number of senior citizens is expected to hit 9.5 million by the year 2020. The conduct of this research could exceed 13 million senior citizens at a 13.2% rate.

Relative to these figures, according to the World Health Organization, populations around the world are aging rapidly. From 2000 to 2050, the proportion of the world's population aged 60 years and above will double from about 11% to 22%. The absolute number of people aged 60 years or over is projected to increase from 900 million in 2015 to 1400 million by 2030 and 2100 million by 2050. (Health and Wellness Program for Senior Citizen, DOH, 2018).

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Consistent with the mandate of the 1987 Constitution, and as stated in the aforementioned DSWD CM No. 4, the Philippine Government has made great stride in promoting the welfare of its people and has ensured the continued participation in the development by legislating national policies in response to the emerging needs of the Filipino senior citizens.

The trend in poverty increase in the basic sector is true in developing countries as the number of elderly poor is increasing, and the older people are overrepresented among chronically poor people. This situation is aggravated due to retirement from work and or unemployment so much so that two-thirds of older people receive no regular income, and 100 million live on less than US\$1 a day.

1.1 Objectives

Notwithstanding the various DSWD guidelines issued in the field for the effective and efficient implementation of the government programs in addressing the welfare of the senior citizens, there still exist queries and, to some extent, complaints and confusion among the supposed beneficiaries of said programs. It is in the policy implementation that most of the questions raised are focused. Not only that a clear picture of the situation be drawn from this study, but more so, to come up with a Validation Survey Instrument as an output; this study aims to look into the various benefit aspect of implementation and specifically seeks to answer the following:

1. What is the profile of the Senior Citizens of Barangay San Vicente, Apalit, Pampanga in terms of:
 - 1.1. Economic status is described as Pension from GSIS, SSS, AFPMBA, and other Private Insurance
 - 1.2. Health and Physical condition
 - 1.3. Support from relatives
 - 1.4. House/dwelling
2. To what extent does RA 9994, in part is, availed by the san Vicente senior citizens as stipulated in the law in terms of:
 - 2.1. Hospitalization privileges
 - 2.2. Access to quality Medicine
 - 2.3. Food and basic commodities
 - 2.4. Transportation
3. How is the Social Pension policy implementation of RA 9994 to the benefit of the San Vicente senior citizens be described in terms of:
 - 3.1. Profiling of beneficiaries
 - 3.2. Manner and Selection of recipient
 - 3.3. Instrument used to ensure equity
4. What level of satisfaction the impact of RA 9994 has in the lives of the San Vicente senior citizens?
5. What survey instrument can be devised in order to establish a data bank in aid of the social pension provision under RA 9994.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

SOP No. 3 is approached through the ethnographic mixed interview, which covers the following:

Profiling of beneficiaries
Manner and Selection of recipient
Instrument used to ensure equity

As applied, the ethnographic mixed interview dealt with the nature, composition of family and households, the shelter and dwelling structure, the demographic, economic and poverty level, health and sanitation, the local language of communication, and the ethnicity of the life of the community are given special concern. Interviews, both structured and informal, were employed to get into the existent sentiment of the senior citizens through the use of methods such as participant observation and face-to-face interviewing. Documentation was done through the use of a smartphone equipped with a camera and recorder, which later were analyzed and tabled for easier interpretation.

2.2 Respondent

The respondents are all members of the San Vicente Senior Citizens Organization, whose ages range from 60 years old and above. However, believing that the age bracket more needing attention in so far as government assistance is concerned, and following the suggestion of the DSWD Memorandum, identifying the respondent is given more consideration to ages from 70 years old and above without detriment to those younger who are found on similar poverty situation.

2.3 Sources of Data

Secondary information was gathered from the Municipal Social Welfare and Development (MSWD), the Office of the Senior Citizens (OSCA), and the Barangay Office of San Vicente LGU. First-hand information was done through the questionnaire and face-to-face structured and unstructured interviews.

2.4 Instrument Used in Gathering Data

The questionnaire, which was designed to elicit relevant information on the policy implementation of RA 9994, was used. The questionnaire is brief, simple, and easy to direct-yielding information. Extensive utilization of structured and unstructured interviews was also used as supplementary gathering information on such, which was not adequately yielded through the written questionnaire to thoroughly assess and analyze the spirit of RA9994 and draw a clear-cut line on the gaps of implementation. Documentation was as well included tape-recording, picture taking, and other available materials the respondent wished to show or add that would give stronger credibility to the instrument. The generosity of the respondent in their responses is the assurance of confidentiality and treats the whole process to their identity.

2.5 Ocular Observation

In order to substantiate the responses from the target population, ocular observation was employed, especially on the actual situation on matters pertaining to the visible variables like; economic status, e.g., type of shelter or dwelling; health status, e.g., frail, sickly, malnourishment, etc.; support from a relative, e.g., judging on what is obvious; and the general environment. This method provided an objective manifestation of the actual and obtaining circumstances of the kind of life the subject senior citizen lives in. Documentation along this aspect is also a characteristic of an ethnographic-mixed approach, which is done with the consent of the subject respondent as well as the family or household.

The researcher was assisted by the Barangay Purok Leaders and the SVCZO coordinators in conducting the research work using the validated Questionnaire, Survey Instrument, and interview and documentation materials. This process lasted for a week which included the floating of the questionnaire and the conduct of casual, informal, formal, house to house, and face-to-face manner of interviews as the situation so demanded. Utmost care for health and safety was of general concern given the obtaining circumstances.

The data gathered was subjected to statistical treatment aimed at yielding the desired information with care and strict confidentiality to protect the privacy of the respondent. In this aspect, all those volunteers involved were made to understand the principle of Disclosure and Confidentiality. Significant information embedded in the process provided the impetus to crafting the Validation-Survey Instrument of the Social Pension, which is an essential output for which this study is conducted.

2.6 Documentary Materials

Electronic gadgets such as cell phones for photo shoots and recording, the computer/laptop Excel Spreadsheet, and photocopier/printer proved to be expedient and convenient tools in facilitating a systematic encoding and processing of gathered data.

2.7 Statistical Treatment

The following statistical tools were employed in the analysis and interpretation of gathered data.

- 1. Frequency tally and Percentage** – this, in particular, was used in order to associate the descriptive and quality assessment of the respondent in terms of policy implementation of RA 9994.

$$\text{Formula: } P = f \times 100 \% n$$

Where: P = percentage f = frequency n = total

- 2. Mean** – this is the number of the observed values divided by the number of observations. Formula: $(M = \sum fx / n$

Where: M = the mean

\sum = (sigma) the summative

fx = the product of the frequency and the weight of the Summative n = total

3. Norms for interpretation - For the proper interpretation and analysis of the results of the computations and in describing specific observations made in the different aspects of the RA 9994 social benefits to senior citizens, the following standard description were utilized.

3. Findings and Recommendations

Guided and consistent with the statement of the problems which was drawn from looking into the different benefits RA 9994 offered to the elderlies of barangay San Vicente, Apalit, Pampanga and in the manner of its implementation and in keeping with the process throughout the presentations of data, the following are the findings of the Study:

1. What is the profile of the Senior Citizens of Barangay San Vicente, Apalit, Pampanga in terms of:

3.1 Age:

SITIO/PUROK	AGE BRACKET in YEAR				TOTAL
	60-69	70-79	80-89	90 - UP	
ALAULI	10	4	7	1	22
BALITI-BABO-LALAM	13	8	4	4	39
CABAMBANGAN	25	10	11	3	49
NORTH VILLE	17	7	5	2	31
PIARAP	8	8	4	2	21
PIGULUT	6	2	2	1	11
PULUNG MALIGAYA	8	4	5	1	18
SAMPAGA	19	8	6	3	36
SANTIAGO	20	10	3	4	37
VILLE SUBDIVISION	8	3	3	1	15
TOTAL	144	64	50	22	279
Percent Weight	52%	23%	18%	8%	100%

The profile of the respondent in terms of age was established in Table 1, wherein the respondents were distributed across the range of 60 years old to 90 years old and above. There were 144 or 52% coming from age bracket 60-69, bracket 70-79 at 64 or 23%, bracket 80-89 with 50 or 28%, and bracket 90 and above with 22 or 8%. Across this age bracket was a total of 279 senior citizens respondents.

3.2 Civil Status:

SITO/PUROK	CIVIL STATUS				TOTAL
	Married	Widower	Widow	Single	
ALAULI	10	3	6	3	22
BALITI-BABO-LALAM	15	5	13	6	39
CABAMBANGAN	23	4	16	6	49
NORTH VILLE	7	9	11	6	31
PIARAP	10	3	6	2	21
PIGULUT	5	2	3	1	11
PULUNG MALIGAYA	8	2	6	2	18
SAMPAGA	17	3	11	5	36
SANTIAGO	17	4	11	5	37
VILLE SUBDIVISION	7	3	3	2	15
TOTAL	119	38	86	36	279
Percent Weight	42.65%	13.62%	30.82%	12.90%	100%

Table 4 was about the civil status of the respondents, which established the following information consisting of married at 119 or 42.65%, widower with 38 or 13.62%, widow with 86 or 30.82%, while single at 36 or 12.90%. It is noted that the combined number of widows and widowers represents a dominant 124 or 44.45%, meaning there is such a number of families with one surviving parent.

3.3 Economic status is described as Pension from GSIS, SSS, AFPMBA, and other Private Insurance.

Question 6.1	Respon- dents (450) Retrieve d (279)	(Salary)	(Self employe d)	Pension:				Ala (None Family support)
				GSIS	SSS	Milita r/ pulis	Aliwa /priba du (Priva te)	
Nanu ing panibatan ning pangabyayan (daily sustenance)		57	55	8	14	3	0	142
TOTAL	279	57	55	8	14	3	0	142
Percentage Point	100%	20.43%	19.71%	2.87%	5.02%	1,07%	0	50.89%

On the Economic Status/Financial Aspect, where employment, self-employed, pension, and family support were the factors, Table 5 established the following information. Among the 279 respondents, there are those who are still gainfully employed either in government or private sectors at 57 or 20.43%, those who are engaged as self-employed numbered 55 or 19.71%, while those who depend on pension either from GSIS, SSS, or Military or PNP were 25 or 8.96% and a staggering number of 142 or 50.89% have no income from any source.

3.4 Health and Physical condition:

Question 6.2	Respon- dents (450)	Sapat (regular) Sufficien t (5)	Magkasya (maralas) Good Enough (4)	kulang (malagad) Scarcely (3)	Halus ala (dimut) Little (2)	Ala None (1)
Nu anti ing supporting pinansiyal /kabyayan ibat kareng kamag-anak?		56	81	40	22	80
TOTAL	279	56	81	40	22	80
Percent Weight	100%	20.07%	29.03%	14.34%	7.86%	28.67%

On Physical/Health conditions which is an important part of the profiling of the respondents, Table 8 established the following information with criteria such as healthy at 81 or 29%, frailty with 39 or 14%, sickly at 81 or 29.00%, sick with 64 or 23.00% and bedridden at 17 or 6.00% out of 279 respondents respectively. Among the senior respondent, the number of the healthy and the sickly matches fairly, while there is a slight difference between the frailty and the sick. On the other hand, the number of those who are bedridden is not very disturbing at 6%, considering the age and life expectancy among the elderly.

3.5 Support from relatives

	Respon- dents (450)	Sapat (regular) Sufficien t (5)	Magkasya (maralas) Good Enough (4)	kulang (malagad) Scarcely (3)	Halus (dimut) Little (2)	Ala None (1)
Nu anti ing supporting pinansiyal /kabyayan ibat kareng kamag-anak?		56	81	40	22	80
TOTAL	279	56	81	40	22	80
Percent Weight	100%	20.07%	29.03%	14.34%	7.86%	28.67%

Table 6 established the information on the financial support from relatives based on the criteria such as sufficient at 56 or 20.07%, good enough at 81 or 29.03%, scarcely with 40 or 14.34%, little at 22 or 7.86%, and none with 80 or 28.67%. The seniors belong to those who totally depend on their family or relative, and other people comprised receive a meager amount that cannot sustain a healthy and comfortable ageing life.

3.6 House/dwelling

Question 7.1	Respon- dents (450)	Maragul (Big House) (5)	Kasantingan a dagul (Medium) (4)	Malati (Small) (3)	Dalung- Dung (Makeshi p) (2)	Tapal- tapal (Shanty) (1)
Nanu ya klasi ing bale tutuknangan?	279	14	103	128	20	5
TOTAL	279	14	103	128	20	5
Percent Weight	100%	5.00%	37.00%	46.00%	7.17%	1.79%

Information on House dwelling/Shelter was established under Table 7 with the criteria such as big with 14 or 5.00%, medium at 103 or 37.00%, small with 128 or 46.99%, make-ship with 20 or 7.17%, and shanty with 5 or 1,79%, for a total of 279 respondents. These figures show that the majority of the respondents live in a somewhat safe and comfortable dwelling or shelter.

4. What is the extent to which RA 9994, in part, is availed by the san Vicente senior citizens as stipulated in the law?

Information on the extent by which RA 9994, in part, is availed by the san Vicente senior citizens as stipulated in the law was established through the interview using both simplified structured and unstructured instruments in terms of:

Hospitalization privileges – there were varying responses from the respondent raging from affirmative to negative based on individual experiences. What is noticeable was that those who had access to these privileges were those who had the means to go to the hospital, but others simply stayed at home without the benefit of enjoying what RA 9994 offers.

Access to quality Medicine - for those who have secured prescriptions from the doctors, along with the patients' booklet and ID, quality discounted medicines are available. However, those who cannot afford to see a physician and cannot secure any prescription are deprived of quality discounted medicine. This is true for the majority of the elderlies needing medicines and, in most cases resorting to buying unprescribed over the counter drugs.

Food and basic commodity - the same case as in the availment of the privileges on access to quality medicine, there were varying reactions in the purchase of food and staples. Many were being deprived of privileges in the purchase of discounted food and basic staples as not all groceries implement discounts for seniors. Foods purchased in the market are not subject to discounted prices

likewise from sari-sari stores where most of the seniors usually purchase food and basic commodity. If ever one gets discounts from grocery, this is limited to a maximum of Php 30.00 only and good for a week purchase as reflected in the Purchase Booklet. This is another reason for most seniors avoid the trouble of long cues from supermarkets.

Transportation – to most seniors, tricycles, jeeps (PUJ), and buses are common means of transportation. None of the respondents traveled by airplane, boat, or commuter train. Those who are still working from places requiring travel from busses avail of discounts, likewise from PUJ although some do not avail discount from these because the senior passengers understand that such is a deduction from their earnings. Tricycles do not grant discounts; instead, they are more Interested in keeping the change. A great majority of seniors do not travel needing such transportation vehicles, so this privilege renders it irrelevant to them.

5. How is the Social Pension policy implementation of RA 9994 to the benefit of the San Vicente senior citizens be described in terms of:

Profiling of beneficiaries, manner, and selection of recipient – obviously, there was no formal profiling of beneficiaries nor a credible selection process as can be gathered from interviews and responses from the questionnaire. It would just be unethical and, likewise, so as not to stir issues that the survey instrument made no mention of this concern. Suffice to look into the list of recipients and listen to feedback, besides in a sitio or puruk as the setting suggests; everyone knows everybody, the deserving or not.

Instrument used to ensure equity – practically, there was no such instrument as can be deduced from most of the seniors' feedback. Many complain that they were deprived because others who are smart and clever and have the "connection" get the slot undeservedly.

6. What level of satisfaction the impact of RA 9994 has in the lives of the San Vicente senior citizens?

Question 9.1	Respon- dents (450)	Masayang -Masaya (Very happy) (5)	Masaya (Happy) (4)	Medyu masaya (Somewhat happy) (3)	Medyu Malungkut (somewhat sad) (2)	Malungkut (sad) (1)
Nanu ing asabi mu inggil king babye nang benepisyu ning RA9994?		17	81	73	17	95 = 662
TOTAL	279	17	81	73	17	95
Weighted MEAN	100%	6.00%	29.00%	26.00%	6.00%	34.00%

Level of satisfaction the impact of RA 9994 has in the lives of the San Vicente senior citizens – responses given by the sample population are consistent in presenting the sentiments of the respondents. With the varying views gathered, on the one hand, there are those strong, healthy, and have money, who were enjoying the benefits of discounts accruing from bus fare, PUJ, hospital bills, medicine, groceries, restaurant, and other amenities have registered "Very happy (Masayang- masaya)" with 17 or 6.00%, "Happy (Masaya)" at 81 or 29.00% with a total of 98 or 35%. On the other hand, seniors lying in the opposite situation do not enjoy the same benefits and have registered "Somewhat sad (Medyu malungkut)" at 17 or 6.00%, "Sad (Malungkut)" with 95 or 34.00% for a combined 112 or 40.00%. The criteria "Somewhat happy (Medyu masaya)" however, registered 73 or 26% splitting the lever to tilt a bit lower on the sad side of the beam by 14 or 5% of respondents.

7. What survey instrument can be devised in order to establish a data bank in aid of the social pension provision under RA 9994.

A survey instrument that can be devised in order to establish a data bank in aid of the social pension provision under RA 9994 is inevitable to ensure a fair, just, and reliable selection of prospective beneficiaries under the Government Social Amelioration Program, also known as Social Pension Program (SOCPEN). Such is the Validation Survey Instrument for Beneficiaries of the Social Pension Program, which is an output of this research material. The sample of which is an attachment in the appendix.

8. Conclusion

The government, mindful of this critical situation, has passed legislation, particularly the R.A. 9994, known as the Expanded Senior Citizen Act of 2010. This Act, with all its built-in care, protection, and a number of social, health, and economic benefits entitling the senior citizen, is considered noble and compassionate.

However, with all the good intent of RA 9994, the spirit of which can only be enjoyed fully by the intended beneficiaries once every feature of which is justly implemented. It is in this premise whereby this research work is attempting to explore the implementation-satisfaction aspect and device an instrument in aid of its social pension program for indigent senior citizens.

9. Recommendations

Provide facilities and activities that promote 1) healthy living through comprehensive health care and rehabilitation system, 2) improved quality of life in taking their proper place in society through a system that fosters their capacity to attain more meaningful and productive ageing, 3) full participation as an integral part of Philippine society; 4) total well-being of the elderly and the capacity to contribute to nation-building, 5) recognition of the dignity and rights of senior citizens as worthy members of the Philippine society.

1. **Provision of a Livelihood activity program** through the help and support of the LGU, the community, and the families should be initiated at the sitio/purok and community level.
2. **Provision of the privilege of hospitalization** should be reviewed and monitored in its aspect of implementation, which needs to be rationalized in such a way that even those who are bedridden at home will enjoy the kind of benefit in an extended manner in the absence of home-care facilities.
3. **Provision on the purchase of medicine**, while safety net is necessary to curbe on possible abuses, the stringent requirement of Doctor's Prescription and booklet, however, be relaxed in favor of those who cannot afford to secure prescriptions, especially on over-the-counter medicine which usually good for a week prescription, including vitamins and food supplement whereby the senior ID alone will suffice.
4. **Provision on the slot allocation** for the recipient/beneficiaries of the Social Stipend/Pension Program by barangay should be reviewed for equitable distribution by a number of population and truly deserving senior citizens.
5. **Provision on "Pay out" of the monthly pension/stipend** should be rationalized and simplified such that the use of automated payment be employed like the use of ATM for monthly cash out that is more systematic and accessible to the beneficiaries to avoid delays, as in the present practice of semi-annual payout. This practice proved detrimental to recipients, defeating the good intent of RA 9994, which is a "monthly pension of Php 500.00. Partners banks knew how to make it works.
6. **Provision on beneficiaries under SOCPEN and UCT**, there should be no duplication of beneficiaries under the Social Stipend/Pension Program and those under the UCT beneficiaries. There is more indigent who could be listed in any one of the cited amelioration programs instead of one receiving from both – SOCPEN or UCT.
7. **Provision on the utilization of Validation Survey Instrument one, which is unbiased**, fair, and impartial in the selection of beneficiaries Under the Government Social Amelioration Program (SOCPEN). An example of this is the output of this research material to properly screen those prospective beneficiaries under the so-called Social Pension (SOCPEN) under RA 9994. This sample accomplished the instrument using the data gathered from the Survey Questionnaire and Unstructured Interview is attached as an Appendix.
8. **Revisiting the policy and implementation aspects of RA 9994** in terms of accessibility and relevance between the "haves" and the "have not" senior citizens. Tilt the balance more in consideration of the needy rather than lavish perks accorded to those who can afford it while leaving scraps to those in dire needs -- happier life to one already enjoying life but crumbs to the impoverished and bedbound. Retooling RA 9994 for sensitivity and responsiveness.
9. **Further study of the R.A. 9994, especially on policy and information aspects.**

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