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**Value of Older Persons in the Philippines**

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**Abstract**

The Philippines is experiencing rapid population ageing due to the declining fertility rate and increasing life expectancy. Using data from the Longitudinal Study of Ageing and Health in the Philippines (LSAHP), this research explores older adults' contributions in four key areas: grandparenting, caregiving, financial support, and volunteerism. Almost all older adults have grandchildren, and many contribute significantly to childcare, especially when their adult children work abroad. Older individuals also act as primary caregivers, an intensive role involving long hours and co-residing with the person they care for, usually their spouse. Financially, older adults support their co-resident and non-co-resident children, highlighting the ongoing economic involvement of older individuals in Filipino families. Beyond the household, older adults engage in volunteer work and organizational activities to contribute to their community. However, many feel uncertain about their ability to pass on important skills, indicating a gap between their participation and perceived impact. This research will assess the value of older Filipinos by examining the various ways they contribute to their families and society, using data from two waves of the LSAHP.

Keywords: older persons, grandparenting, caregiving, financial support, older volunteers

Asia is experiencing a faster ageing of its population compared to other regions, primarily due to the rapid demographic transition from higher to lower birth and death rates. This demographic shift is also evident in the Philippines. The fertility rate decreased from 2.7 in 2017 to 1.9 in 2022 (Philippine Statistics Authority & ICF, 2023), while life expectancy increased from 65.1 and 70.3 in 2000 to 69.1 and 75.7<sup>1</sup> in 2030 for males and females, respectively (Cabigon, 2009). These changes will have significant long-term effects on the size, growth, and age structure of the population. By 2030, the proportion of the population aged 60 and over is expected to reach 10%, indicating a transition to an ageing society according to the United Nations definition. The older population is currently the fastest-growing demographic group and is projected to remain so until 2050. There were 9.3 million people aged 60 and over in 2020, and this number is anticipated to increase to 23.7 million by 2050. Given this considerable shift in the country's age structure, it is important to address the implications of these changes.

The Philippines recognises the valuable contribution of older persons to nation-building. The Republic Act No. 9994, also known as the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010, provides additional benefits and privileges to senior citizens. Aligned with constitutional principles, it acknowledges the rights of older individuals to take their proper place in society and considers it a matter for the family, community, and government to address. It also aims to improve older people's overall well-being and participation in the community, recognizing them as an integral part of Philippine society.

This research will describe the value of older Filipinos by assessing the diverse ways in which they contribute to their households, communities, and the wider society. The paper is divided into four sections: grandparenting, caregiving, financial support, and involvement in organisations or volunteerism. It draws on the findings from Wave 1 of the Longitudinal Study of Ageing and Health in the Philippines (LSAHP).

LSAHP is the first nationally representative panel survey on older Filipinos. It is designed to gather comprehensive data aimed at improving the well-being of older Filipinos. The LSAHP has two primary objectives: (1) to examine the health status and well-being of elderly Filipinos and identify the factors that influence these outcomes, and (2) to provide data for analyzing the determinants of health status and tracking changes over time.

The LSAHP baseline survey (Wave 1 or W1) was conducted from December 2018 to March 2019 and covered 5,985 older individuals aged 60 and above, with a response rate of 95%. Four years later, all baseline respondents were revisited at their addresses. Of these, 4,397 were still alive, 1,579 had passed away, and 9 could not be located. Both the baseline (W1) and the follow-up survey (Wave 2 or W2) achieved 95% and 94% response rates, respectively.

The following section presents findings from the LSAHP W1 report focusing on the four dimensions of the value of older people.

### *Grandparenting*

Grandparenting is nearly universal, with 96% of older adults reporting having at least one grandchild from their biological, step, or adopted children. Approximately 24% were involved in caring for their grandchildren either fully or partially. Among those providing care, 82% lived with their grandchildren, and 29% were solely responsible for their care, with women more often assuming this role (34% compared to 17% for men). The primary reasons for this responsibility included parents working in another area (35%), parental separation (33%), parents working abroad (11%), or the child's preference to live with the grandparent (9%).

This underscores the vital role older adults play in supporting their families, particularly when adult children migrate for work, whether within the country or abroad. The care they provided enabled their children to pursue economic opportunities, especially in overseas employment. Remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) have long been a vital part of the national economy, with OFWs being

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<sup>1</sup> The data was derived from the population projections of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Population Projections (IAWGPP) based on the 2020 census.

celebrated as "Modern Day Heroes." In this context, the unpaid caregiving provided by older adults forms a crucial part of the invisible care economy that sustains OFW's continuous contribution to the country's economic growth. This supports the contention of Vullnetari (2023) that care work should be recognised as a form of development work.

Table 1. Grandchildren of older persons by sex and age

Information on grandchildren	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
% who have any grandchildren from own, step and adopted children	94.4	97.0	*	95.4	97.0	97.3	n.s.	96.0
<i>N of cases</i>	2,278	3,426		3,614	1,462	628		5,704
% who take care of any of the grandchildren, either fully or partially	19.3	27.3	***	29.5	18.4	7.7	***	24.2
<i>N of cases</i>	2,111	3,261		3,376	1,392	602		5,370
For OP taking care of any grandchild:								
% who live with any grandchild	84.6	80.3	n.s.	80.3	86.0	87.0	n.s.	81.7
% who are solely in charge of taking care of any grandchild	17.1	34.3	**	27.4	33.7	34.4	n.s.	28.9
Reasons for being solely in charge								
Grandchild's parent is working abroad	18.0	9.8	n.s.	7.8	23.0	7.6	n.s.	11.3
Grandchild is orphaned	8.9	2.0	*	2.5	3.8	12.8	n.s.	3.3
Grandchild prefers to live with OP than with own parents	8.0	9.0	n.s.	4.8	18.6	25.0	**	8.9
Mother/Father or both parents of grandchild is working outside the town/city but within the Philippines	8.0	40.6	***	39.7	22.6	10.6	n.s.	34.6
Grandchild's parents are separated	47.7	29.9	n.s.	37.5	22.5	19.2	n.s.	33.3
Grandchild's parents are not married	0.0	4.3	n.s.	4.6	0.1	2.5	***	3.5
<i>N of cases</i>	70	305		273	86	16		375

Source: Cruz & Cruz (2019). Calculated using original LSAHP data

### Caregiving

Older people are often viewed as a burden on health systems, overlooking their significant role as caregivers. Similar to the findings of Carmichael and Ercolani (2014), this paper stresses the intensive nature of caregiving among older persons, often caring for long hours and co-residing with the person they care for. Gender differences were also observed, with most older males (67%) having their wives as their primary caregivers, while only a few older females (8%) have their husbands in the same role. The results emphasise the significant contribution of older persons who provide spousal care and the need to support them in their caregiving roles.

Table 2. Relationship, living arrangement, assistance given by primary caregivers to older persons, by sex and age of older persons

Relationship, living arrangement, and assistance	SEX		AGE GROUP			TOTAL
	Male	Female	60-69	70-79	80+	
Relationship to OP						
Spouse	66.8	7.6	40.2	46	12.8	29.1
Son	2.5	8.9	4.5	9	6.9	6.6
Daughter	16.1	53.4	32.1	28.0	51.2	39.9
Son-in-law	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.1
Daughter-in-law	5.1	11.1	13.1	4.7	7.9	8.9
Grandson	0.6	1.2	0.2	3.0	0.6	1.0

Granddaughter	1.3	7.0	0.4	4.4	8.5	4.9
Other relative	7.4	7.6	8.2	3.1	9.2	7.6
Not related	0.2	3.0	1.3	1.5	2.8	2.0
Living arrangement with OP						
Lives with OP	85.7	80.9	84.0	83.7	81.1	82.6
Lives next door	6.2	13.7	7.7	8.6	14.6	11.0
Lives in same barangay	4.1	5.4	3.9	7.8	4.3	4.9
Lives in same city/municipality	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Lives in same province	4.0	0.0	4.5	0.0	0.0	1.5
<i>N of cases</i>	125	220	112	75	157	344
Mean number of hours per week spent caring for OP						
Household tasks	35.09	29.69	27.13	36.61	32.13	31.60
<i>N of cases</i>	111	202	98	72	142	313
Personal care	31.87	24.35	19.73	33.29	28.78	26.94
<i>N of cases</i>	89	170	84	62	113	259
Moving around the house, going on outings, visiting family or friends, etc.	30.93	21.88	21.86	28.19	25.02	24.64
<i>N of cases</i>	62	142	70	44	90	204

Source: Laguna (2019). Calculated using original LSAHP data

### Financial Support

Older persons remain economically active, with almost half (46%) still active in the workforce, although this proportion decreases with age. On average, older individuals had two sources of income and received a median monthly income of PHP3,000 (~US\$59, based on an exchange rate of PHP51). The most common sources of income cited were support from their children, either within the country (58%) or abroad (15%), followed by pensions (43%), earnings from employment (34%), and income from their farm (23%).

Older people made essential financial contributions to their families. Around 51% of OPs provided financial support to their co-resident children, and 38% offered financial help to non-co-resident children. Notably, this support decreases with age, reflecting the greater financial capacity of younger older persons. In some cases, older individuals even provide substantial financial assistance for significant family needs, such as business ventures, medical expenses, or home purchases. Their financial assets, specifically home ownership (85%), also represent a substantial form of wealth that benefits co-residing family members.

Table 3. Financial assistance provided by older persons to co-resident and non-co-resident children in the 12 months prior to the interview by sex and age

Assistance provided by older person	SEX			AGE GROUP			TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	
% who gave financial support to any co-resident child	57.1	46.6	*	57.5	42.8	26.1	***
<i>N of cases</i>	1,530	2,066		2,438	791	368	
% who gave financial support to any non-co-resident child	39.7	36.1	n.s.	42.1	33.9	21.4	***
<i>N of cases</i>	2,137	3,152		3,282	1,402	603	

Source: Marquez (2019). Calculated using original LSAHP data

Despite the financial assistance that OPs provide, many still receive monetary support from their children. According to adult child respondents, two in five received financial support from their parents the month before the interview, while 64% of them provided financial assistance to their parents. Though unequal,

this reciprocal exchange of support emphasises the continued economic involvement of older persons within Filipino families.

### *Volunteerism and Generativity*

The research highlights the often-overlooked contributions of older people to their communities through participation in organisations and volunteer work. Many older adults actively engage in their neighbourhoods, contributing valuable time to voluntary activities. Around 31% are members of nonreligious organisations, while 12% are involved in religious groups, with higher participation among women than men. Additionally, 14% of older adults contribute to church or community volunteer work, with women and those aged 60–69 being more likely to participate compared to men and older counterparts.

Table 4. Membership in organisations by sex and age

Membership in organisations	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
% who are currently members of any religious group or organisation	5.8	16.3	***	12.7	12.1	8.6	n.s.	12.1
<i>N of cases</i>	2,411	3,574		3,760	1,552	673		5,985
% who are members of any type of non-religious organisations	31.1	31.3	n.s.	31.9	28.5	33.1	n.s.	31.2
<i>N of cases</i>	2,411	3,573		3,760	1,552	673		5,985
% who are engaged in any volunteer work in church or community	6.4	18.8	***	17.0	9.8	4.7	*	13.8
<i>N of cases</i>	764	1,136		1,219	453	227		1,900

Source: Ogena (2019). Calculated using original LSAHP data

Generativity plays a key role in these contributions. As a concept tied to meaningful activities, generativity allows older adults to feel needed by engaging in roles that help others and contribute to the larger society (Maselko et al., 2014; Erikson, 1997). Measures of generative concern reflected older adults' desire to impart knowledge (Mean = 0.96 [on a scale of 0 to 3, with 3 indicating very often or nearly always]) and make unique contributions to society (Mean = 0.87). However, many felt less confident in their ability to pass on important skills (Mean = 0.80). A significant proportion of older adults felt they lacked valuable skills to share (33%) or believed others would not recognise their contributions to society (27%). This indicates a gap between their participation and perceived impact, highlighting the importance of better appreciating and supporting their generative efforts.

After discussing the results of the LSAHP W1, the next part of the report is an analysis into how older persons' contributions have changed since the baseline survey using the LSAHP Wave 2 results conducted in 2023 (n=4011). Further analysis will also focus on the differentials in older persons' contributions across various covariates, such as educational attainment, urban-rural residence, wealth index, and other relevant factors, providing deeper insights into the evolving role of older people in their families, communities, and society at large.

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