



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

**Barangay Desk Officers Capability in Handling Violence against Women and Children Incidents**Maricon C. Pablo<sup>1\*</sup>, Wilfredo D. Dalugdog<sup>2</sup><sup>1,2</sup>College of Criminal Justice Education, Laguna State Polytechnic University, Province of Laguna, Philippines**Article Info****Abstract**

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The barangay violence against women and children (VAWC) desk officers are vital for providing services to the abused victim-survivors of VAWC. This study aimed to determine the capability and challenges of the barangay VAWC desk officers in the province of Laguna, Philippines. The descriptive research design was used employing a survey questionnaire distributed to 214 respondents. The study revealed that the VAWC is extremely capable in the execution of intermediate functions. However, they are capable of implementing immediate interventions and anti-VAW prevention functions. It was also revealed that the challenges encountered by the barangay VAWC desk officers in the province of Laguna are moderately serious in the implementation of immediate intervention, execution of immediate functions, and implementation of anti-VAW prevention. It concludes that the age profile variable has a significant relationship to the challenges encountered in the implementation of immediate interventions, anti-VAW prevention functions, and execution of immediate functions.

**\*Corresponding Author:**

mcpablo@lspu.edu.ph

**INTRODUCTION**

The government is responsible for the well-being of everyone, especially the underprivileged women and children. Women and children are covered by laws and international conventions; however, women and children's cries for assistance are frequently disregarded. According to World Health Organization (2021), violence against women and children (VAWC) occurs all around the world and is a serious problem in many countries. Throughout 161 nations and regions, it was discovered that 30% of women, or roughly 1 in 3 women globally, had experienced VAWC. Moreover, violence is a terrible cycle that can affect anyone at any time. In particular, vulnerable people are those who are physically weak and unable to defend themselves. If women are encouraged and supported by a variety of institutions, particularly those at the local level, they can break the cycle (PCW, 2017).

In the Philippines, the community-based violence against women (VAW) desk office plays a significant role in resolving gender-sensitive issues at the local level. According to Santiago et al. (2021), the smallest administrative unit in the Philippines is the *barangay* and supporting the nation's Local Government Units (LGUs) is greatly aided by governance at the barangay level. Porio & Roque-Sarmiento (2019) have said that the *barangay* is the lowest political administrative unit of the Philippine government. Together with the municipal and provincial government, the *barangay* is considered the fundamental base of the Philippine national government. This has to do with how accountable, fair, and transparent the leader is in carrying out his obligations as a servant to his community. It is supported by the study of Hadap (2014), that the *barangay* is the smallest political component of the government. Furthermore, Section 9 of Republic Act Number 9262, Chapter IV, urges each barangay to create a Violence Against Women and Children desk to guarantee that incidences of violence against women and children are adequately investigated and dealt with in a

gender-responsive manner. This desk would provide rapid help to incidents involving violence that occur in the barangays. Therefore, the Barangay Captain shall choose a desk officer on VAWC who is skilled in gender-sensitive case management, specifically a woman who is a *barangay kagawad* or *barangay tanod (community councilor)*. Although different laws and services exist to address issues on VAWC, the Philippine government remains reactive instead of proactive (Garcia, 2020). Moreover, the establishment and strengthening of VAW Desks in barangays are a priority to bring assistance closer to women and their children. It is mandated that every barangay must designate a VAW desk to act as first responders to the abused victim of women and children. As of August 2018, 90% of the 42,036 barangays had already set up their VAW desks. Therefore, today's focus is improving the functioning of existing VAW desks, which has been completed for the most part. Making ensuring that the barangay officials in charge of the desk are capable of handling a case in a gender-sensitive manner, referring a victim for aid, and issuing a Barangay Protection Order (BPO) as needed is a crucial component of functionality (*SDS Administration, 2019*).

*Therefore, the role of the Desk Officers on VAW in providing services to victims and survivors is vital. Thus, they must acquire and develop specific characteristics that will enable them to be efficient and effective in performing their duties.* As well as Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) No. 2010-2 establishes standards and processes for the creation of a VAW Desk in each barangay. It aims to ensure that all types of domestic violence complaints are thoroughly addressed in a way that is gender-sensitive (Philippine Commission on Women, 2017). A designated desk officer on VAW can be a woman who is a barangay kagawad or barangay tanod (community councilor). Furthermore, the Desk Officers on VAWC must complete Gender Sensitivity Training to be productive and efficient and must be able to respond to and support, in a gender-sensitive approach, victim-survivors or witnesses, especially if the witnesses are minors (JMC, 2010). Moreover, the Barangay Captain, the Barangay Kagawads as well as the *Barangay Tanods (community councilor)* Barangay Health Workers/Nutrition Scholars, and other employees constitute the Barangay Council. A Barangay Women's Desk or the Committee on Social Services is responsible for aiding VAWC victims' survivors in barangays. The barangay's roles and responsibilities are classified into three classifications: implementation of immediate interventions, execution of intermediate functions, and implementation of VAW prevention through the dissemination of information and advocacy on women's and children's rights, as well as capacity-building of service providers (*Philippine Commission on Women, 2010*).

With the foregoing premises, the researchers aimed to answer the two major questions. First, what is the capability of the barangay VAWC desk officers in the province of Laguna, Philippines in terms of implementation of immediate intervention, execution of intermediate interventions, and implementation of anti-VAW prevention functions? Second, what are the challenges encountered by the barangay VAWC desk officers in the province of Laguna, Philippines in terms of implementation of immediate intervention, execution of intermediate interventions, and implementation of anti-VAW prevention functions? Moreover, the capability and challenges encountered by the barangay violence against women and children desk were correlated.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The descriptive research design was used to document the capability and challenges of the barangay VAWC desk officers in terms of implementation of immediate intervention, execution of the intermediate function, and implementation of anti-VAW prevention functions. The respondents of this study were identified and selected using a stratified random sampling technique. It has 214 respondents composed of barangay violence against women and children desk officers, city/municipal social welfare and development officers, women and children protection desk officers, and city/municipal local government operations officers. The majority of the respondents are from the age range of 36-40 years old with a median age of 38 years old, they are mostly female and married, high school graduates, and have attended training or seminar, and the respondents are mostly in the service for 1-8 years.

Data were collected using the researchers-made survey questionnaire composed of 2 parts: part 1 is about the capability of the barangay VAWC desk officers in terms of implementation of the immediate intervention (13 items), execution of the intermediate function (5 items), and implementation of anti-VAW prevention functions (6 items); and answered based on a 5-point Likert scale: strongly agree,

agree, fairly agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The second part is about the challenges encountered by the barangay VAWC desk officers in terms of implementation of the immediate intervention (8 items), execution of intermediate functions (7 items), and implementation of anti-VAW prevention functions (7 items), and answered based on a 5-point Likert scale: *most serious*, *serious*, *moderately serious*, *least serious*, and *not a problem*. The researchers-made survey questionnaire used underwent pilot testing to test its internal consistency and reliability by using Cronbach's alpha, the items inter reliability gained .725, which depicts acceptable reliability.

Upon approval of the request letter, the researchers personally distributed the questionnaire to the target respondents from the 4<sup>th</sup> week of June up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of August 2022, with a 96.83% retrieval rate. The mean and standard deviation were used to interpret and analyze the capability and challenges encountered by the barangay VAWC desk officers in the province of Laguna in terms of implementation of immediate intervention, execution of intermediate functions, and implementation of anti-VAW prevention functions. Kolmogorov Smirnov test revealed the normal distribution of data; thus, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to test the significant relationship between the capability and the challenges encountered by the barangay VAWC desk officers in terms of implementation of immediate intervention, execution of intermediate functions, and implementation of anti-VAW prevention functions. The confidentiality of data and anonymity of the respondents were guaranteed throughout the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 presents the profile variables of the respondents. Most of the respondents are 56 years old and above and the least are 21-25 years old, with the mean age range between 36-40 years old. The 92.1% (197) of the respondents are female and one (1) respondent is a member of the LGBTQIA+. They are mostly married with 66.4% (142) and no respondents are annulled. The respondents are mostly high school graduates (43.5% or 93) and elementary graduates (33.6% or 72). It was also observed that 73 (34.1%) have attended a single training related to violence against women, however, 68 (31.8%) of the respondents have not attended any training related to their current positions. Furthermore, they are mostly 1-8 years in the service as barangay VAWC desk officers, and the least are 25-32 years and 33-40 years in service.

This affirms that the members of the personnel assigned to the Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) were mostly adults. It shows that most of the barangay desk officers who handle VAWC were married and can understand the life situation of having a family. There are no respondents pursuing a doctorate degree in a specific category. It demonstrates that once you become a barangay desk officer, you are responsible for attending seminars and training on Anti Violence Against Women Act and other laws related to violence against women and children in order to become informed and knowledgeable about how the laws are implemented.

**Table 1. Profile of the Respondents**

<b>Profile</b>	<b>Frequency (N=214)</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Age Group</b>		
<i>21-25 years old</i>	4	1.9
<i>26-30 years old</i>	10	4.7
<i>31-35 years old</i>	23	10.7
<i>36-40 years old</i>	26	12.1
<i>41-45 years old</i>	22	10.3
<i>46-50 years old</i>	25	11.7
<i>51-55 years old</i>	41	19.2
<i>56 years old and above</i>	<b>63</b>	<b>29.4</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
<i>Female</i>	<b>197</b>	<b>92.1</b>
<i>Male</i>	16	7.5
<i>LGBTQIA+</i>	1	0.5
<b>Civil Status</b>		
<i>Single</i>	30	14.0

<i>Married</i>	<b>142</b>	<b>66.4</b>
<i>Live-in</i>	20	9.3
<i>Separated</i>	6	2.8
<i>Annulled</i>	0	0
<i>Widowed</i>	16	7.5
<b>Highest Educational Attainment</b>		
<i>Elementary Graduate</i>	72	33.6
<i>High School Graduate</i>	<b>93</b>	<b>43.5</b>
<i>College Graduate</i>	42	19.6
<i>College Undergraduate</i>	5	2.3
<i>Master's Degree</i>	2	0.9
<i>Doctorate Degree</i>	0	0
<b>Training and Seminars Attended</b>		
<i>0</i>	68	31.8
<i>1</i>	<b>73</b>	<b>34.1</b>
<i>2</i>	53	24.8
<i>3</i>	16	7.5
<i>4</i>	3	1.4
<i>10</i>	1	.5
<b>Years in Service</b>		
<i>1-8 years in service</i>	<b>164</b>	<b>76.6</b>
<i>9-16 years in service</i>	37	17.3
<i>17-24 years in service</i>	7	3.3
<i>25-32 years in service</i>	3	1.4
<i>33-40 years in service</i>	3	1.4

Table 2 shows the capability of the barangay violence against women and children desk in the province of Laguna, in terms of Implementation of Immediate Interventions. Using the scores obtained, an overall ( $\mu = 4.18$ ,  $SD=0.893$ ) marked agreed for the areas identified under the capability concerning immediate interventions. Based on the data, there is a need to enhance the level of capability of BVAW in terms of the implementation of immediate interventions.

The results of the data show that Q1, "Quick response to VAW reports and rescue" obtained a ( $\mu = 4.38$ ,  $SD = .764$ ); Q13, "report/referral to C/MSWDO for further evaluation and support" obtained ( $\mu = 4.28$ ,  $SD= .891$ ); Q2, "seek the help of a police officer" obtained the ( $\mu = 4.27$ ,  $SD = .872$ ); Q3, "ensuring medical treatment in case the victim is suffering from any physical violence" obtained the ( $\mu = 4.23$ ,  $SD=.768$ ); Q7, "assessment of immediate needs and safety, including life-threatening situations" obtain the ( $\mu = 4.23$ ,  $SD=.839$ ); and Q6, "conduct a victim-survivor interview and orientation" obtained the ( $\mu = 4.21$ ,  $SD= .845$ ), which corresponds to the verbal interpretation of *strongly agree*. This demonstrates that barangay desk officers are highly responsive in assisting victims of violence against women and children (VAWC). It was also observed that these officers seek assistance, especially when cases are referred by higher authorities like the municipal or city social welfare development office. Additionally, they request police support for security purposes, such as protecting the victims from perpetrators and facilitating their transport to the nearest hospital for medical treatment. In cases of violent incidents, particularly physical abuse, barangay desk officers ensure the safety of the victim-survivors by sending them to the nearest hospital or clinic. They also assess, recognize, and address any potentially harmful or violent circumstances in VAWC incidents. Furthermore, barangay desk officers conduct interviews with victim-survivors to gather crucial information about the abuse.

Hence, Q8, "advice on their legal rights, legal aid, and remedies" obtained a ( $\mu = 4.18$ ,  $SD = .943$ ); Q12, "referral to a law enforcement officer for complaint filing" attained a ( $\mu = 4.16$ ,  $SD = .830$ ); Q9, "information and dissemination about Barangay Protection Order" obtained a ( $\mu = 4.15$ ,  $SD = .988$ ); Q5, "arrest of the suspect and confiscation of weapons" obtained a ( $\mu = 4.09$ ,  $SD=.967$ ); Q10, "issuance of a barangay protection order and distribution of copies to the victim-survivor, perpetrator, PNP, C/MSWDO, and LOGO" obtained a ( $\mu = 4.04$ ,  $SD = .975$ ); Q11, "assessing the perpetrator's barangay protection order compliance" obtained a ( $\mu = 4.04$ ,  $SD = .835$ ); and Q4, "providing temporary shelter

within the barangay hall” obtained a ( $\mu = 4.02$ ,  $SD = .957$ ), which corresponds to the verbal interpretation of *agree*. It shows that the respondents agree, but barangay desk officers still advise victim-survivors of their legal rights, ensuring they are informed and feel empowered. It also represents that while respondents agree, barangay desk officers coordinate with other agencies when emergencies arise. It illustrates that the respondents agree with the dissemination of information concerning Barangay Protection Orders (BPO) by desk officers within the barangay. It depicts that respondents agree with the capability of barangay desk officers, but despite this, they are taken into custody, and their weapons are seized. Furthermore, it demonstrates that respondents agree, yet desk officers issue protection orders to protect victims from further harm, reduce disruptions in their daily lives, and help them regain control independently. It implies that respondents merely agreed with assessing offenders’ compliance with barangay protection orders. Lastly, it shows that respondents provide housing for victims and survivors of violence against women and children but are unable to fully accommodate them due to the barangay’s limited budget.

**Table 2. The Capability of the Barangay Desk Officers in the implementation of Immediate Interventions**

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
1. Quick response to VAW reports and rescue	4.38	.764	Strongly Agree	1
2. Seek the help of a police officer	4.27	.872	Strongly Agree	3
3. Ensuring medical treatment in case the victim is suffering from any physical violence	4.23	.768	Strongly Agree	4.5
4. Providing temporary shelter within the barangay hall	4.02	.957	Agree	13
5. Arrest of the suspect and confiscation of weapons	4.09	.967	Agree	10
6. Conduct a victim-survivor interview and orientation.	4.21	.845	Strongly Agree	6
7. Assessment of immediate needs and safety, including life-threatening situations	4.23	.839	Strongly Agree	4.5
8. Advice on their legal rights, legal aid, and remedies	4.18	.943	Agree	7
9. Information and dissemination about BPO	4.15	.988	Agree	9
10. Issuance of a BPO and distribution of copies to the victim-survivor; perpetrator; PNP, C/MSWDO, and LOGO	4.04	.975	Agree	11.5
11. Assessing the perpetrator's BPO compliance	4.04	.835	Agree	11.5
12. Referral to LEO (law enforcement officer) for complaint filing	4.16	.830	Agree	8
13. Report/referral to C/MSWDO for further evaluation and support	4.28	.891	Strongly Agree	2
<b>Overall Mean and Standard Deviation</b>	<b>4.18</b>	<b>.893</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>--</b>

Table 3 shows the capability of the barangay violence against women and children desk in the province of Laguna, in terms of Execution of Intermediate Functions. Based on the scores generated, an overall mean of 4.27,  $SD=.876$  depicted strongly agrees with the capability concerning the execution of intermediate functions. This means that the respondents intensely approved of the intermediate functions.

It shows that Q1, “keeping VAW records and files confidential” obtained the highest mean of 4.40,  $SD=.922$ ; Q2, “follow-up on service provision by C/MSWDO and implementation of its proposals” obtained the mean score of 4.30,  $SD=.854$ ; Q5, “assist the victim-reintegration survivors under the C/strategy MSWDOs and the client” obtained the highest mean of 4.27,  $SD=.903$ ; and Q4, “adopt barangay ordinances and resolutions to prevent VAW cases and protect victims and survivors” obtained the highest mean of 4.25,  $SD=.822$ , verbally interpreted as *strongly agree*. It confirms that the barangay desk officer dealing with incidents of violence against women and children preserves the confidentiality of records for complaints and allegations of abuse, protecting the complainants and victim-survivors privacy. As confirmed by the study of Malawig-Ignacio (2021) confidentiality concerning data gathered from survivors of violence is important. It also demonstrates that the barangay desk officer monitors the services provided by a higher institution on the provision and implementation of such laws for the benefit of the victim's survival needs. Claus et al., (2017), suggests strengthening the implementation for the protection of women and children, particularly the young and helpless, through the initiative of barangay officials, the DSWD, and the

PNP's Children and Women's Desk Section. It illustrates that the victim-survivor who has suffered from violent incidents can be assisted by reintegrating into society and providing guidelines such as livelihood and healthcare programs that benefit them. As stated in the study of Hoff et al., 2023, suggest that combining occupational rehabilitation and healthcare interventions may be useful for victim-survivors. It illustrates that the desk officer at the barangay level implements the existing ordinances to serve as a guide for dealing with VAW situations in the community. Claus et al., (2017) mentioned that local government representatives may regularly organize orientations on women's empowerment and seminars on the Anti-VAWC Law to educate women and children about their rights and protection.

However, Q3, "respond to referrals from other organizations by filling out and returning the Referral Feedback form" attained a (mean =4.14, SD = .880), which corresponds to the verbal interpretation of agree. It represents that the desk officer responds to recommendations from other organizations by completing and returning the Referral Feedback form from other agencies. As mentioned by Claus et al., (2017), reveals that the barangay desk officer responds especially when cases are brought by higher authorities such as the municipal or city social welfare development office, and VAW Desk officers within PNP.

**Table 3. The Capability of the Barangay Desk Officers in the Execution of Intermediate Functions**

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
1. Keeping VAW records and files confidential.	4.40	.922	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	1
2. Follow-up on service provision by C/MSWDO and implementation of its proposals	4.30	.854	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	2
3. Respond to referrals from other organizations by filling out and returning the Referral Feedback form.	4.14	.880	Agree	5
4. Adopt barangay ordinances and resolutions to prevent VAW cases and protect victims and survivors	4.25	.822	Strongly Agree	4
5. Assist the victim-reintegration survivors under the C/MSWDOs strategy and the client.	4.27	.903	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	3
<b>Overall Mean and Standard Deviation</b>	<b>4.27</b>	<b>.876</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	--

Table 4 shows the capability of the barangay violence against women and children desk in the province of Laguna, in terms of Implementation of Anti-VAW Prevention Functions. As described in the tabulated scores, an overall mean of 4.19, SD=.879, affirmed agree with the implementation of Anti-VAW Prevention Functions. It implies that the respondents accepted the state of prevention functions delivered by the VAWC personnel in Laguna.

The survey findings revealed that Q1, "the awareness and advocacy in the community about Violence against Women and Children" (mean=4.41, SD=.787); Q2, "obtaining technical assistance/support from the LGOO, C/MSWDO, LEA, and others to ensure that anti-VAW legislation is effectively implemented" (mean=4.21, SD=.834); and Q3, "training for duty holders and claimants on the administration of VAW cases" obtained a(mean=4.21, SD=.842); which corresponds to the verbal interpretation of strongly agree. It implies that the barangay desk officers supported the advocacy in improving and executing community services and programs to address women's strategic gender needs. As stated by Bermillo (2017), the implementing agencies may conduct program and service awareness initiatives to enhance stakeholder participation and cooperation, as well as to increase victim-survivor approval. The Philippine Commission on Women (2019), empowering women allows them to participate in enabling legislation in a discreet and meaningful manner, ensuring that they participate in it and benefit through changes and development. It was also implies the barangay desk officer ensuring that the anti-VAW policy is successfully utilized and seeking technical support from relatively high entities concerned so that victim-survivors in violence cases do not get worse. Taylor-Dunn and Erol (2016) have said that efficient multi-agency relationships must be in place in order to successfully help victims and survivors. It was also observed that the barangay desk officers ensure that they receive training, including a gender sensitivity program and related training to violence

against women and children’s cases, in order to respond to complainants in cases of abuse and enable them to respond to victims of violence. As cited by Libre et al., (2020), GAD policy will be implemented according to the barangay officials’ knowledge of it. Likewise, Hadap (2014) mentioned that barangay officials were gender sensitive and had received the necessary training to ensure the successful execution of RA 9262.

However, Q6, “distribution of Information, Education, and Communication VAW materials” attained a (mean =4.17, SD = .966); Q5, “seminar and orientation for barangay leaders, neighbourhood associations, women, men, and children/youth on VAW and other legislation” gained a (mean =4.06, SD = .920); and Q4, “mobilization of resources for community programs” attained a (mean =4.05, SD = .925), which corresponds to the verbal interpretation of agree. It implies that the desk officers within the barangay level raise awareness and increase their level of knowledge among the residents about violence against women and children’s incidents. As affirmed by Jeanette (2017), in order to combat incidents of violence against women and children, education and awareness campaigns and increased awareness of social issues are essential instruments. It was also reflecting that the barangay desk officer initiated the conduct of seminars and training to raise knowledge and awareness about violence against women and children case. As affirmed by Fraser and Wood (2018), the necessity for women to oversee campaign implementation by society and women’s organizations and lead campaigns. Furthermore, respondent only agrees on the resource mobilization for community programs against violence against women and children due to a limited budget. It was reemphasized in the study of Fraser and Wood (2018), particularly the necessity of a sufficient budget, a thorough strategic framework, which includes strategies and relevant information, appropriate training, and capacity development of public officials.

**Table 4. The Capability of the Barangay Desk Officers in the Implementation of Anti-VAW Prevention Functions**

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
1. The awareness and advocacy in the community about Violence against Women and Children	4.41	.787	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	1
2. Obtain technical assistance/support from the LGOO, C/MSWDO, LEA, and others to ensure that anti-VAW legislation is effectively implemented.	4.21	.834	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	2.5
3. Training for duty holders and claimants on the administration of VAW cases	4.21	.842	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	2.5
4. Mobilization of resources for community programs	4.05	.925	Agree	6
5. Seminar and orientation for barangay leaders, neighborhood associations, women, men, and children/youth on VAW and other legislation	4.06	.920	Agree	5
6. Distribution of Information, Education, and Communication VAW materials	4.17	.966	Agree	4
<b>Overall Mean and Standard Deviation</b>	<b>4.19</b>	<b>.879</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>--</b>

Table 5 presents the scores obtained to describe the association between the profile variables and the capability of the BVAW desk in terms of implementation of immediate intervention and the following profile variables: age group ( $r_{obt}[212]=.181^{**}$ ,  $p_{01}=.008$ ), gender ( $r_{obt}[212]=.005$ ,  $p_{05}=.939$ ), civil status ( $r_{obt}[212]=-.025$ ,  $p_{05}=.714$ ), highest educational attainment ( $r_{obt}[212]=.107$ ,  $p_{05}=.119$ ), number of training/seminars ( $r_{obt}[212]=.072$ ,  $p_{05}=.292$ ), and years in service ( $r_{obt}[212]=.055$ ,  $p_{05}=.427$ ). The capability of Implementation of Immediate Intervention is significantly correlated to the age group at  $\alpha.01$ , which allows the researchers to accept the alternative hypothesis. This affirms that among the profile variables, only the age group is significantly linked to the capability of implementation of immediate intervention. According to the findings of Boateng et al. (2012), age plays a significant role in determining how involved women are in all sociocultural aspects. Women are more respected in the community and have more authority as they get older, which may account for this association when it comes to how they respond to cases of violence against women.

Moreover, looking at the scores obtained to describe the Execution of Immediate Function and the following profile variables: age group ( $r_{obt}[212]=.161^{*}$ ,  $p_{05}=.018$ ), gender ( $r_{obt}[212]=-.037$ ,  $p_{05}=.590$ ), civil status ( $r_{obt}[212]=-.052$ ,  $p_{05}=.445$ ), highest educational attainment ( $r_{obt}[212]=.073$ ,  $p_{05}=.285$ ),

number of training/seminars ( $r_{obt}[212]=.052$ ,  $p_{05}=.451$ ), and years in service ( $r_{obt}[212]=.073$ ,  $p_{05}=.289$ ). The capability of Execution of Immediate Function is significantly correlated to the age group at  $\alpha.05$  which made the researchers reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This confirms that among the profile variables, solely the age group is significantly connected to capability concerning the intermediate functions. As cited by Pambè et al., (2013), the findings emphasize the significance of women's age as a factor in household decision-making. Women who are older are more likely to take part in decision-making. As a result, older women are more involved in household decisions because they might become more powerful as they get older.

Lastly, looking at the scores obtained to describe the association between the profile variables and the capability of the BVAW desk in terms of Implementation of Anti VAW Prevention and the following profile variables: age group ( $r_{obt}[212]=.202^{**}$ ,  $p_{01}=.003$ ), gender ( $r_{obt}[212]=-.038$ ,  $p_{05}=.579$ ), civil status ( $r_{obt}[212]=-.015$ ,  $p_{05}=.831$ ), highest educational attainment ( $r_{obt}[212]=.060$ ,  $p_{05}=.379$ ), number of training/seminars ( $r_{obt}[212]=.054$ ,  $p_{05}=.432$ ), and years in service ( $r_{obt}[212]=.119$ ,  $p_{05}=.081$ ). The capability of Implementation of Anti VAW Prevention significantly correlated to the age group at  $\alpha.01$  which allows the researchers to totally accept the alternative hypothesis. This approves that among the profile variables, the age group is the only meaningfully associated with capability concerning the prevention functions. As stated by Gupta et al., (2013) the strong emphasis on age indicates that social and gender norms also continue to strongly influence older women’s responses and relate their experiences in responding to incidents of violence against women. Thus, as a person age, they describe social and gender norms as shaping their decisions. This may indicate the positive impacts of violence prevention interventions focused on changing social and gender norms.

**Table 5. Test of Association between the Profile Variables and the Capability of the Barangay Violence against Women and Children Desk Officer**

Variables	Age Group	Gender	Status	Educ'l Attain	# Training	Yrs Services
Implementation of Immediate Intervention	.181**	.005	-.025	.107	.072	.055
Execution of Immediate Function	.161*	-.037	-.052	.073	.052	.073
Implementation of Anti-VAW Prevention	.202**	-.038	-.015	.060	.054	.199
* <i>. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)</i>						
** <i>. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)</i>						

Table 6 shows that the barangay violence against women and children desk officers have encountered moderately serious challenges in the implementation of immediate intervention which obtained an overall mean of 2.81,  $SD=1.227$ . The survey findings revealed Q2, Q3, Q5, Q6, and Q8, “lack of cooperation on the part of both the suspect and the victim”, “the suspect’s refusal to cooperate in solving the case”, “the failure to apprehend the suspect”, “insufficient equipment/facilities for providing quality service”, and “unawareness of the laws that have been enacted” have obtained means scores and standard deviations (3.01, 1.208); (3.08, 1.162); (2.96, 1.233), (2.94, 1.199); and (2.82, 1.258), respectively, with the verbal interpretations of moderately serious. It indicates that the complainant and perpetrator did not take part in the incidents because of the bad impact on their lives, as violence against women is the most serious human rights violation. As supported by Espineli et al., (2015), when responding to reports, one of the key concerns of the officers is the caller/abused women’s unwillingness to cooperate. This is due to the fact that the majority of the victimized women were still in shock after experiencing violence. They also regard this experience as an embarrassing portion of their lives, making it difficult for them to reveal the sensitive issue.

It shows that the suspects refuse to cooperate with the barangay officials to settle their cases and issues against violence case. As mentioned by Spohn & Tellis (2014), the barangay desk officers face difficulties in handling the suspect’s case due to the suspect’s cooperation, which may be hampered by concerns of retaliation, punitive measures from others, being deemed as unlawful victims, and their family’s public image. According to Stahl (2012), without the suspect’s cooperation, successful prosecution is impossible because they are not shielded from external threats.



Likewise, it can be gleaned from the findings that the desk officers failed to apprehend the suspect due to the victim's demand to the authority not to sue the husband or spouse because they are financially, and economically dependent on their husband because of the sensitivity of the issues and their effects on women and their families. According to Partlow (2020), it explains that many abused women give in to pressure from children who ask them not to file complaints against their spouses, or when these women are financially dependent on their husbands. Furthermore, Bernabe (2012), The results of this study are consistent with the fact that VAWC incidents are frequently underreported because of the sensitive nature of the subjects and the impact they have on women and their families. Due to individual factors like embarrassment, financial dependence, respect for family privacy, and victim-blaming attitudes, many cases go unreported (Garcia, 2021).

One of the moderately serious challenges encountered by the barangay desk officer was the lack of facilities and equipment to deliver quality service such as maintaining secrecy and confidentiality during the interview of the victim-survivor against violence. According to the study by Espineli et al., (2015), WCPD officers find it difficult to get true information from abused women during interviews due to the lack of space in the office for a VAW desk, which necessitates confidentiality for the protection of the survivors.

It demonstrates a lack of societal awareness of VAWC, as well as limited knowledge and abilities in the contexts of victim-survivor protection and assistance at the barangay level. Based on the results of a study by Cultura (2017), the challenges experienced by desk officers are a lack of police protection for complainants, a lack of initiative among Desk Officers to aid complainants, and a lack of knowledge about the provision of R.A 9262.

However, the findings also revealed Q1, Q4, and Q7, “*delay in responding to the complainant’s needs*”, “*due to a lack of financial support, the matter has been sent to the DSWD*”, and “*inadequate training in dealing with VAW cases*” have obtained mean scores and standard deviations (2.57, 1.297); (2.58, 1.230); and (2.52, 1.228), respectively, with the verbal interpretation of least serious challenges encountered by the barangay violence against women and children desk officers in the implementation of immediate interventions. One of the least serious challenges is the budget constraints, as the VAWC cases are forwarded to higher agencies like PNP, and MSWD. In order to ensure VAW services for women and children, it is necessary to amend government policies and allocate funds appropriately (Embate et al., 2019). Likewise, for the cases involving women and children in the barangay, the desk officers must immediately reach out to the victim-survivors. Based on the study of Anderson et al., (2020), some of the risk factors for the victim-survivors include a lack of responsive institutions and insufficient legal protections against violence. Furthermore, in order for the desk officers in the barangay to fully understand how to deal with violence against women and children, it is evident that they must attend training sessions and seminars related to the management and handling of VAWC cases. According to Ms. Barcia in her seminar regarding Gender and Development Orientation (2019), the desk officers must fully understand these laws in order to perform their duties as it relates to handling cases of abuse against women.

**Table 6.Challenges Encountered by the Barangay Desk Officers in the Implementation of Immediate Intervention**

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
1. Delay in responding to the complainant's needs.	2.57	1.297	Least Serious	7
2. Lack of cooperation on the part of both the suspect and the victim.	3.01	1.208	Moderately Serious	2
3. The suspect's refusal to cooperate in solving the case.	3.08	1.162	Moderately Serious	1
4. Due to a lack of financial support, the matter has been sent to the DSWD.	2.58	1.230	Least Serious	6
5. The failure to apprehend the suspect	2.96	1.233	Moderately Serious	4
6. Insufficient equipment/facilities for providing quality service.	2.94	1.199	Moderately Serious	3

7. Inadequate training in dealing with VAWC cases.	2.52	1.228	Least Serious	8
8. Unawareness of the laws that have been enacted.	2.82	1.258	Moderately Serious	5
<b>Overall Mean and Standard Deviation</b>	<b>2.81</b>	<b>1.227</b>	<b>Moderately Serious</b>	--

Table 7 shows that the barangay violence against women and children desk officers have moderately serious challenges in the execution of intermediate functions with overall mean and standard deviation (2.61, 1.273). This is somewhat alarming as the Q1, Q4, and Q5, “the VAWC records are not properly organized”, “inability to provide necessary support and treatment to victim-survivors”, and “refuse to implement barangay ordinances and resolutions to prevent VAW and protect victims and survivors” have obtained mean scores and standard deviations (2.71, 1.329); (2.71, 1.261); and (2.62, 1.268), respectively, with the verbal interpretation of *moderately serious*. It implies that the documentation of reports in cases of violence against women and children was not organized, which may cause a problem for the desk officers due to the lack of future reference and referral from a higher institution. As supported by Garcia (2020), there is no central data bank to compile the information from the various government institutions, which results in the VAW data being restricted, inconsistent, and untrustworthy. Because of this, it is challenging to understand the problem’s entire national scope. Furthermore, Inarda et al., (2019), have mentioned that governments were open and accountable for their actions that would have records management systems in place to make sure that all of their operations, procedures, and administrative processes are well-documented.

Likewise, providing the needed support and treatment to the victim survivor of VAWC is one of the moderately serious challenges encountered by the barangay violence against women and children desk officers. Garcia (2020) has mentioned the responsibility of DSWD to offer center-based and community-based services to GBV victims while also providing social protection. There are also short-term housing options, as well as services for money, health, law, and social support, hence according to the PNP WCPC, social services are frequently lacking.

Moreover, the barangay desk officers failed to execute barangay ordinances and resolutions in preventing violence against women cases. Consignado et al., (2022) have mentioned that there is only one VAW desk officer and the barangay cannot act on its own, the VAW desk officer must continue to wait for the PNP or DSWD to request the orientation and training services from the city government to implement its ordinances.

However, it can be observed that Q2, Q3, Q6, and Q7, “not protecting the victim’s or survivor’s confidentiality”, “poor implementation and enforcement of laws which causes its constituents to be clueless about what it delivers”, “inability to address referrals from other organizations”, and “failure to accommodate or assist the victim’s survivor” have obtained means score and standard deviations (2.57, 1.297); (2.58, 1.230); (2.52, 1.228); and (2.57, 1.297), respectively, with the verbal interpretation of *least serious*.

The barangay desk officers must strictly protect the confidentiality of the victim-survivors of violence against women and children’s cases. Based on the results of a study by Espineli et al., (2015) due to the structural layout of the workplace, WCPD officers find it difficult to elicit information from the assaulted women during interviews. They acknowledge that the workplace does not have a private setting because it does not meet the legal requirements.

Likewise, the desk officers are not properly implemented and enforced, which leaves the desk officers unaware of the service they provide. As mentioned by Garcia, (2020), government services continue to be disorganized and ineffective because VAW data from the various services are not uniform or centralized. The findings of the surveys also support the notion that certain service providers are unprepared, lack of gender awareness, and still take a victim-blaming attitude. Garcia (2020) has mentioned that regarding the reporting process and government services for VAW victims, there were a variety of issues due to a lack of collaboration between the various service providers, the victims either do not know where to report or are directed to numerous authorities.

**Table 7. Challenges Encountered by the Barangay Desk Officers in the Execution of Intermediate Functions**

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
1. The VAWC records are not properly organized.	2.71	1.329	Moderately Serious	1.5
2. Not protecting the victim's or survivor's confidentiality	2.57	1.297	Least Serious	5.5
3. Poor implementation and enforcement of laws which causes its constituents to be clueless about what it delivers.	2.58	1.230	Least Serious	4
4. Inability to provide necessary support and treatment to victim-survivors	2.71	1.261	Moderately Serious	1.5
5. Refuse to implement barangay ordinances and resolutions to prevent VAW and protect victims and survivors.	2.62	1.268	Moderately Serious	3
6. Inability to address referrals from other organizations.	2.52	1.228	Least Serious	7
7. Failure to accommodate or assist the victim's survivor.	2.57	1.297	Least Serious	5.5
<b>Overall Mean and Standard Deviation</b>	<b>2.61</b>	<b>1.273</b>	<b>Moderately Serious</b>	--

Table 8 shows that the barangay violence against women and children desk officers have encountered moderately serious challenges in the implementation of anti-VAWC functions with an overall mean and standard deviation (2.65, 1.257). The survey finding revealed Q1, Q4, Q6, and Q7, “there was no therapy or counseling available for the victim’s survival”, “inadequate funding and resources for community programs”, “unfamiliar with the provisions of Republic Act 9262 and Magna Carta for Women”, and “there are no legal safeguards or well-defined processes in place to prevent violence and assist victims” have obtained mean scores and standard deviations (2.89, 1.302); (2.66, 1.285); (2.72, 1.307); and (2.64, 1.283), respectively, with the verbal interpretation of *moderately serious*. One of the challenges encountered by the desk officer at the barangay level was the lack of therapy and counselling within the barangay that ensures the victim-survivor against trauma, due to the unavailability of a professional counsellor within the barangay level that helps the victim survivor to recover. Very few counsellors were interviewed as they are primarily available at specialized hospitals, but also because counselling to women who experienced abuse is offered primarily by medical social workers. As stated in the study of Kaur & Garg (2008) court decisions are sometimes rendered ineffective due to a lack of services for the women and even for the abusers. For instance, there is no national counselling service even if counselling is mandatory for abusers.

Another challenge faced by the barangay desk officers was a shortage of funding, therefore the implementation of community service related to the violence against women program was hampered. In order to ensure that women and children can access VAW services, government policies must be modified, and funds must be properly allocated (Embate et al., 2019).

Further, it shows that the desk officers at the barangay level handling VAW cases were no legal measures and clear mechanisms or protocols in position to protect and support victim-survivors. According to Anderson et al. (2020), the risk factors include a lack of responsive institutions and insufficient legal measures against violence. Therefore, the failure of the referring agency disrupts the flow of the entire system.

However, it was observed that Q2, Q3, and Q5, “inadequate training in delivering VAWC-related seminars”, “there is no distribution of IEC materials about VAWC in place”, and “the barangay VAWC desk is not conducting seminars and training on violence against women and children” have obtained mean scores and standard deviation (2.52, 1.143); (2.58, 1.279); and (2.57, 1.197), respectively, with the verbal interpretation of *least serious*. It implies that in order for the desk officers working in the barangay to be knowledgeable about the provisions of the law, they must attend various training sessions and seminars on violence against women and children. Based on the study of Hadap (2022) Barangay officials had the necessary training and gender awareness to implement RA 9262 in an

efficient manner. The barangay desk officer makes an effort in raising awareness within the community by distributing of IEC materials. According to Buis (2017), to combat violence against women and children, education and awareness campaigns and increased awareness of social issues are essential instruments.

Furthermore, the barangay desk officer is required to organize training sessions and seminars on the subject of violence against women in order to increase community awareness. According to Ms. Barcia in her seminar regarding Gender and Development Orientation (2019), it is essential that the VAW desk officers have an awareness of gender and development. This will ensure that those officers handling the case receive justice, and they will be able to fairly assess the need for the campaign against violence against women and children.

**Table 8. Challenges Encountered by the Barangay Desk Officers in the Implementation of Anti-VAW functions**

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
1. There was no therapy or counseling available for the victim's survival.	2.89	1.302	Moderately Serious	1
2. Inadequate training in delivering VAWC-related seminars	2.52	1.143	Least Serious	7
3. There is no distribution of IEC materials about VAWC in place.	2.58	1.279	Least Serious	5
4. Inadequate funding and resources for community programs	2.66	1.285	Moderately Serious	3
5. The Barangay VAWC desk is not conducting seminars and training on violence against women and children	2.57	1.197	Least Serious	6
6. Unfamiliar with the provisions of Republic Act 9262 and Magna Carta for Women	2.72	1.307	Moderately Serious	2
7. There are no legal safeguards or well-defined processes in place to prevent violence and assist victims.	2.64	1.283	Moderately Serious	4
<b>Overall Mean and Standard Deviation</b>	<b>2.65</b>	<b>1.257</b>	<b>Moderately Serious</b>	<b>--</b>

Table 9 shows the collective scores describe the challenges encountered in the implementation of immediate intervention as well as the profile variables: age group ( $r_{obt}[212] = -.002, p_{05} = .978$ ), gender ( $r_{obt}[212] = .059, p_{05} = .392$ ), civil status ( $r_{obt}[212] = -.050, p_{05} = .470$ ), highest educational attainment ( $r_{obt}[212] = .206^{**}, p_{01} = .002$ ), number of trainings/seminars ( $r_{obt}[212] = .072, p_{05} = .296$ ), and years in service ( $r_{obt}[212] = .086, p_{05} = .209$ ). Applicants should be qualified for their position in any organization.

The challenges encountered in the implementation of immediate interventions, it is significantly correlated to the highest educational attainment at  $\alpha.01$ , which permits the researcher to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. Clearly stating that among the profile variables, only the highest educational attainment is significantly connected and can be the mediator to challenges encountered about immediate interventions.

According to Boateng et al. (2012) in Ghana and Acharya et al. (2010) in Nepal, these results can be attributed to the fact that educated women are probably much more capable of negotiating their involvement in household decision-making in terms of understanding.

Considering the scores obtained to describe the challenges encountered with the execution of intermediate functions and the following profile variables: age group ( $r_{obt}[212] = .096, p_{05} = .162$ ), gender ( $r_{obt}[212] = -.018, p_{05} = .791$ ), civil status ( $r_{obt}[212] = -.033, p_{05} = .635$ ), highest educational attainment ( $r_{obt}[212] = .141^*, p_{05} = .039$ ), number of training or seminars ( $r_{obt}[212] = .058, p_{05} = .396$ ), and years in service ( $r_{obt}[212] = .106, p_{05} = .121$ ).

The challenge encountered in the execution of intermediate functions is significantly correlated to the highest educational attainment at  $\alpha.05$  which allows the researcher to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. With this, it is approved that among all the profile variables, it is only the highest educational attainment is significantly associated with challenges encountered

concerning the intermediate functions. Lack of formal education, according to Parveen (2007), may have a negative impact on women's cognitive domain, making them dependent and inferior.

Lastly, the scores obtained in the implementation of Anti VAW prevention and the following profile variables: age group ( $r_{obt}[212]=.050$ ,  $p_{05}=.468$ ), gender ( $r_{obt}[212]=-.008$ ,  $p_{05}=.909$ , civil status ( $r_{obt}[212]=-.029$ ,  $p_{05}=.673$ ), highest educational attainment ( $r_{obt}[212]=.135^*$ ,  $p_{05}=.048$ ), number of trainings/seminars ( $r_{obt}[212]=.004$ ,  $p_{05}=.955$ ), and years in service ( $r_{obt}[212]=.021$ ,  $p_{05}=.759$ ).

Therefore, the challenges encountered in prevention functions are significantly correlated to the highest educational attainment at  $\alpha.05$  and letting the researchers totally accept the alternative hypothesis. This clearly stated that among the profile variables, the highest educational attainment is the sole profile variable that was able to establish a direct association with the challenges encountered by prevention functions. According to Pambe et al., (2013), women's participation in household decision-making would be positively correlated with their level of education.

**Table 9. Test of Association between the profile variables and the challenges encountered by the Barangay Violence against Women and Children Desk Officers**

Variables	Age Group	Gender	Status	Educl Attain	#Trainings	Yrs Services
Implementation of Immediate Interventions	-.002	.059	-.050	.206**	.072	.086
Execution of Intermediate Interventions	.096	.018	-.033	.141*	.058	.106
Implementation of Anti-VAW Prevention	.050	.008	-.029	.135*	.004	.021
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)						
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)						

**CONCLUSION**

The barangay desk officers in the province of Laguna, Philippines were capable of the implementation of immediate interventions to the cases of violence against women and children. Barangay desk officers can immediately respond to cases of violence against women reports and rescue by tapping the help of the police officers to ensure a medical treatment in cases the victim is suffering from any physical violence. Likewise, with the assistance of the police officers and City or Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officers (C/MSWDO), the barangay desk officers can be capable to assess the immediate needs and safety of the victims of violence against women and children including life-threatening situations. The barangay desk officers were capable of the execution of intermediate functions by keeping the VAW records confidential and assisting the victim-reintegration survivors. Furthermore, they are capable of the implementation of anti-VAW prevention functions by adapting the barangay ordinances and resolutions including obtaining technical assistance from the Local Government Officers, C/MSWDO, and Law Enforcement Agencies to prevent VAW cases and protect victims and survivors. The barangay desk officers have encountered moderately serious challenges in the implementation of immediate interventions because of insufficient equipment/facilities for providing quality services and inadequate training in dealing with the victim-survivors of violence against women and children. Even though the barangay desk officers can implement immediate interventions, the victim and suspect are not cooperative in solving the case. Meanwhile, the execution of intermediate functions by the barangay desk officers has encountered moderately serious challenges, particularly, in organizing the VAWC records, inability to provide necessary support and treatment to victim-survivors, and refusal to implement barangay ordinance and resolutions to prevent VAW and protect victims and survivors. Furthermore, there were moderate challenges encountered by the barangay desk officers in the implementation of Anti-VAW functions, particularly, the barangay desk officers are unfamiliar with the provisions of Republic Act 9262 and Magna Carta for Women, inadequate funding and resources for community programs, no well-defined processes in place to prevent violence and assist victims, and no therapy or counseling available for the victim's survival. In addition, only the age group has a significant

relationship with the barangay VAWC desk officers' capability in the implementation of immediate interventions and anti-VAW prevention functions and execution of intermediate functions. Likewise, only educational attainment has a significant relationship with the challenges encountered by the barangay VAWC desk officers in terms of the implementation of immediate interventions and anti-VAW prevention functions, and execution of intermediate functions

Since challenges still exist in the execution of intermediate functions, implementation of immediate interventions, and Anti-VAW functions, this study recommends allocating an adequate budget for information dissemination for the community programs to prevent the occurrence of violence against women and children. Likewise, the barangay desk officers need to undergo a regular refresher course in processing the violence against women and children, assisting and therapy the victim-survivors, and documenting properly the records of the cases of violence against women and children. Furthermore, sufficient equipment/facilities to provide quality services in dealing with the victim-survivors of violence against women and children.

Although the study was conducted in the province of Laguna, Philippines, the results have potential implications for the current and future plans of any barangay officials in the Philippines to assess the capability of their designated barangay desk officers. Further studies are also encouraged to be conducted to strengthen the capability of the barangay desk officers in handling the violence against women and children's cases.

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