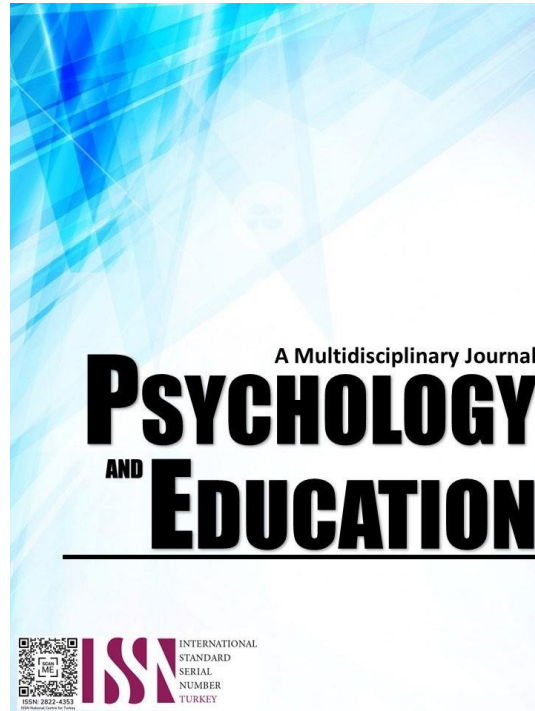


ASSESSING ELDERLY NEEDS IN INDANG, CAVITE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM



PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

Volume: 34

Issue 2

Pages: 280-285

Document ID: 2025PEMJ3255

DOI: 10.70838/pemj.340209

Manuscript Accepted: 03-05-2025

Assessing Elderly Needs in Indang, Cavite: Recommendations for a Community-Based Mental Health Program

Gian Derick J. Sevilla,* Nikko J. Malazarte, Ronel Rio Aligam, Cecilia B. Banaag, Jemarie L. Bebangco, Cheryl D. Cañezal, Ernesita P. Corpuz, Roberto L. Cruz III, Agnes B. Gibas, Anna Joanna S. Marquez, Ma. Jazmine A. Ontang, Jhan Arno S. Sodayi, Mark P. Solo III

For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

The elderly population faces a unique set of challenges that impact their overall well-being. As such, a needs analysis was conducted on an elderly community in Indang, Cavite using a focus group discussion to gather the data. The analysis revealed three primary themes: (1) social challenges, (2) psychological challenges, and (3) somatic challenges. Social challenges centered on transgenerational parenting, whereas participants experienced multiple roles such as caregiving for their grandchildren and performing household chores for the family. Psychological challenges on the other hand included persistent worry about familial problems with participants expressing concerns about their health and the support their families need as well as unexplored mental health concerns. Lastly, somatic challenges were also evident in which physical health issues and sleep disturbances further complicate their ability to manage their daily responsibilities. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to address these multifaceted challenges in rural communities.

Keywords: *needs analysis, elderly, mental health, focus group discussion, community*

Introduction

Elderly Care in the Philippines

The Philippine government faces significant challenges in improving health and social services for its aging population, despite the increasing number of senior citizens, discussions on topics such as aging remain minimal (Carandang et al., 2019). Rural communities in the Philippines, much like in other countries, are characterized by a lack of access to health care services, financial insecurity, inadequate housing, and social isolation (Butler & Kaye, 2004; Emeka-Okafor et al. 2024). These challenges are compounded by the limited availability community services and the fragmented delivery of healthcare delivery systems (Harvey, 2019). As such, the elderly in rural areas often rely heavily on family support and community networks to meet their daily needs and cope with the physical and social challenges of aging (Cohen & Bennett, 2017).

Several studies have highlighted various unmet needs of the elderly in the Philippines such as financial instability affecting their wellbeing, the need for accessible and affordable healthcare services tailored for the elderly, the need to create environments that support the elderly in their daily life, & strengthening family support systems to ensure that the elderly receive adequate care. (Carandang et al., 2019; Abalos et al., 2018; & Urgel & Borabo, 2015), as such addressing these unmet needs is vital for improving the overall quality of life among the elderly.

Physiological Challenges

Elderly individuals in rural areas often experience significant physiological challenges and changes which include physical health and sleep problems. These challenges are exacerbated by limited access to healthcare services and resources which are often more pronounced in rural areas compared to urban areas (Dye et al., 2011; Reis & Nagy, 2019; Weirich & Benson, 2019). In addition, the lack of transportation and healthcare infrastructure further complicates the management of chronic illnesses and routine check-ups (Parfenova & Petukhova, 2022; Li et al., 2022; & Reyes-Gibby, & Aday, 2005). Lastly, nutritional deficiencies are common among the elderly in rural areas, contributing to their overall physical and health decline (Reis & Nagy, 2019; Risonar et al., 2009). As such, this implies that physical challenges for elderly individuals in rural areas are multifaceted and necessitate targeted interventions such as improving healthcare infrastructure, enhancing transportation services, and providing better nutritional support to ensure the well-being of the elderly in these communities.

Psychological Challenges

Apart from physical challenges, psychological challenges among the elderly in rural communities are also prevalent as there are often concerns which stem from uncertainties about their health and the wellbeing of their families (Santoyo-Olsson et al. 2024). The stress of managing chronic illnesses and the fear of being unable to support their own health and that of their family members also contribute to heightened levels of anxiety (Hendricks & Turner, 2019), moreover, the lack of mental health services in rural areas means that these psychological issues tend to go unaddressed. (Kaufman et al., 2006).

In the Philippines, mental health services for older adults face significant challenges as there is a continued shortage of mental health professionals, and services are often inaccessible and equitable, particularly for the marginalized sectors. With stigma and

discrimination against mental health conditions being widespread, this leads to the avoidance of available services instead. (Aldalaeen et al., 2025). In terms of mental health concerns, depression and anxiety seems to be prevalent among the elderly with studies indicating that 32.1% of older adults exhibited depressive symptoms with higher rates among women compared to men (Pengpid & Peltzer, 2024). Another study reported that 21% of older adults experienced depression, 39% anxiety, and 82% distress (Flores, et al., 2018) as such there seems to be a pressing need to address the mental health concerns of older adults in the Philippines.

To address the pressing mental health challenges among the elderly, tailored interventions such as promoting awareness, reducing stigma, and providing targeted support can prove to be effective in improving the wellbeing of the elderly. These approaches can be adapted to include community-based programs, family support networks, and healthcare services designed to meet their specific needs (Paterson et al., 2021), as such understanding the factors that contribute to the success of such interventions are essential for improving their implementation and quality.

Social Challenges

Rural areas also face numerous social challenges, with the elderly often taking on multiple roles, such as being caregivers to their grandchildren. This presents a unique set of challenges such as significant physical, emotional and social burden and obligation especially among grandparents in poor health, those with higher education, and those juggling multiple responsibilities (Grunwald et al. 2024).

This is further underscored by grandparenthood without parental presence in which such custodial grandparenting was associated with decreased health and wellbeing (Danielsbacka et al., 2022). As such, these highlight the multifaceted nature of grandparent caregiving emphasizing the need for targeted support and resources in maintaining their own health and well-being.

The Need for Assessment of Elderly Needs

In view of the existing literature, conducting a needs analysis provides community specific insights which are essential for tailoring interventions for the unique needs of the elderly in a particular community (Niolin et al., 2006; Leach & Jankowski, 2024), as this localized approach can ensure that interventions are relevant and effective, and can inform policymakers and service providers, leading to the development of targeted programs and policies which can address the specific needs of the elderly.

Moreover, the findings from the needs analysis can inform the development of community-based platforms and programs that enhance the capabilities of the elderly, ensuring their well-being and dignified aging (Staniuline & Januleviciene, 2016; Norona et al. 2021), as such initiatives may allow for supportive environments where the elderly can thrive.

Directions Towards Helping the Elderly

Various programs such as community-based intervention programs that include physical activities can significantly enhance cognitive functions and overall quality of life among the elderly such as combining physical and leisure activities (Kamegaya et al., 2014). In addition to physical activities, holistic person-centered care and evidenced based interventions promoting physical activity and interprofessional collaboration are key components of effective physical health support for the elderly (Criss et al., 2022).

Mental health support services are equally important as peer and community support have demonstrated significant improvements in depression and quality of life among older adults (Chapin et al., 2013; Ngamwongwiwat et al., 2023), furthermore, programs that promote social interactions and reminiscence activities have been found to reduce symptoms and enhance quality of life (Ngamwongwiwat et al. 2023). Social support, particularly, emotional support from family members plays a crucial role in the mental health of the elderly while financial and daily care support can improve physical health (Luo et al., 2017).

Lastly, components of positive psychology such as spirituality, gratitude, and perceived social support are significant predictors of psychological well-being in the elderly which can greatly improve mental health outcomes (Sadoughi & Hesampour, 2020). By integrating various approaches, comprehensive support systems can address the diverse needs of the elderly, in which future research could be geared to explore.

The Present Study

The present study explored the needs of an elderly community in Indang, Cavite through a qualitative needs assessment, aiming to gather in-depth insights into the participants' lived experiences. The results of the study is intended to guide the development of community-based programs tailored to the identified needs and ensuring that interventions are responsive, relevant, and meaningful to the elderly.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative needs analysis to identify the specific needs of the elderly within the community, furthermore, data collection was conducted through a focus group discussion (FGD) to promote an interactive discussion on the perspectives, challenges, and pertinent needs of the elderly within the community.

Participants

The study was conducted in an elderly community in Indang, Cavite. A total of 18 female senior citizens aged between 61 and 79 participated in the study. The inclusion criteria were (1) of the female sex, and (2) a minimum age of 60, in alignment with the definition of a senior citizen in the Philippines. No additional criteria related to socioeconomic status, health conditions, or community involvement were imposed.

Instrument

A researcher-made interview protocol was utilized in gathering the data through a semi-structured approach. This allowed for flexibility in the discussion, enabling participants to elaborate on their responses while addressing predetermined key questions. The key questions focused on identifying possible needs of the community in the aspects of health and wellness, social connections, daily living and independence, and use of technology. To account for objectivity and sensitivity, the instrument was screened by licensed and practicing psychologists and counselors.

Procedure

The participants were organized into four separate groups to maintain a manageable group size and to encourage participation. At the start of each session, the researchers introduced themselves and explained the objectives of the study, its benefits, potential risks, and participant rights. Each group lasted for approximately 60 minutes and was conducted in a semi-structured manner, allowing for flexibility and sharing among the participants. The sessions were properly concluded, and no adverse effects were reported by the participants during or after the discussions.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the data by capturing key points and relevant insights from the participants which was reviewed multiple times for familiarization and to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the data. Emergent themes were developed based on the patterns and recurring ideas and were further grouped into clusters that represented broader categories. Formulated meanings were then derived from the clusters to interpret the underlying needs and perspectives of the participants.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted within ethical standards. To ensure the rights of the respondents were protected, formal approval was obtained from the leaders of the community. The respondents were informed about the objectives of the research, its benefits, and potential risks prior to gathering the data. The respondents were informed of their rights such as the right to confidentiality, and to opt out of the study at any time without fault or consequences.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. *Challenges or Concerns*

<i>Emergent Themes</i>	<i>Clusters</i>	<i>Formulated Meaning</i>
Social Challenges	Transgenerational Parenthood	Experienced multiple roles such as being a caregiver to grandchildren and doing house chores continuously across generations. This means that they take care of their grandchildren and children of other family members.
Psychological Challenges	Persistent Worry about Familial Problems	Worried about their own health and the support that their family needs. They continuously work and look for means to support their family especially their children and their grandchildren.
	Unexplored Mental Health Concerns	Due to prevailing familial concerns and needs, they are not always able to look for their mental health issues and concerns such as handling difficult emotions such as anger, sadness, loneliness, past experiences of 'trauma', depression, anxiety, etc.
Somatic Concerns	Physical Health Concerns	Experienced body aches like joint pain, muscle loss, gout, high blood pressure, heart problems
	Sleep Disturbance	Unable or difficulty sleeping at night or walking in the middle of the night

Participants expressed significant concerns regarding the continuous responsibilities associated with motherhood, which frequently extend beyond raising children to include caring for grandchildren and, in some instances, managing both simultaneously. Despite these challenges, the family remains a cornerstone of their well-being, serving as their primary support system. However, some respondents reported unresolved family issues, such as strained relationships with their children. While some conflicts have been reconciled, residual feelings of resentment persist. Many respondents further shared that they are responsible for caring for aging their aging children, further compounding their caregiving obligations.

Health and medical concerns were also pervasive among the respondents. Sleep-related difficulties, such as frequent awakenings during the night and an inability to resume sleep, were commonly reported. Physical health issues, including joint pain, muscle loss, gout, high blood pressure, and age-related cardiovascular conditions, are prevalent and significantly impact their daily lives. Some of the

participants experienced worries and anxiousness because they were concerned about their families, especially their children who still needed their support. Even though most of their children were adults and could live independently, they still worried about them and wanted to support them as much as they could.

Amid these challenges, respondents shared their aspirations for their later years. They expressed a desire to lead a stress-free life, free from undue worry, and to derive joy from their role as grandmothers. Many also hope to participate more actively in religious or church activities. Moreover, there is a strong demand for enhanced community programs, particularly those catering to the elderly and children.

Due to the prevailing health concerns that coincide with their psychosocial issues, participants of the study highlighted the need for the restoration of free maintenance medications for seniors, increased recreational activities such as routine/instructed dance exercise and gardening, initiatives addressing spiritual needs, and programs aimed at fostering family reconciliation. They also emphasized the importance of regular free medical check-ups for senior citizens and additional programs for children to alleviate the caregiving burden on elderly participants.

As the emergent themes such as somatic concerns, psychological challenges, and social challenges; a major theme that is prevalent across these concerns emerges. The theme of interconnectedness of late adulthood challenges. This central theme highlights how somatic concerns, psychological challenges, and social dynamics are not isolated issues but rather are interwoven aspects of overall well-being, particularly in the context of elderly mental health. This supports the current body of literature that mentions that integration of person-centered care and collaboration among professionals increases the support of the health of the elderly (Criss et al., 2022). Physical discomfort from chronic pain or mobility issues can also intensify psychological distress as it potentially leads to anxiety or depression. Likewise, social challenges such as isolation and inadequate support systems can further worsen both physical and mental health conditions, creating a cycle of struggle which is further exacerbated by aging and limited health care access (Dye et al., 2011; Reis & Nagy, 2019; Weirich & Benson, 2019).

This interconnectedness highlights the importance of a holistic approach to elderly mental health care. It suggests that interventions focused on one area—be it enhancing physical health through exercise and proper nutrition, providing psychological support through counseling or therapy, or fostering social connections through community engagement—can have a ripple effect, positively influencing the other aspect of well being. The study supports previous research in emphasizing the role of biopsychosociocultural factors in shaping elderly mental health care, guiding the development of programs which can enhance the quality of life of the elderly. As such, targeted interventions which include emotional and financial support from family members (Luo et al., 2017), can significantly improve overall health and resilience among older adults (Chapin et al., 2013; Ngamwongwiwat et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, recognizing these interconnections is crucial in developing holistic programs which promote physical, emotional, and social well being among the elderly. By integrating comprehensive strategies which support the elderly can foster resilience and improvement in quality of life, ensuring sustained mental health and well being throughout the aging process (Paterson et al., 2021).

Conclusions

The study highlights the interconnected challenges faced by elderly individuals in Indang, Cavite, emphasizing the interplay between social, psychological, and somatic challenges. The findings reveal that transgenerational caregiving, persistent familial worries, and untreated mental health concerns contribute to the strain experienced by these older adults. Additionally, physical health issues and sleep disturbances further hinder their well-being. These challenges underscore the need for holistic, community-based intervention programs to enhance their quality of life.

In line with the findings of the study, the following are recommended: (1) Implement social support initiatives to distribute caregiving responsibilities more equitably among family members and establish senior support groups to reduce loneliness and emotional distress. (2) Provide accessible mental health screening and counseling for the elderly, along with workshops on stress management, resilience, and emotional regulation to enhance coping strategies. (3) Improve physical healthcare through regular free check-ups, access to maintenance medication, and structured exercise programs to promote mobility and overall well-being. Additionally, sleep hygiene education can address sleep disturbances. (4) Expand spiritual and community engagement by increasing access to faith-based activities, volunteer opportunities, and recreational programs to foster emotional support and a sense of purpose. These recommendations can guide policymakers and professionals in developing effective elderly care programs.

References

- Abalos, J. B., Saito, Y., Cruz, G. T., & Booth, H. (2018). Who cares? Provision of care and assistance among older persons in the Philippines. *Journal of Aging and Health*, 30(10), 1536-1555. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0898264318799219>
- Aldaldeen, M. O., Haddad, R. H., Bani Ahmad, T., & Doo-ayen, N. (2025). Mental health law in the Philippines: Health policy issues governing mental health promotion among Filipino older adults with serious mental illnesses. *Mental Health and Social Inclusion*, 29(2). <https://doi.org/10.1108/MHSI-01-2025-0008>
- Butler, S. S., & Kaye, L. W. (2004). Chapter 1: Rurality, aging and social work: Setting the context. *Journal of Gerontological*

Social Work, 41(1–2), 2–18. https://doi.org/10.1300/J083v41n01_01

Carandang, R. R., Asis, E., Shibnuma, A., Kiriya, J., Murayama, H., & Jimba, M. (2019). Unmet needs and coping mechanisms among community-dwelling senior citizens in the Philippines: A Qualitative Study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(19), 3745. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16193745>

Chapin, R. K., Sergeant, J. F., Landry S., Leedahl, S. N., Rachlin, R., Koenig, T., & Graham, A. (2013). Reclaiming joy: Pilot evaluation of mental health peer support program for older adults who receive medicaid. *Gerontologist*, 53 (2), 345 - 352. 10.1093/geront/gns120

Criss, M. G., Wingood, M., Staples W. H., Southard, V., Miller, K. L., Norris, T. L., Avers, D., Ciolek, C. H., Lewis, C. B., & Strunk Ellen, R. (2022). APTA geriatrics' guiding principles for best practices in geriatric physical therapy: An executive summary. *Journal of Geriatric Physical Therapy*, 45 (2), 70 - 75. 10.1519/JPT.0000000000000342

Danielsbacka, M., Křenková, L., & Tanskanen, A. O. (2022). Grandparenting, health, and well-being: a systematic literature review. *European Journal of Ageing*, 19(1), 341-368.

Dye, C. J., Willoughby, D. F., & Battisto, D. G. (2011). Advice from rural elders: What it takes to age in place. *Educational Gerontology*, 37 (1), 74 - 93. 10.1080/03601277.2010.515889

Emeka-Okafor, E. N., Onyeke, N. G., & Jamila, S. (2024). Challenges of and needed support for aged in rural areas of Enugu State, Nigeria. *Journal of Home Economics Research* 31 (1) 59-69.

Flores, J. L., Hernandez, M. A., Leyva, E. W., Cacciata, M., Tuazon, J., Evangelista, L. (2018). Prevalence and correlates of depression, anxiety, and distress among Filipinos from low- income communities in the Philippines. *Philippine Journal of Nursing*, 88 (2), 8 - 13.

Grünwald, O., Damman, M., & Henkens, K. (2024). The experiences of grandparents looking after their grandchildren: Examining feelings of burden and obligation among non-custodial grandparents. *Ageing & Society*, 44(3), 1791-1808. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X22001027>

Kamegaya, T., Araki, Y., Kigure, H., & Yamaguchi H. (2014). Twelve-week physical and leisure activity programme improved cognitive function in community-dwelling elderly subjects: A randomized controlled trial. *Psychogeriatrics*, 14 (1), 47 - 54. 10.1111/psyg.12038

Kaufman, A. V., Scogin, F. R., Burgio, L. D., Morthland, M. P., Ford, B. K. (2007). Providing mental health services to older people living in rural communities. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 48 (3-4), 349 - 365. https://doi.org/10.1300/J083v48n03_05

Hendricks, J., & Turner, H. B. (2019). Social dimensions of mental illness among rural elderly populations. *Health and Healthcare Utilization in Later Life*, 109 - 129. 10.4324/9781315227375-8

Li, K., Li, S., & Qin, R. (2024). Development of a casual model for improving rural senior's accessibility to resources: Data-based evidence. *International conference on Transportation and Development 2024: Transportation Planning, Operations, and Transit, ICTD*, 2024. 92 - 102. 10.1061/9780784485521.009

Luo, H., Wu, K., ao, P., & Ren, X. (2017). Urban-rural differences in the role of family support in physical and mental health of elderly people in China. *Journal of Sichuan University (Medical Science Edition)*, 48 (2), 263 - 267.

Ngamwongwiwat, B., Kongsuwan, V., Songwathana, P. (2023). Interventions for improving mental health and quality of life of older adults with mental illness in long-term care: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Pacific Rim International Journal of Nursing Research*, 27 (4), 671 - 693. 10.60099/prijnr.2023.261505

Norona, M., Pambid, K., & Vicente L. (2021, March). A capability index for the Filipino elderly home care: A community based approach. *11th Annual International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management*, 5272 – 5280 <https://doi.org/10.46254/AN11.20210888>.

Parfenova, O. A., & Petukhova, I. S. (2022). Covid-19 pandemic impact on older people in urban and rural context. *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniya*, 2022 (5), 71 - 80. 10.31857/S013216250018704-7

Paterson, D. C., Ramage, K., Moore, S. A., Riazi, N., Tremblay, M. S., & Faulkner, G. (2021). Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on the movement behaviors of children and youth: A scoping review of evidence after the first year. *Journal of Sport and Health Science*, 10(6), 675–689. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jshs.2021.06.001>

Pengpid, S., & Peltzer, K. (2024). Prevalence and associated factors of depressive symptoms among older adults in the Philippines. *Actas Espanolas de Psiquiatria*, 52 (5), 705 - 715. 10.62641/aep.v52i5.1686

Reis, J., & Nagy, J. (2019). Food, nutrition, and older people living in rural communities. *Odysseys of Plates and Palates*

- Reyes-Gibby, C. C., & Aday, L. A. (2005). Access to healthcare in a rural area of the Philippines. *Ethnicity and Disease*, 15 (1), 104 - 109. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4866652>
- Risonar, M. G. D., Rayco-Solon, P., Ribaya-Mercado, J. D., Solon, J. A. A., Cabaldam A. B., Tengco, L. W., & Solon, F. S. (2009). Physical activity, energy requirements, and adequacy of dietary intakes of older persons in a rural Filipino community. *Nutr J*, 8, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1475-2891-8-19>
- Sadoughi, M., & Hesampour, F. (2020). Prediction of psychological well-being in the elderly by assessing their spirituality, gratitude to god, and perceived social support. *Iranian Journal of Aging*, 15 (2), 144 - 158. 10.32598/SIJA.13.10.210
- Santoyo-Olsson, J., Covinsky, K. E., Chesla, C. A., Lorig, K., Gallagher-Thompson, D., Cheng, Jing, Luzanilla, M., Macias Romo, E., Aguayo Ramirez, G., Karliner, L., & Yank, V. (2024). Predictors of psychological distress among rural family/ friend caregivers of people living with dementia in the United States: Consequences of the covid-19 pandemic. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 79 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbad164>
- Staniulienė, S. & Januleviciene, L. (2016). Social services development in rural areas designing domestic help for elderly people. *Research for Rural Development* 2, 210- 217.
- Urgel, E. L., Borabo, M. L. (2015). The Needs and capabilities of older adults bases for nursing curriculum enhancement. *Philippine Journal of Nursing*, 85 (1), 50 - 58.
- Weirich, M., & Benson, W. (2019). Rural America: Secure in a local safety net? *Generations*, 43 (2) 40 - 45. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26760113>

Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Gian Derick J. Sevilla

De La Salle University – Dasmarinas, Philippines

Nikko J. Malazarte

De La Salle University – Dasmarinas, Philippines

Ronel Rio Aligam

National University – Philippines

Cecilia B. Banaag

De La Salle University – Dasmarinas, Philippines

Jemarie L. Bebangco

Local Government of Malangas, Zamboanga Sibugay – Philippines

Cheryl D. Cañezal

De La Salle University – Dasmarinas, Philippines

Ernesita P. Corpuz

De La Salle University – Dasmarinas, Philippines

Roberto L. Cruz III

De La Salle Medical and Health Sciences Institute – Philippines

Agnes B. Gibas

De La Salle University – Dasmarinas, Philippines

Anna Joanna S. Marquez

De La Salle University – Dasmarinas, Philippines

Ma. Jazmine A. Ontang

De La Salle University – Dasmarinas, Philippines

Jhan Arno S. Sodayi

De La Salle University – Dasmarinas, Philippines

Mark P. Solo III

De La Salle University – Dasmarinas, Philippines