

Awareness and Availment of Benefits of Senior Citizens in A Highly Urbanized City

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Introduction. Republic Act (RA) 9994, otherwise known as the Expanded Senior Citizen Act of 2010, was enacted into law to provide more benefits to the elderly and deliver full support to their well-being (Inabangan et al., 2019). The benefits are essential as most of them no longer hold jobs, and financial stability can be challenging if not fatal. The current laws and policy provisions on food and medicine discount and the granting of a social pension to underprivileged senior citizens are only palliatives at best. However, they stretch the limited incomes of these individuals, and their supporting families who live below the poverty level. The study assessed the level of awareness and extent of availment on the benefits under RA 9994 of senior citizens in a highly urbanized city of Negros Occidental as well as the relationship between awareness and availment. Likewise, it explored the challenges encountered by senior citizens in availing

their benefits under RA 9994.

Methods. A descriptive, comparative, and correlational research were used to assess, compare, and correlate awareness and availment on the benefits under RA 9994 of senior citizens. Using stratified random sampling, 338 registered senior citizens participated in the study. The data was gathered using a researcher-made instrument. Mean, Standard Deviation, frequency count, percentage distribution, Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal-Wallis H test, and Spearman Rank were used to analyze the data.

Results. The findings revealed that the level of awareness on the benefits and privileges under RA 9994 of senior citizens is generally high regardless of sex, educational attainment, living conditions, and economic status. However, the extent of availment on the benefits and privileges under RA 9994 of senior citizens is moderate irrespective of sex. As to the relationship between demographics and level of awareness, and extend of availment on the benefits and privileges under RA 9994, the findings revealed there is a significant relationship in the level of awareness and extent of availment on the benefits and privileges when the senior citizens are grouped according to the highest educational attainment, and economic status. On the other hand, there is no significant relationship between the level of awareness and extend of availment when the senior citizens are grouped according to sex and living conditions (De Leon, 2014). A significant relationship was found between awareness and availment on the benefits and privileges under RA 9994. the findings indicated that awareness significantly predicts the availment of benefits and privileges. Finally, the results revealed that a vast majority of senior citizens have often experienced difficulties in availing of their benefits. In contrast, only 11 percent have not encountered any challenges as far as the availment of their benefits and privileges is concerned.

Conclusion. Issues in implementation, dissemination, and monitoring of these mandated benefits and privileges prevent them from fully aware of their benefits. Some of these issues include procedural barriers and other concerns of the senior citizens that proved to be detrimental to the effectiveness of its implementation. Discrepancies occur along with the law's policy implementation limits the full benefits of RA 9994. Moreover, a great number of senior citizens are experiencing difficulties in fully utilizing their benefits under RA 9994. Mainly because a vast majority of the senior citizens are experiencing challenges in the availment of their entitled benefits, challenges such as nepotism and red tape are commonly encountered among senior citizens, which discouraged and

hindered their ability to avail. The inability of many senior citizens to avail of their benefits despite their high awareness means that policy enhancement is needed. Thus, it is recommended to reinforce the implementation and dissemination of RA 9994 and regular monitoring of all policies in all public and private establishments.

Practical Value of the Paper. The study contributes to the few studies on the RA 9994 awareness and availment of senior citizens. Also, the survey findings provided a baseline to formulate an action plan to address senior citizens' concerns.

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