

Awareness and Perception of Senior Citizens on the Implementation of Republic Act 9994 in San Isidro in Nueva Ecija in the Philippines

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Abstract

This study determined the awareness and perception of senior citizens on the implementation of R.A. 9994, or the Expanded Senior Citizen Act of 2010. It employed both qualitative and quantitative research design as it described the profile of the respondents, determined the level of awareness of the respondents on the benefits granted by RA 9994, and analyzed the extent of implementation of the benefits and privileges based on R.A. 9994. The respondents came from the three clustered barangays of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija in the Philippines. The researcher used a 5-point Likert Scale questionnaire. The data gathered revealed that Senior Citizens were “Moderately Aware” of most of the parameters presented such as the 20% discount, government assistance, and priority in express lanes. On the other hand, the mean response on the extent of implementation was verbally described as “Slightly Implemented.” The Analysis of Variance showed that the level of awareness of respondents across the clustered barangays does not vary significantly. Thus, from the findings, it is recommended that a thorough study with a greater number of respondents, including the relatives/primary care giver, should be involved. Firm and systematic assessment is also recommended to monitor the implementation of the programs.

Keywords: senior citizens, effectiveness, RA 9994, expanded senior citizens act of 2010, Philippines, San Isidro, policy implementation

1. Introduction

In reference to the data of the National Institute of Health (2011), World Health Organization (2018) stated that population around the world are rapidly ageing. People are just starting to understand its effects at the national and international levels. It affects majority of the sectors of society, including the demand for goods and services such as housing, transportation and social protection, as well as family structures, intergenerational ties and labor and financial markets. (Dugarova, E. 2016)

In the Philippines, individuals aging 60 years old and above are called ‘senior citizens’. According to the Population Commission (2018), there are 8,013,059 Filipinos over 60 which composed the 8.2% of the population of all Filipinos on 2018. On the said group, 5,082,049 range from 65 years old and above. The population of one country is considered ageing if they contain the 7% of the masses over 65 years old.

Family is the basic unit of society, thus, the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines provides that “family has the duty to take care of elderly members, but the State may also do so through just programs of social security” (De Leon and De Leon, 2014). On February 15, 2010, Republic Act (RA) 9994 otherwise known as the Expanded Senior Citizen Act of 2010 was signed into law. It further expands the benefits and privileges of RAs 7432 and 8257. RA 9994 expands the coverage of the list of goods and services entitled to the twenty percent discount and exemption from the twelve percent Value-Added Tax (VAT). These benefits include 20% discounts and utility discounts, free medical and dental services, tax exemptions, government assistance such as social pension, mandatory PhilHealth coverage, safety nets and death benefit assistance, and other privileges like express lanes and free vaccination

(House of Representatives, 2015).

RA No. 9994 aims to recognize the rights of every senior citizen in the context of the society, their family, community, and the government. Since the senior citizens are integral part of the society, the law aims to provide the following: provision of support or assistance for the total well-being of the elderly; to motivate and encourage them to contribute to nation building; to encourage their families and the communities they live with to reaffirm the valued Filipino tradition of caring for our elderly loved ones; to provide a comprehensive health care and rehabilitation system for disabled senior citizens to foster their capacity to attain a more meaningful and productive ageing (Official Gazette, 2010).

According to International Labor Organization, despite of the progress and the government efforts to increase the allocation for the senior citizens, the Philippines social pension system has serious gaps in terms of distribution of pension to our senior citizens. Out of eight million Filipinos, an estimated of 40 percent (3.2 million) do not have access. While social security pension is evident, the life expectancy of Filipinos is rising on average. Low pension coverage creates additional monetary problems for family as the ratio between elderly parents and adult children upsurge. (Ducusin, L.A. 2017)

The Business Mirror (2017) showed that despite the constitutional mandate on social security for senior citizens, not all of them receive financial support. Some do receive but it is often inadequate to provide their basic needs. According to the study by the Coalition of Services of the Elderly (COSE), with HelpAge International, 38% of senior citizens are still not aided with social pension. (Knox-Vydmanov, C., Horn, D., & Sevilla, A. 2016)

It is reflected in the Philippine Development Plan of 2017-2022 that programs for senior citizens remains one of the top agenda in pursuing universal social protection. This program aims to reduce weakness of individuals and families, and improve the social pension system among others.

Presently, the definition of senior citizens excludes senior citizens who are not sick or disabled and who have pension or other sources of income. All senior citizens need to be included in the provision of the law, for they are also in need of government assistance in the face of increasing price of basic commodities and services. (House of Representatives, 2010)

Due to these gaps, the researcher focused in determining the awareness and perception of the senior citizens on the implementation of the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010, particularly in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija.

Specifically, it dealt with the following:

1. Described the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - a. Age;
 - b. Gender;
 - c. Civil Status;
 - d. Educational Attainment; and
 - e. Monthly Income

2. Determined the level of awareness of the senior citizens on the benefits granted by RA 9994;
3. Determined the perception of the senior citizens on the extent of implementation of the benefits and privileges of RA 9994;
4. Analyzed the significant difference on the awareness of the respondents across the three clustered barangays of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija; and
5. Recommend policies to improve the implementation of Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

Every senior citizen is endowed with the dignity and worth as a human being. Therefore they have the right to be respected and be provided with love, care, understanding, and moral security. Likewise, every senior citizen has the right to live in a community and a society that can offer an environment conducive to the promotion of his health, as well as to a well-rounded development of his personality. The ultimate goal is for them to be happy, useful, and active member of society.

Government and family need to be cognizant of the numerous needs of senior citizens and aggressively provide opportunities to help them satisfy each level of the hierarchy. It is to achieve a life that is truly valued rather than just survived. For this view, the researcher employed the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as the theoretical framework of the study. (McCarthy,2013)

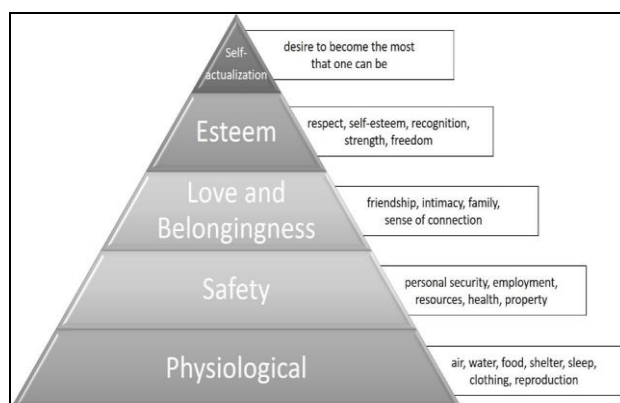


Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The government is for the public. Thus, people need access to food and safe house, to feel safe and secure, to keep up social affiliations, and to get respect. If government measures its performance in these terms, it would have the capacity to effectively empower its senior citizens to encounter the lives they truly need to live

1.2 Conceptual Framework

The framework of this study depends on the awareness of the Senior Citizens in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija on the benefits granted by the RA 9994. The five (5) benefits and privileges,

pursuant to the provision of RA 9994 are the following: 20% discounts, exemptions, 5% utility discounts, government financial assistance, and other privileges like priority in express lanes among others.

Republic Act 9994, refers to senior citizen as all elderly “who is frail, sickly or with disability and without pension or permanent source of income, compensation or financial assistance from his or her relatives to support his or her basic needs.”

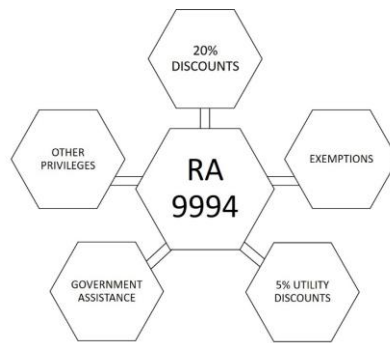


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

The needs of older persons, among others, are included in the priority list when designing and implementing integrated and comprehensive programs. This is to make essential goods, health, and other social services available to all the people at affordable cost.

1.2 Research Paradigm

The figure below shows the research paradigm which guides the researcher on the implementation of this study.

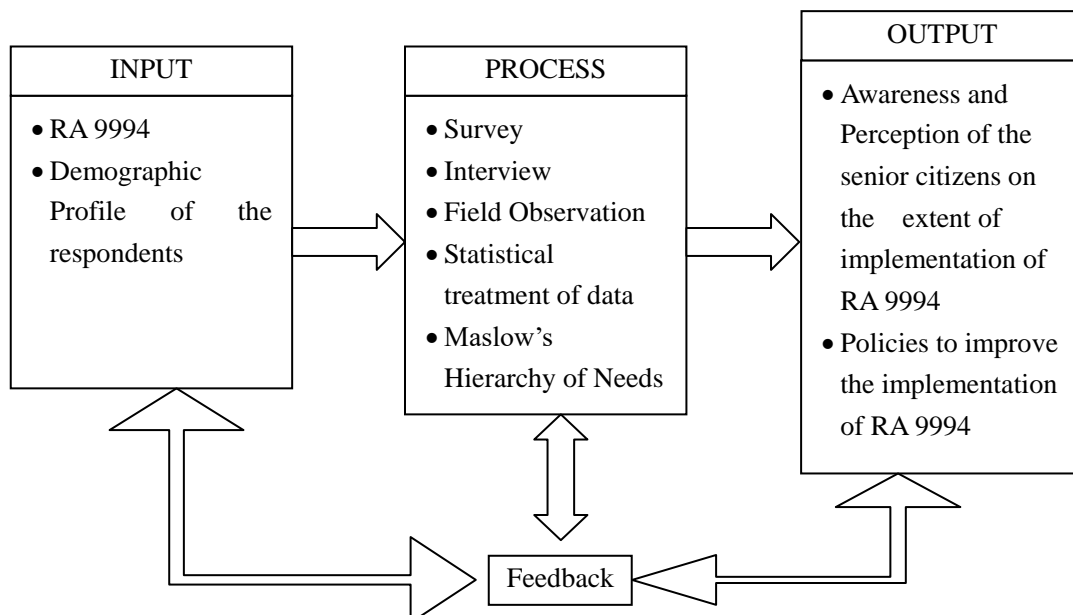


Figure 3. Conceptual Framework

In the light of the theoretical framework and the system approach, the research paradigm presents the following: the inputs are the objectives of RA 9994 and the demographic profile of the respondents; the input is processed through the use of data gathering tools, the

statistical treatment of data and the Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs; and the output shows the analysis on the awareness and perception of the senior citizens on the extent of implementation of RA 9994, as well as, the recommendation of policies to improve its implementation. The feedback is taken from all factors and actors which will be significant to improve the policy implementation and delivery of the needs and services to the people.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study Locale

Municipality of San Isidro is the locale of the study. It is a second class municipality that lies in the province of Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The municipality is divided into nine (9) barangays. Based on the 2015 census of the Philippine Statistics Authority the total population of the municipality is 51,612 and approximately 4.50% were senior citizens. Figure 3 presents the map of the Philippines showing the location of Nueva Ecija. Figure 4 shows the map of the province of Nueva Ecija while pinpointing the location of San Isidro.



Figure 4. Map of the Province Nueva Ecija, Philippines (*Source: www.researchgate.net*)

2.2 Research Design

This paper employed the qualitative and quantitative research design. It described the profile of the respondents, determined the level of awareness of the respondents regarding the benefits and privileges provided by RA 9994, as well as the extent of implementation of the benefits granted by RA 9994 as perceived by the Senior Citizens. Likewise, it determined the significant difference in the level of awareness of senior citizens according to geographic location. The researcher utilized comparative technique as the study compared the level of awareness of the senior citizens from the three clustered barangays of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija explicitly;

I. Cluster A (Central includes Poblacion, Alua, Malapit)

II. Cluster B (South includes Pulo, Mangga, Tabon)

III. Cluster C (West includes Sto. Cristo, San Roque, Calaba)

The respondents were the Senior citizens who are listed in the Municipal Federation of Senior Citizens Association of the Philippines (MFSCAP) San Isidro Chapter. The total number of population from clusters A, B and C were 886, 838 and 602 respectively. Cluster Sampling was employed in the population sampling. Basing on the online computation for population sample of surveymonkey.com, in a population of 2326, it only needs at least 93 respondents in this study. Generally, 105 were subjected to answer the questionnaire; 35 respondents each sampled cluster so that each cluster has the same number of interviews.

The researcher used a 5-point Likert Scale questionnaire measuring the extent of implementation and awareness of the respondents as presented in the table 1 below:

Table 1. Scoring guide used to interpret survey responses

Average Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	
	Extent of Implementation	Level of Awareness
1.00 – 1.79	Not Implemented	Not at All Aware
1.80 – 2.59	Slightly Implemented	Slightly Aware
2.60 – 3.39	Somewhat Implemented	Somewhat Aware
3.40 – 4.19	Moderately Implemented	Moderately Aware
4.20 – 5.00	Fully Implemented	Extremely Aware

The questionnaire instruments used was based on the provisions of RA 9994. It was administered after the interview with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) personnel, and was complemented by field observations. A focus group discussion was conducted to validate the results of the survey and all the information gathered from the respondents. Thus, confirmed the extent of implementation and awareness of the respondents on the policies or concerns on RA 9994.

Likewise, a review of secondary sources was utilized such as news clippings and make use of existing literature in the Philippines and internet searches about the subject matter. The first section of the instrument confined the information on respondent's age, gender, civil status, educational attainment and income. The second section assessed the extent of implementation of the respondents to determine their level of awareness along the areas of 20% discounts, exemptions, utility discounts, government assistance and other privileges.

Frequency and percentages was used for the overall description of the population being surveyed, while mean and rank distribution was used to measure the responses of the respondents. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the significant difference in awareness of the respondents on the benefits granted by RA 9994 from the three clustered barangays of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija,.

3. Results and Discussions

This part of the study presents the data gathered, the findings, interpretations and analysis of data consistent with the statements of the problems.

3.1 Demographic Profile

The demographic profile is presented in the following figures which could also be helpful for the understanding of the subsequent analysis of the outcomes. This study involved a total 105 respondents and they were divided into three groups (Cluster A, Cluster B and Cluster C).

3.1.1 Age

The statistics shows that majority of the respondents fall on 29.52% are between age group of 60-64 years old, whereas around 24% of the respondents fall between 65-69 years. The remaining respondents are as follows; 19.05% for 70-74, 12.38% for 75-79, 10.48% for 80-84 and only 4.76% of the respondents are 85 and above. Based on the informal interviews, those who are nearing 60 were somehow excited to become a member of the federation and, enjoy their privileges and benefits.

3.1.2 Gender

As the results show, majority of the respondents who participated in the study were female, consisting of 48% of the total population, whereas, only 42% were male. Although, there is no big difference in the gap, it is noted that females, when it comes to participation, are more active than men. This result indicates that female senior citizens are more active and aware of the benefits that they should be getting. Also, based on the result, female senior citizens are more numerous than males. According to Philippine Statistics Authority, the Philippines is made up 6.8 percent of the 92.1 million household population in 2010. Among the senior citizens, 55.8% females and 44.2% males

3.1.3 Civil Status

Majority of the respondents were married comprising the 47.62% (50) of the total respondents (105). Whereas only 29.52% were widows and 11.43% were single. Only 1.90% of the total respondents were in common law relationship. Undoubtedly, most of the respondents enjoying the benefits and privileges were married. Based on the gathered results, anyone, regardless of the civil status, can enjoy the benefits that they should be getting. Likewise, anyone can participate in the community and become a member of the federation.

3.1.4 Educational Attainment

The result of level of education reveals that majority of the total respondents were high school and elementary graduate, both consisting 19.05%. Notably, during their times, many of our senior citizens only reached elementary level merely comprising the 16% of the whole. Only 13% of them reached college level, whereas 12% graduated from college and only 7% of the whole had their professional degree. The result depicts that the level of educational attainment simply means that they know about the law granted to the senior citizens. As supported by the study, the educational level of the respondents is expressively related to

their level of awareness. This means that most of the senior citizens are able to recognize the importance of the law.

3.1.5 Monthly Income

The monthly income of the respondents shows that overall, 34 out of 105 received 2,000 to 3,999 for their monthly income comprising the highest percentage of 32.38%. Merely 23.81% received the amount of 4,000 to 5,999 monthly to cover all the dues. Though, 20% received 1,999 and below for their monthly income. This result is very alarming because according to the respondent it is impossible to shield all the monthly expenses with this income. Only a part (10.48%) receives the amount of 10,000 and above every month, and four out of 105 respondents were receiving 8,000 to 9,999 monthly, which is according to another respondent is not enough to sustain the whole month necessities.

Financially, our senior citizens today require support from their family and the government. Turning 60 is nearing the end of their work or their career. In most cases, they retire at 60, others at 65. According to seniorliving.org, seniors give up work once they turn 65. For instance, if a senior citizen has planned strategically by saving for retirement during their working age, then they should have something that they can use for their retirement. Otherwise, working is likely a requirement to sustain their daily livings.

3.2 Awareness of Senior Citizens on their Benefits Based on RA 9994

The awareness of senior citizens on their benefits based on RA 9994 of the three clustered barangays of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija were presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean Response on the awareness of senior citizens on their benefits based on RA 9994 in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija

INDICATORS	Cluster A		Cluster B		Cluster C		Overall		RANK
	Mean	Description	Mean	Description	Mean	Description	Mean	Description	
I.20% DISCOUNTS									
1.Medical-related Privileges	4.31	EA	3.19	SA	4.17	MA	3.89	MA	2
2.Medical and dental services, diagnostic and laboratory	3.8	MA	2.78	SA	3.8	MA	3.46	MA	4
3.Professional Fees of Doctors	3.97	MA	2.69	SA	3.77	MA	3.48	MA	3
4.Transportation	4.29	EA	3.42	MA	4.31	EA	4.01	MA	1
5.Utilization of Services	2.89	SA	2.31	SLA	2.77	SA	2.66	SA	5
6.Admission Fees	2.74	SA	2.17	SLA	3	SA	2.64	SA	6
7.Funeral and Burial Assistance	2	SLA	1.97	SLA	2.94	SA	2.30	SLA	7
TOTAL MEAN	3.43	MA	2.65	SA	3.54	MA	3.20	SA	
II.EXEMPTIONS									
1.Tax Exemption	2.91	SA	2	SLA	2.86	SA	2.59	SLA	1
2.Training Fee Exemption	2.11	SLA	1.56	NAA	3.17	SA	2.28	SLA	2
TOTAL MEAN	3.96	SLA	1.78	NAA	3.02	SA	1.60	SLA	

III.5% UTILITY DISCOUNT

1.Electric Bill	2.89	SA	1.72	NAA	2.31	SLA	2.31	SLA	1
2.Water Bill	2.34	SLA	1.56	NAA	1.94	SLA	1.95	SLA	2
TOTAL MEAN	2.61	SA	1.64	NAA	2.13	SLA	1.26	SLA	

IV.GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

1.Social Pension	4.51	EA	4.11	MA	4.69	EA	4.44	EA	2
2.PhilHealth	5	EA	4.25	EA	4.37	EA	4.54	EA	1
3.Social Safety Nets	4.2	EA	4.22	EA	4.23	EA	4.22	EA	3
4.Death Benefit Assistance	2.43	SLA	1.78	NAA	2.11	SLA	2.11	SLA	4
TOTAL MEAN	4.03	MA	3.59	MA	3.85	MA	2.48	MA	

V.OTHERS PRIVILEGES

1.Express Lanes	4.66	EA	3.69	MA	4.31	EA	4.22	EA	1
2.Free medical and dental services, and other fees	2.54	SLA	1.78	NAA	2	SLA	2.11	SLA	3
3.Free influenza and pneumococcal vaccination	2.74	SA	1.86	SLA	2.34	SLA	2.31	SA	2
TOTAL MEAN	3.31	SA	2.44	SA	2.88	SA	1.78	SA	
GRAND MEAN	3.21	SA	2.42	SLA	3.08	SA	2.89	SA	

Legend: NAA-Not at all Aware, SLA-Slightly Aware, SA-Somewhat Aware, MA-Moderately Aware, EA-Extremely Aware

Under 20% Discounts, discount on transportation ranked number 1 with an overall mean of 4.01. While ranked 2, with an overall mean of 3.89 (moderately aware), was discount on medical-related privileges. The last in the ranking, rank 7, with an overall mean of 2.30 was funeral and burial assistance. Thus, senior citizens are aware of discounts on their basic needs such as transportation and medicine and are less aware of their privileges on funeral and burial assistance. Obviously, they will no longer be aware if they were able to avail of that benefit.

According to respondent SC 6, “*Alam ko yang sa 20% discount na yan at yan ang making tulong sa aming mga senior citizens. Sa gamut, sa pagkain, sa ospital at iba pang pangagailangan ng mga matatandang katulad ko ay napapababa ang presyo dahil sa benepisyo naming na ito.*” (“I know about 20% discount and this benefit is an ample help for us senior citizens. When it comes to medicines, foods, hospitalizations and other needs of senior citizens like me, this is very useful because this lowers the amount of price we need to pay.”) Without a doubt, the said benefit is a great help for the senior citizens. They are legalized to purchase a number of items for a lesser amount, mostly medicines and foods.

In exemption privileges, tax exemption ranked 1 with an overall mean of 2.59, while training fee exemption earned 2.28. This means that senior citizens are mostly aware of what they usually utilize. They hardly undergo any training now for most of them are no longer employed, thus, they are not aware of the training fee exemption. Based on the interview, SC 7 said, “*Hindi ako masyadong maalam sa benepisyo na an. Parang sa mga may kaya sa buhay lang yata yang training na yan. Matanda na ko hindi ko na kaya yang mga ganyan.*” (I

do not much about this benefit. It seems like that this benefit is not for us ordinary citizens. I am old already for that.” It is clear based on the statement that there is, indeed, a need for information disseminations regarding the benefits and privileges of our senior citizens.

Under 5% utility discount, discount on electric bill ranked 1 earning 2.31 and in rank 2 described as slightly aware, water bill earned 1.95. The results show that senior citizens are slightly aware of their benefits on utilities discount. This may be because they are no longer the one actually paying for the utilities in the family, possibly due to their age. According to respondent SC 8, “*Itong benepisyo na ito, itong 5% discount, madalang ang nakakaalam nito, eh hindi naman din kasi nagagamit.*” (“This benefit, this 5% discount, we do not know about this much, maybe because we hardly use it.”) Looking at the statement, particular benefits are only for those who can afford and are able to utilize it. According to an article, “An alternative to senior citizen discount”, by Benjamin Punongbayan, our legislation must be based on analyses to avoid unnecessary opposing effects to other sectors of community. Also adequate research is necessary before legislative processes took place.

In government assistance privileges, Philhealth was ranked 1 and described as extremely aware, followed by benefits on social pension accorded with a mean of 4.44 (Extremely Aware). While Death Benefit Assistance was ranked 4th and the respondents were slightly aware of this. The results support the findings on the 20% discounts where senior citizens are mostly aware of medical benefits than death benefits, for they medical privileges and social pension are their basic and priority needs. According to respondent SC 9, “*Malaking tulong ang Philhealth hindi lang sa mga matatanda kundi sa lahat, dahil malaking diskwento ang nakukuha namin. At alam din ng nakakarami yung tulong na binibigay ng gobyerno pag may mga sakunang nangyayari dito dahil lagi naming nakikita na laging may dumadating na tulong.*” (“Philhealth is a great help not just for seniors but for all of us, because of the discounts we are getting. Also when it comes to social security assistance, our government is always there to support us when calamity strikes, we knew, because they are always visible when it comes to sending help.”) Based in an article, Mandatory Philhealth Coverage of Senior Citizens, since the law was amended, all of our senior citizens are gaining greater peace of mind because they are covered by PhilHealth. Also, senior citizens entitle members to declare dependents.

Other privileges include express lanes, which is rank 1 with a mean of 4.22; Free influenza and pneumococcal vaccination in rank 2 (2.31); and free medical and dental services, and other fees in rank 3 wherein the respondents were slightly aware (2.11). Senior citizens usually avails of the priority lanes and medical services for their immediate needs, thus they are more aware of these benefits. Based on the interview, SC 10 said, “*Ako kasi hindi ako masyado lumalabas sa bayan para magbayad o magpunta sa bangko, pero alam kong may priority lanes ang mga senior citizens. May mga free medical at dental sa health center. Sa mga bakuna naman, madalang ko mabalitaan.*” (I don’t go out much to pay for bills or go to banks, but I know that there is a priority lanes for us. Regarding the free medical and dental, we have that in our health center. In vaccinations, I seldom heard about it.”)

Considering their age and health status, it is just right to serve the senior citizens with

considerations to their comfort and accessibility in all kinds of transactions. For the government need to provide what the people need at all times, by all means, and with equity.

3.2 Perception of the Senior Citizens on the Extent of Implementation on Benefits and Privileges Provided by RA 9994

The next table presents the mean response of the participants on the extent of implementation on benefits and privileges provided by RA 9994.

Table 3. Mean response of the senior citizens on the extent of implementation on benefits and privileges provided by RA 9994

RA 9994 provides Senior Citizens with the following benefits;	Mean	Verbal Description
20% DISCOUNTS		
1. Medicines and other essential medical supplies, accessories and equipment to be regulated by the Department of Health (DOH).	3.78	MI
2. All private hospitals, medical facilities, outpatient clinics and home health care services must give discounts on medical and dental services, including the diagnostics and laboratories.	3.36	SI
3. All attending physician/s in all private hospitals, shall give discounts on their professional fees including the medical facilities, outpatient clinics and home health care services.	3.37	SI
4. Discounts on actual fare for transportation travel must be given.	3.89	MI
5. Discounts in hotels and similar place to stay, restaurants and recreation centers.	2.58	SLI
6. Discounts on theaters, cinemas and concert halls, leisure and amusement.	2.57	SLI
7. Discounts on funeral and burial services.	2.25	SLI
II.EXEMPTIONS		
1. Exemption of individual to pay income taxes who are minimum wage earners.	2.51	SLI
2. Senior citizens must be exempted on Training fees for socioeconomic programs.	2.23	SLI
III.5% UTILITY DISCOUNTS		SLI
1. Discounts qualified to the monthly utilization of electricity	2.23	
2. Discounts qualified to the monthly utilization of water	1.89	SLI
IV.GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE		
1. Senior citizens will receive Monthly Social Pension of P500	4.32	FI
2. Indigent senior citizens must be covered by Philhealth.	4.41	FI
3. Government support like food, medicines, and financial assistance for house repair to cushion effects of economic, disaster and calamity shocks.	4.11	MI
4. Death Benefit Assistance of P2,000	2.04	SLI
V.OTHER PRIVILEGES		
1. Express lanes shall be provided in all establishments.	4.10	MI

RA 9994 provides Senior Citizens with the following benefits;	Mean	Verbal Description
2. No fees to be collected on medical and dental services, diagnostic and laboratory fees in all government facilities, subject to the guidelines to be issued by the DOH in coordination with the PhilHealth.	2.04	SLI
3. Free vaccinations that include influenza and pneumococcal vaccines.	2.80	SI
AVERAGE WEIGHTED MEAN	3.03	SI

Legend: NI-Not Implemented, SLI-Slightly Implemented, SI-Somewhat Implemented, MI-Moderately Implemented, FI- Fully Implemented

The data on Table 3 indicates that the respondents were SLIGHTLY IMPLEMENTED on the 20% discount that the RA 9994 provides as revealed by the average weighted mean of 3.03 with verbal description of SLIGHTLY IMPLEMENTED. This denotes that the senior citizens are slightly knowledgeable of the benefits that the government provides for them through the enacted law, specifically RA 9994. And, it does not conform with the purpose of the 1987 constitution to support the basic needs of the senior citizens, for most of them are not really aware and therefore are not availing of the benefits that the government is providing them.

Under the provision of giving 20% discount, the respondents showed a MODERATELY IMPLEMENTED response on transportation (3.89) and medical purchases (3.78). While on professional fees and medical/dental services respondents, respondents gave a SLIGHTLY IMPLEMENTED response with a mean of 3.37 and 3.36 respectively. Utilization of services in hotel and similar establishments, admission fees on cinema and similar halls, and on funeral/burial services were accorded SOMEWHAT IMPLEMENTED. These findings are complemented by the respondents' answer on the interview. SC1 said "*Nagagamit namin ng husto pagdating sa mga discounts na yan. Lalo na sa ospital at sa pagbili ng mga gamit namin. Malaking tulong lalo na sa aming wala naman masyadong pinagkukuann ng pagkakakitaan. Bigay bigay lang ng mga anak yung pera namin. Pero yung sa hotel ay hindi naman namin nagagamit at hindi naman talaga kami naghohotel. Minsan, pero madalang talaga, nakakapanood kami ng sine.*" ("The most beneficial discount for me are the hospital and medicine discount. It was a big help for us who doesn't have regular income. Most of my income is coming from my children so I really value the money. But the discount in hotel, we never avail that since were not used to it. Very seldom, I once availed the discount in cinema.") These results showed that senior citizens Implemented to the benefits provided by the government in terms of discounts on transportation and medical purchases as they usually avails of these benefits. Interview with one of the vice presidents of the association also confirmed this result, it has been said that "*Halos lahat naman naabot ng benepisyoy. Nag uupdate na rin kami ng listahan para sa mga hindi pa nakasamang mga senior citizens. Yung 20% discount sa gamot at transportasyon, yun ang pinakamalaking tulong sa mga senior citizens natin.*" ("Majority of the senior citizens are receiving the benefits. We are currently updating the list of senior citizens for them also to receive the benefits. The 20% discount in medicine and transportation are most useful for us senior citizen.")

However, the data gathered reveals that senior citizens are not convinced of their discounts on

professional fees and medical/dental services, for either they are not using them or they do not experience the weight of these benefits since medical fees are usually high, especially on private hospitals.

In the provisions of Exemptions, respondents gave a SOMEWHAT IMPLEMENTED response on the “Payment of individual taxes who are reflected to be minimum wage earners”, and on “Training fees for socioeconomic program” with means of 2.51 and 2.23. Under 5% utility discount, the respondents gave a SOMEWHAT IMPLEMENTED response, as well as, on the monthly water and electricity utilization (means of 2.23 and 1.89). Based on the interview, respondent SC2 said, “*Hindi naman namin nagagamit yan kasi nga hindi na kami para sa ganyan, matatanda na kami at wala naman kami trabaho. Pero alam namin yan dahil nababanggit sa amin yang mga ganyang bagay. Sa pagbabayad naman ng tubig at kuryente, madalang ang nakakaaalam nyan, Possible din kasing hindi rin nagagamit kaya hindi na rin pinapansin yung 5% discount nay an. Masyadong maliit yung ibinigay na limit sa pagkunsumo ng tubig at kuryente.*” (“Pertaining to tax, we are old enough we can’t have that anymore since we are jobless but we are aware with that. In paying water and electric bills, very few are knowledgeable with that 5% discount. It’s possible that many of us cannot avail the benefit due to minimum usage required that is discountable.”) This is a proof that the provisions of the law mandated by the national government do not consider the actual experiences of the public. Thus, good governance require citizens’ participation when enacting and implementing laws to address the needs of the public (Gabriel&Gutierrez, 2017; Cuya-Antonio&Antonio, 2017).

In government assistance, the respondents perceived that the government FULLY IMPLEMENTS the Philhealth and monthly pension with noticeable high means of 4.41 and 4.23 respectively. Social safety needs were regarded as MODERATELY IMPLEMENTED with a mean of 4.11 and death benefit assistance with a total mean of 2.04 which is verbally interpreted as SOMEWHAT IMPLEMENTED. This denotes that senior citizens really need financial and social support as reflected by the highest mean response on these areas. According to the respondent, SC 3 said, “*Malaking tulong ang gobyerno sa aming mga seniors, dahil sa mga benepisyong ibinibigay saming matatanda. Marami na sa aming mga seniors ay may mga monthly pensions na at yung iba nagiintay na lang pero nakafile na rin yung mga papel nila para makasama sa listahan ng may pension. Tapos kaming mga seniors may Philhealth na. Kami dito sa gawing bukid, madalas kaming makatanggap ng mga libreng Serbisyo galing sa probinsya at kay mayor, lalo na pag may bagyo, may dumadating naman mga tulong sa amin. Pagdating naman sa funeral service, hindi kami maalam sa benepisyo tungkol 2,000 na yan, pero may mga dumadating na tulong. Lalo na pag wala talagang pambayad sa serbisyo, sila mayor na ang nagbabayad sa pagpapalibing.*” (“The government was really a big help to us senior citizen in terms of the benefits their giving to us. Many of us senior citizens received monthly pensions while the others are already filed their pensions and still waiting to be on list to be able to receive their benefits. Then all of us senior citizens are Philhealth card holder. The people leaving here in the farm frequently receive services and support coming from the provincial office and office of the mayor most relevantly in times of typhoon. In terms of funeral service, were not knowledgeable in the

benefits pertaining to 2,000php but were able to receive assistance. Furthermore if one of us doesn't really have money to pay the funeral service the office of the mayor will pay for it.”)

On the contrary, the respondents were enjoying the privilege of being a priority in all establishments which they gave a MODERATELY IMPLEMENTED response. They accorded SLIGHTLY IMPLEMENTED on free vaccination on influenza and pneumococcal, and SOMEWHAT IMPLEMENTED on free medical and dental services, diagnostics and laboratory fees. SC 5 said, “*Sa pangkalahatan nasisiyahan naman ako sa ibinibigay sa aming pagpapahalaga ng gobyerno natin. Tulad sa health center natin, may mga nagnagbibigay ng regular na bakuna at madalas silang dumalaw bawat barangay. Minsan kulang ng gamot, ng mga vaccines, pero sa mga nakakaintindi, eh nangyayari talaga yung mga ganun minsan.*” (“As a whole, we’re happy in the benefits and importance given to us coming from the government. Like in our health center, regular vaccination and visitation in barangays are very visible. Seldom, there were lack of medicines and vaccines, but for the ones who understand the realm that happens naturally.”) Generally, senior citizens’ response on their health or medical privileges ranges from SOMEWHAT IMPLEMENTED to MODERATELY IMPLEMENTED. As reflected in the interview conducted and their survey response show that senior citizens are somehow satisfied with the privileges they have, specifically in health services, for they can see their importance in the community and that the government is concerned in providing for their needs.

Based on the findings, the senior citizens perception on the extent of implementation on the benefits of RA 9994 depends on their use or availing of the benefits and the frequency of using them. Hence, if the senior citizen usually avails of the benefit it means that the senior citizen is somehow satisfied of that benefit. However, there is a tendency for them to not be satisfied of the benefit if they hardly use or avail that privilege. This is reflected on the overall SLIGHTLY IMPLEMENTED response of the respondents.

3.4 Significant Difference between the Awareness of Respondents Across the Clustered Barangays

The data in Table 4 shows the ANOVA result in finding the significant difference between the awareness of respondents across the clustered barangays of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija. The analysis reveals that there is no significant difference amongst the respondents’ awareness from the three clustered barangays. Visibly, the level of awareness of the respondents between Cluster A, B and C have no difference and are almost same as the other. This means that the level of awareness of respondents when grouped according to their geographic locations does not vary significantly. It indicates that although each of the respondents from the clustered barangays have their own experiences and perception of the implementation of RA 9994, it is not enough to create a significant difference on the group means. However, each of their response must not be ignored as it can be used to validate and triangulate the findings drawn from the data gathered.

Table 4. Result of One-way ANOVA on the Significant Difference of the Awareness of the Senior Citizens across the Clustered Barangays

Source of Variation	df	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	2	1.724096404	0.188565	3.179
Within Groups	51			
Total	53			

Significant at $p\text{-value} < .05$

Based on an interview with the DSWD personnel, it was mentioned that, “*Okay naman ang implementasyon ng benepisyong ating mga senior citizens dito sa San Isidro. Regular ang mga benepisyong natatanggap nila. Yung iba, wala pa talaga sa listahan ng beneficiaries kaya hindi pa nakakakuha ng monthly cash benefits. Yung listahan na nandito ay nanggagaling sa kapitolyo. Sa part namin ng DSWD, katulong namin ang OSCA sa pagpapahatid ng mga impormasyon nauukol sa mga senior citizens.*” (“The implementation of benefits of our senior citizens here in San Isidro is doing okay. They are receiving the benefits regularly while the others who are still waiting for the final list for them to receive the monthly cash benefits. The list that we have here is from the provincial office. Here in MSWDO, we work with OSCA in disseminating the information pertaining to senior citizen.”)

While one of the OSCA officer declares, “*Masaya ang mga senior citizens natin dito sa San Isidro. Madalas may programa para sa aming mga seniors. Sa kasalukuyan, ipinapatayo na ang senior citizen’s building na para talaga sa senior citizens. Bukod sa mga natatanggap ng senior citizens, nakatanggap din ang mga lolo at lola ng christmas gift mula sa office of the mayor. Suportado ng ating mayor ang mga programa para sa ating mga senior citizens.*” (“The senior citizens here in San Isidro are happy because most of the time we have programs for them. Currently, the construction of senior citizens building is on-going that will serve as our Senior Citizens Center. Aside from the regular benefits, the senior citizens received Christmas gifts from the office of the mayor. The mayor supports all the programs for our senior citizens in all the ways possible.”)

According the OSCA officials, and the municipal government personnel, the provisions of RA 9994 is implemented in San Isidro and it is supported by the respondents’ answers. However, the implementation is obviously lacking as it is shown in the overall awareness response of the respondents of SOMEWHAT AWARE. This may be due to lack of information dissemination to the part of the local government unit and the OSCA.

5. Conclusion

The proper implementation of the benefits and privileges mandated through R.A. 9994 has numerous issues. Some of these issues, such as, the knowledge and awareness factor, procedural barriers and other concerns, are proved to be detrimental in the success of its implementation.

Based on the researchers’ observations, numerous of the respondents are still not fully aware

of the RA 9994. In spite of the fact that greater part of the respondents realize that they have the following privileges: 20% discount on their medicines and transportation; social pension; Philhealth and safety provisions from the government; as well as the express or priority lanes, still, there are respondents who are not aware of these benefits and privileges.

Local government units should address issues of capacity and effectiveness in policy implementation to ensure that the welfare and development of the citizens, particularly the senior citizens, are prioritized. The low awareness of the respondents on the implementation of RA 9994 is also reflective of the governments' ineffectiveness through the lack of information dissemination.

Seniors also have their rights as citizens of this country. The government and the community, as well, should give them opportunities to be productive. Thus, the need to provide them support and privileges in all areas of their concern such as, health, employment, and their primary needs. For them to remain a productive member of the community, it is vital to empower and allow senior citizens to engage in work which are according to their abilities

6. Recommendations

Based from the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were given:

1. The government, thru LGU and/or OSCA, and DSWD, needs to reinforce the bureaucracy so that all senior citizens would be awarded of all benefits and privileges due to them. There should be regular monitoring of the policy implementation.
2. It is also recommended that government should formulate a more effective and efficient program for the Senior Citizens, for them to enjoy their right to live in a community, a society, and a family. And provide them an environment conducive to the promotion of their health, and a well-rounded development of their personality. The end goal is to make all senior citizens happy, useful, and active members of the society.
3. It is recommended that a more in-depth study with a large number of Senior Citizen respondents (including relatives/primary care giver) should be included. Extensive evaluation is also recommended to check the effective implementation of the programs.
4. For future study, it is recommended to examine each if there are significant differences or relationship between the demographic profile and the senior citizens' awareness and availment of benefits and privileges.
5. Implementation of programs/services for the elderly should be analyzed in other aspects such as their usefulness to the senior society or impact of specific benefits and privileges to the living conditions of the senior citizens.
6. Perceptions of other sectors of society such as medical institutions, families of the elderly people, and the government program implementers can also be included in future studies.

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