

Awareness and Implementation of the Expanded Senior Citizen Act of 2010(RA 9994)

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ABSTRACT: The study determined the Level of Awareness and Implementation of RA 9994, an act to maximize the contribution of senior citizens to nation building. This supports the traditional Filipino culture of taking care of the needs of our elderly.

They are generally "Aware" on their privileges but not on retirement benefits to ensure their continuing responsiveness and sustainability and the education sector and non- government organizations shall institute programs that will ensure access to formal and non- formal education.

The concerned agencies give discounts provided they have the necessary documents. However, problems on the rebates is one of their concerns.

Keywords: Senior Citizen Act, elderly, implementation

Introduction

In human beings, elderly is the final stage of the normal life span. Old age is not consistent from the standpoints of biology, demography (conditions of mortality and morbidity), employment and retirement, and sociology. For statistical and public administrative purposes, however, old age is frequently defined as 60 or 65 years or older. (Collins, English Dictionary).

Our history has witnessed the importance that ancient Filipinos gave to elderly. During the pre-colonial period, they were a source of wisdom. Custom and tradition were kept and passed by them to younger generation. Thus, their contributions in the enhancement of the country's institutions such as government,

family, education, and religion cannot be ignored.

The Ilocanos of the Philippines are equally caring and equipped with qualities that are enough to provide care for their elderly. Unfortunately, elderly people have specific issues and special needs that must be addressed upon which in case cannot be met due to various factors and constraints.

To give full support to the improvement of the total well-being of the elderly and their full participation in society considering that senior citizens are an integral part of Philippine society, this must be the concern of the family, community, and government. It aims 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 and to recognize the important role of the private sector in the improvement of the welfare of senior citizens and to actively seek their partnership.

This research study is based on RA 9994 which gives discounts and privileges to senior citizens because one of the greatest obstacles that senior citizens faces today is poverty and the act can help them save more money.

An issue is the economic impact of ageing on overall welfare. Given their increasing number, the elderly pose a great economic challenge as their productivity declines. Thus, there is a need for a strong commitment and a comprehensive policy that would respond to the various needs of the elderly. This paper aims to present these crucial aspects of the situation of the elderly in its attempt to identify the many challenges that we need to address and contend with in the next century.

Families will benefit from this study because they are the ones who are taking good care of their elderly and this will also help them know more about existing benefits for their aging parents.

The government also gains benefit from this study as this would serve as a basis to assess the implementation of the programs for the senior citizens.

For the Academe to strengthen their curriculum on Gerontology thus, becoming more efficient health care providers especially to the elderly.

Lastly, to the senior citizens, the recipients of the Law, this would empower them on their rights and privileges stipulated in the Senior Citizen Act of 2010.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to determine the level of awareness on the provisions of the Senior Citizens Act (R.A. 9257) among elderly in selected municipalities of Ilocos Sur.

Specifically, it sought to determine the following:

1. The profile of the respondents in terms of the following:
 - a. Age,
 - b. Sex,
 - c. Receiving Pension,
 - d. Monthly Pension, and
 - e. Presence of Support Group
- 2 The level of awareness of the respondents on the provisions of the Senior Citizens Act
- 3 The relationship between the profile of the respondents and their level of awareness on the provisions of Senior Citizens Act
- 4 The extent of the implementation of the Senior Citizen Act among the different agencies: hospitals/ clinics, groceries, drugstores, electric and water services

Literature Review

The total population of the Philippines stands at 73,130,885 and the elderly population are considered to be totaling 4,280,364 or 5.8 percent of our population.

Significant concerns of the elderly have only recently been offered serious consideration. Perhaps because of the

prevailing view that the local population is generally a young one, no close attention is given to elderly issues.

One of the issues is the security in old age. Poverty is perceived as an obstacle to a secured old age. As such, the current pension system in the Philippines requires careful consideration and evaluation. The government offers welfare services such as homes for the aged and Senior Citizens Centers to better address the plight of the Filipino elderly. However, the effectiveness of such welfare services can only be confirmed by the level of satisfaction of their intended beneficiaries.

Another issue is the health status of the elderly. As people age, their bodies undergo changes which can make them less resistant to chronic, debilitating and disabling conditions. Consequently, the elderly tend to be more at high risk of developing disabilities and contracting diseases.

For the marginalized Filipino elderly, majority of them continue to work and push their bodies to the extreme in order to eat, live and provide for those who are still depending on them with the little income that they are earning. Their exposure to stress can also be a factor affecting their health status. Since they are poor or marginalized, the elderly feel pressured to help in any way they can especially if they are living with their children who are also supporting their own family. Because of this situation they are over worked and undernourished making them more vulnerable to diseases and other ailments. Unfortunately, education on disease prevention is also lacking. In addition, very

few elderly Filipinos are aware of the free medical assistance and discounts on medicines provided by the government through the RA 9994 or Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010.

With the growing awareness for elderly concerns and needs, there is a greater demand for appropriate policies and legislative initiatives to promote the welfare of the elderly. As a response, several bills on the elderly in both houses of the 11th Congress of the Philippines were already passed and still have to go through the legislative mill. The current legislation on elderly in the 11th congress as of March 1999, there are continuous calls for the amendment of the R.A. No. 7432 also known as Senior Citizens Act. These calls for amendment are mainly aimed at strengthening and maximizing the benefits and special privileges that are being accorded by the government to senior citizens. The remaining House Bill that seeks amendment focuses on the Local Government Code in 1991 in pushing for the Representation of Senior Citizens in the Sanggunians of Barangays, Municipalities, Cities and Provinces to senior citizens under Republic Act Numbered 7432. The latter House Resolution can be considered as a response to the usual complaints of some senior citizens who encountered difficulties in availing of the 20% discount.

The Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010 gives the elderly benefits and privileges not included in the Senior Citizens Act of 1992 (Republic Act No. 7432). Some five million senior citizens, defined as resident citizens of the

Philippines aged 60 and above, will get the following:

- A 20-percent discount and exemption from the value-added tax on the sale of goods and services (medicines, medical and dental fees, transport fares, services in hotels and restaurants, admission fees in theaters and other places of leisure)
- In case of discount promos, the senior citizens shall avail themselves of either the promotional discount or the 20-percent discount, whichever is higher.
- Mandatory PhilHealth coverage
- Free medical and dental service, diagnostic and laboratory fees in all government facilities
- A monthly stipend of P500
- For indigents, a P1,500-monthly stipend and free vaccination against the influenza virus and pneumococcal disease
- A five-percent discount on water bills (if consumption is less than 30 cubic meters a month) and electric bills (if consumption is less than 100 kilowatt-hours)
- Educational assistance for those who shall meet school admission requirements
- To avail themselves of benefits, senior citizens should present their passport or other documents establishing their citizenship and age.
- In case of death, the nearest surviving relative of the deceased

senior citizen shall get P2,000.00.

- The law also orders the Department of Health, local government units and other concerned organizations to institute a national health program for the elderly.
- It also establishes an Office for Senior Citizens Affairs in all cities and municipalities, and a senior citizens ward in every government hospital.

First-time violators of the law face imprisonment of six months to two years and a fine ranging from P50,000.00 to P100,000.00.

For subsequent violations, the fine can go up to P200,000.00, and the prison term can reach six years.

Anyone who abuses the privileges granted in the law shall pay a fine of P5,000.00 to P50,000.00, and shall be jailed for at least six months.

Fortunately, in the Philippines, the elderly rights and need for assistance are given recognition and importance through the passage of the Senior Citizens' Act or Republic Act (RA) No. 7432 as amended by RA 9994 (Expanded Senior Citizens' Act of 2010). This may be seen as a victory for all the elderly who benefit from the law. However, could the same be said of all covered establishments mandated by the same law to grant the discount and the implementation of its other provisions.

Methodology

Research Design. The researcher made use of the descriptive-correlation method of research.

Population and Sample. The respondents of the study were the elderly assembly and were able to comprehend and answer the questionnaire checklist in the selected municipalities of Ilocos Sur, namely: Cabugao, San Juan and Vigan City. An initial data of the total number of elderly was taken from the list of the DSWD and the Association of Senior Citizens on the different municipalities of Ilocos Sur.

Data Gathering Instrument. The study made use of a questionnaire-checklist based from the Senior Citizens Act. The questionnaire was translated to Iloko version for better and clearer understanding of the items by the respondents. It consisted of two parts:

Part I of the questionnaire elicited information on the Age, Sex and Source of Income Educational Attainment.

Part II obtained information on the level of awareness on the Provisions of Senior Citizens Act (RA 9994) among Elderly in the Selected Municipalities of Ilocos Sur.

In order to assess the Implementation of the Senior Citizen Act of 2010, a questionnaire was floated to agencies concerned in the implementation namely: hospitals/clinics, groceries, drugstores, electric and water services. However, during the data gathering, the head/manager of the agencies refused to answer the questionnaire, instead they obliged to be interviewed regarding the Implementation of the Senior Citizen Act.

Data Gathering Procedure.

Permission was sought from the municipal mayors. Likewise, the Federated President of the Senior Citizen Association of the Municipality was asked to facilitate the location of the respondents. The researcher personally floated the questionnaires and explained the items not fully understood by the respondents.

Statistical Treatment of Data. The following statistical tools were used: Frequency and percentages, Mean, T-test and Simple correlation analysis.

RESULTS

The interests of this section are the formal introduction, dissection and the explanation of the collected data, which expressed the weight of the findings in connection to the Provisions of Senior Citizens Act (RA 9994) among Elderly in Selected Municipalities of Ilocos Sur.

Profile of the Respondents

The Profile of the respondents was measured in terms of their age, sex, source of income and educational attainment.

On Age. Majority of the respondents (70 or 63.1 %) belong to the age bracket of 60-70. There is one (0.9%) who belong to the 91 and above age bracket.

On Sex. Majority of the respondents (67 or 60.4%) are female. There are 44 (39.6%) respondents who are male.

On Source of Income. It can be gleaned on the table that majority of the respondents (80 or 72.1%) have no income while 26 (23.4%) are receiving GSIS pension and one (.9%) is receiving pension from the SSS.

On Educational Attainment. As shown in table, most of the respondents are Elementary graduate (28 or 25.2 %) and only one (0.9%) have finished Post Graduate Studies.

Level of Awareness of the Respondents on the Provisions of the Senior Citizens Act

The respondents are “Aware” on the Provisions of the Senior Citizens Act with a mean rating of 49.62%. Specifically the lowest mean attained (27.0) were on retirement benefits of retirees from both the government and the private sector shall be regularly reviewed to ensure their continuing responsiveness and sustainability, and to the extent practicable and feasible, shall be upgraded to be at par with the current scale enjoyed by those in actual service and on the provision that the Department of Education (DepED), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), in consultation with nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and people’s organizations (POs) for senior citizens, shall institute programs that will ensure access to formal and non formal education.

This implies that there is limited level of awareness on other scopes and privileges that seniors citizen can access to formal and non formal education. There is a need for a strong commitment and a comprehensive policy that would respond to the various needs of the elderly.

As reflected in table, the level of awareness of the respondents on the Provisions of the Senior Citizens Act is related to the source of income ($r=-0.257$). Since majority of the respondents have no

income, they tend to be more aware of the benefits of the Senior Citizen Act which will help them avail of discounts from commodities and services, thus helping them to meet their basic needs and maintain their health and well being. This is found in Section 3 stating that “*Indigent senior citizen*, refers to any elderly who is frail, sickly or with disability, and without pension or permanent source of income, compensation or financial assistance from his/her relatives to support his/her basic needs, as determined by the Department of Social Welfare and development (DSWD) in consultation with the National Coordinating and Monitoring Board.”

It can also be seen on the table that the educational attainment of the respondents is significantly related to their level of awareness. This implies that they are able to recognize the importance of the Senior Citizen Act wherein its objectives is to establish a program beneficial to the senior citizens, their families and the rest of the community they serve.

The other variables like age, sex and occupation have no significant relationship between the Level of Awareness on the Provisions of the Senior Citizens Act.

Extent of the implementation of the Senior Citizen Act among the different agencies: hospitals/ clinics, groceries, drugstores, electric and water services.

The implementers represented by the managers were asked to answer the questionnaire on the implementation of the senior Citizen Act of 2010. However, they refused to answer the questionnaire and instead obliged to be interviewed regarding

the extent of the implementation, its requirements to avail and reasons for not fully implementing the Act by some concerned agencies.

On the grant of minimum of five percent (5%) discount relative to the monthly utilization of water and electricity supplied by the public utilities.

The concerned agency claims to be implementing the discount provided that the water and the electric bill are registered under the name of the senior citizen and that they must present the necessary supporting documents.

On the purchases of medicines, including the purchase of influenza and pneumococcal vaccines, and such other essential medical supplies, accessories and equipment.

The two known established drugstore in Vigan were the respondent of the study. One drugstore implements the Section 4 of the act the grant of twenty percent (20%) discount on the purchase of medicines, including the purchase of influenza and pneumococcal vaccines, and such other essential medical supplies, accessories and equipment to be determined by the Department of Health (DOH).

However, in order to avail of the discount, the senior citizen must present the Senior Citizen ID, the booklet issued by the office of the Social Worker in their municipality and the doctor's prescription of the medicines needed.

On the other hand, another drugstore only gives five percent (5%) discount on

the purchase of medicines by senior citizens. This is due to the difficulty in availing of the rebates from the discounts given. However, the drugstore offers medicines at a lower cost.

On the professional fees of attending physician/s in all private hospitals, medical facilities, outpatient clinics and home health care services.

From the result of the interviews, the private hospitals provide discounts to senior citizens in their availment of medical services. This is consistent with the constitutional principles and objectives of the Act 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.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the findings in this study the following conclusion were drawn:

1. Most of the respondents (70 or 63.1 %) belong to the 60-70 age bracket, female, have no income and are Elementary graduates.
2. The respondents are "Aware" on the Provisions of the Senior Citizens Act with a mean rating of 49.62%.
3. The level of awareness of the respondents on the Provisions of the Senior Citizens Act is significantly related to the source of income and educational attainment.
4. On the implementation of the Senior Citizens Act, majority of

the concerned agencies claim to give discounts to them provided they have the necessary documents to support their availment. However, problems on the rebates of the discount is one of their concerns.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were drawn:

1. An intensive information, education, communication (IE) campaign should be conducted by government and non-government organization on all the provision, benefits and services that Senior Citizen may avail.
2. The support group given to the elderly should be improved. Community organizations and Rural Health Units should plan programs that would be include the elderly people in their locality so that they would not be left out and feel neglected.
3. Elderly must have the right to have access to services and opportunities that will help them to achieve a productive, wholesome and satisfying life.

4. Family and community should recognize the potentials of elderly person and the need to provide opportunity to make minimum of such potentials.
5. The government must provide basic and essential services for the elderly well being through the provision of adequate care and relief from stress.
6. A follow up study, using a more in depth tool should be undertaken to have a more comprehensive result on the status of the senior citizen.

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