



Competency and value profile of barangay nutrition scholars in Laoag City: Implications for capacity building

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the demographic profile, competencies, and values of Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs) in Laoag City as a basis for developing a research-based competency-building and values development plan. Using a descriptive-comparative design and document analysis, data were collected from BNSs, their supervisors, and punong barangays through questionnaire administration, document analysis, and structured interviews.

Findings revealed that the BNS workforce is predominantly female, largely within the midlife age group, mostly college graduates, and relatively new to the nutrition program. Competency assessment indicated that BNSs possess very high levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities essential for effective nutrition program implementation, as corroborated by their supervisor and punong barangays. Evaluation of values highlighted very high levels of integrity and accountability, compassion, and commitment among BNSs. These findings provided a basis for designing a research-based plan to enhance competencies and reinforce values through targeted training, mentoring, and performance recognition mechanisms. The plan was assessed as very highly valid and ready for implementation.

The study findings confirm the principles underlying the Competency Theory and the Values Theory. The study underscores the importance of aligning development interventions with the existing strengths and needs of BNSs to ensure continued effectiveness in delivering community nutrition services.

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Introduction

Nutrition is a cornerstone of public health and community development, particularly in grassroots settings. In the Philippines, the Barangay Nutrition Scholar (BNS) Program was established to address malnutrition and deliver

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health services at the local level. Its legal basis is Presidential Decree No. 1569 (Republic of the Philippines, 1978), which mandates the assignment of at least one trained nutrition scholar in every barangay (National Nutrition Council [NNC], 2020), who will serve as the vital link connecting national nutrition initiatives with households and communities.

The role of these frontline health workers is critical to achieving two of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the United Nations global agenda adopted in 2015. These goals or key targets, which are directly related to the work of BNSs, are: SDG 2 - Zero Hunger, which aims to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030, and SDG 3 - Good health and well-being, which seeks to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. The BNSs' work in conducting nutritional assessments, providing health education, and linking families to health services directly contributes to achieving these ambitious goals.

Over the past decade, from 2015 to 2025, the Philippines has intensified its efforts to address malnutrition in alignment with the SDG targets. The BNSs have been at the forefront of this national push, working to implement programs to improve nutritional outcomes nationwide. However, despite a decade of implementation, malnutrition remains a persistent challenge. Data from the Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department [CPBRD] (2024), based on the 2021 Expanded National Nutrition Survey (ENNS), revealed that about 21.6% of infants and young children (0–23 months) suffer from stunting, reflecting poor growth outcomes during critical development years. In a similar finding, the Global Nutrition Report (2021) reported that 28.8% of children under five in the Philippines are stunted, exceeding the Southeast Asian regional average of 21.8%.

The country also experiences what is known as the triple burden of malnutrition: undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and increasing cases of overweight and obesity. Data from the Philippine National Nutrition Survey, as reported by the Food and Nutrition Research Institute [FNRI] (2020), showed that the prevalence of overweight among adolescents rose from 4.9% in 2003 to 11.6% in 2018, underscoring growing concern about diet-related noncommunicable diseases. The World Obesity Federation (2023) reported that adult obesity has also continued to rise, further increasing health risks.

While national statistics extensively document the prevalence of malnutrition, Abadejos and Almerino (2025) and Marasigan (2025) observed a notable scarcity of research regarding the specific internal drivers of program success at the local level, particularly in Laoag City. In addition, Marasigan (2025) contended that macro-level perspectives leave a significant gap in the documented literature exploring the vital intersection between a worker's technical competencies and their underlying ethical values.

National agencies, such as the Department of Budget and Management (2022), emphasized fiscal accountability and resource optimization as the primary drivers of program success. But Abadejos and Almerino (2025) argued that these systemic analyses often overlook the personal motivations and ethical orientations that govern how frontline workers actually perform in the field. This oversight represents a critical research gap, as the effective translation of national policy into grassroots action relies not only on a worker's knowledge base but also on the professional values that dictate their service delivery.

Recent scholarly analyses in the *Asian/Pacific Island Nursing Journal* (2023) and the *Journal of Healthcare Treatment Development* (2021) suggest that while institutional barriers are well documented, individual-level factors—such as staff motivation and ethical orientations—remain under-addressed in local health planning. Consequently, without localized empirical data on these human factors, nutrition interventions remain generic and risk failing to address the unique socio-cultural and professional challenges faced by community-based nutrition

scholars in local areas, such as Laoag City. As Abadejos and Almerino (2025) contend, the effectiveness of national nutrition programs is highly dependent on the competencies and values of these local nutrition workers. Their skills and commitment are crucial for the successful translation of broad policies into tangible improvements in community health and nutrition.

As a government employee with direct interaction with BNSs, the researcher observed instances in which some BNSs encountered challenges related to their competencies and values when delivering services to clients in the barangays. These observations prompted this study to determine the competencies and values of BNSs and to deepen understanding of how their roles can be strengthened to support the Philippines' national and international commitments to health and nutrition.

Literature review

Demographic profile of barangay nutrition scholars

The demographic profile of BNSs, including their sex, age, educational attainment, and length of service, has been widely studied as a factor influencing their competencies, values, and overall performance in community nutrition programs. Understanding these demographic and professional characteristics is essential for designing targeted training programs, support mechanisms, and policy interventions in the Philippine health sector.

The Department of Health (DOH, 2022) and the National Nutrition Council (NNC, 2023) emphasize profiling BNSs to ensure that community nutrition services are delivered efficiently, equitably, and in alignment with local needs.

Competencies of barangay nutrition scholars

Competency among community health workers—including BNSs—has been widely recognized as necessary for effective implementation of health and nutrition plans at the community level. Competency refers to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable BNSs to perform their roles efficiently and responsively, effectively meeting community needs, and that influence performance outcomes and community impact.

The competencies of BNSs can be classified into three interrelated domains essential for effective service delivery. These competency domains are: technical knowledge, interpersonal skills, and attitudes. Technical competencies include knowledge of nutrition, health principles, and the implementation of community-based programs, while interpersonal competencies encompass communication, coordination, and social facilitation skills necessary to engage with diverse community members. Attitudinal components—such as empathy, commitment, and dedication—serve to bridge theoretical knowledge with practical application, enabling BNSs to deliver services effectively at the grassroots level. These domains are consistently emphasized in national program guidelines and training frameworks, which highlight the importance of equipping BNSs with the necessary knowledge, skills, and values to perform their roles in monitoring, counseling, and implementing nutrition interventions (National Nutrition Council, 2014, 2020; Mirasol & Gordoncillo, 2023).

As frontline workers in addressing malnutrition and promoting public health in every barangay, BNSs need not only technical expertise but also the ability to foster community participation and sustain local nutrition programs, while demonstrating empathy and dedication as they engage with local people. The BNSs are frontline implementers of national and local nutrition programs, particularly under the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN), and monitor the nutritional status of vulnerable groups and facilitate access to health and nutrition services (PPAN, 2023).

Values of barangay nutrition scholars

Values play a central role in guiding the behavior, motivation, and ethical conduct of public service workers, including BNSs. The BNS values were categorized into integrity and accountability; compassion and commitment; equity and fairness; and efficiency and excellence in service.

Research by De la Cruz and Uy (2021), Santos and Laxamana (2023), and Ngo and Herrera (2024) repeatedly underscore that values are essential for the ethical and effective performance of BNSs. Core values, such as compassion, commitment, integrity, and volunteerism, guide BNSs' actions, enhance resilience, and sustain active engagement in community nutrition programs.

De la Cruz and Uy (2021) defined values as fundamental principles critical to delivering ethical, high-quality service, while Santos and Laxamana (2023) emphasized that values-driven behaviors help maintain motivation and continued participation. Similarly, Ngo and Herrera (2024) suggested that alignment between personal and organizational values improves job satisfaction and overall performance, demonstrating the practical significance of values in BNS work.

In the Philippine context, the BNS Plan integrates these core values in training and induction programs to reinforce ethical service orientation (Fernandez et al., 2020). Villanueva and Rivera (2022) reported that these values encourage BNSs to extend their service beyond formal responsibilities, often dedicating personal time and resources to support community welfare. Lim and Mercado (2025) noted that the success of local nutrition initiatives is closely linked to the dedication and sincerity of values-driven BNS workers.

Conceptual framework

Together, the Competency Theory (Boyatzis, 1982) and Values Theory (Schwartz, 1994) form a comprehensive framework for this study to determine and improve BNS performance. The synergy between these theories suggests that a high-performing BNS possesses both the technical competencies to perform and the ethical values to serve, sustained by a continuous investment in their professional and personal growth.

Figure 1 illustrates the study's research paradigm, highlighting the demographic profile, competencies, and values of BNSs, as well as differences in perceptions of their competencies and values, which served as the basis for the proposed competency-building and values-development plan.

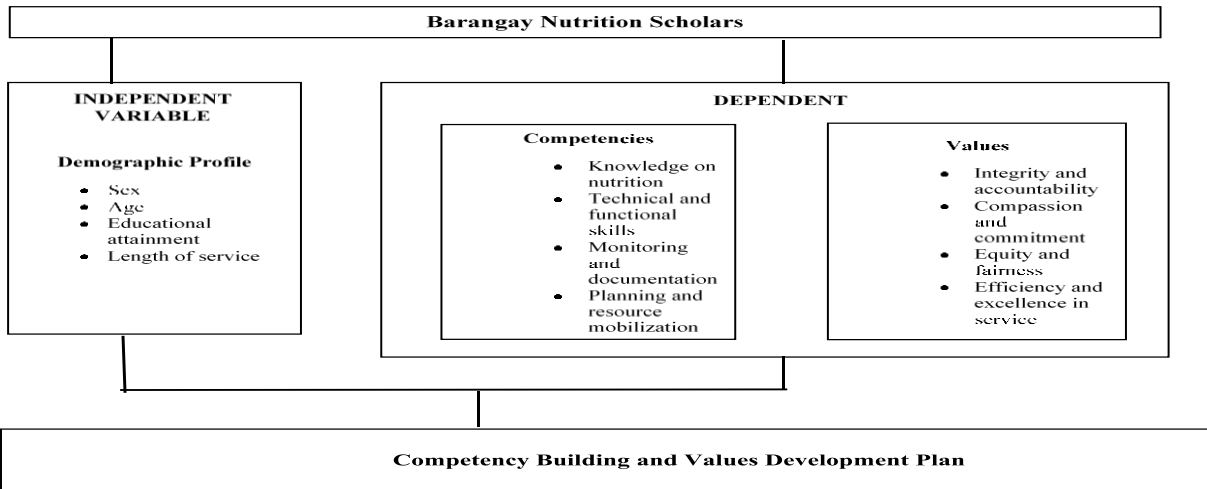


Figure 1. Conceptual paradigm of the study.

Statement of the problem

This study determined the demographic profile, competencies, and values of BNSs in Laoag City as a basis for a research-based competency-building and values development plan. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of BNSs in Laoag City, as to:
 - 1.1. sex;
 - 1.2. age;
 - 1.3. educational attainment; and
 - 1.4. length of service?
2. To what extent do the following BNSs possess the competencies as assessed by themselves, their supervisor, and the punong barangays along the following domains:
 - 2.1. knowledge on nutrition,
 - 2.2. technical and functional skills,
 - 2.3. monitoring and documentation, and
 - 2.4. planning and resource mobilization?
3. To what extent do the BNSs demonstrate the following values as assessed by the BNSs themselves, their supervisor, and the punong barangays about:
 - 3.1. integrity and accountability,
 - 3.2. compassion and commitment,
 - 3.3. equity and fairness, and
 - 3.4. efficiency and excellence in service?
4. Is there a difference between the perceptions of the BNSs and punong barangays on:
 - 4.1. The extent to which BNSs possessed their competencies, and
 - 4.2. The extent to which values are demonstrated by the BNSs?

5. What competency-building and values development plan for BNSs may be developed based on their existing competencies and values?
6. How valid is the competency building and values development plan for BNSs in Laoag City?

Research methodology

Research design

This study utilized a descriptive-comparative research design, with document analysis and interviews as supplementary methods. As defined by Bhandari (2020), the descriptive aspect of this design provides an accurate, factual representation of a specific population or phenomenon.

Locale of the study

The study was conducted in the 80 barangays of Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, where BNSs were officially assigned and actively performing their duties. According to the City Government of Laoag (n.d.), the city is strategically positioned as the capital of Ilocos Norte and serves as the province's primary commercial and administrative hub. Laoag City has solidified its reputation as a leader in grassroots health.

Population

The population of this study consisted of all 80 BNSs deployed in the 80 barangays within Laoag City for the calendar year 2025. It also included the lone supervisor and the 80 punong barangays who evaluated the competencies and values of the BNSs under their supervision. Hence, this study comprised 161 respondents.

Data gathering instrument

In this study, four instruments were used to gather data: a survey questionnaire, a document analysis tool, an interview protocol, and a validation tool for the proposed plan. All these instruments were carefully reviewed and validated by the thesis adviser and members of the research panel.

The survey questionnaire in this study was adapted from validated local instruments and guided by the competency domains identified by Taburnal (2017) and the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) structure of Alaba et al. (2017). The instrument was translated into Ilocano by a proficient Ilocano language translator, an Ilocano writer, and a retired Department of Education supervisor with extensive experience in facilitating communication for research and community-based projects. A pilot test was conducted on five BNS volunteers to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity before its final administration. The feedback obtained from this pilot test served as the basis for refining and finalizing the instrument before its official distribution.

A Document Analysis Guide, based on a standard form of the Laoag City Health Office and enhanced by the researcher, could systematically analyze the quarterly and accomplishment reports with photo documentation submitted by the BNSs to their supervisor during the period covered by the study. This Document Analysis Guide underwent a four-stage refinement process.

An Interview Protocol consisted of questions formulated by the researcher to gather additional data from respondents and further enrich the findings. The fourth instrument was the Validation Tool for the Proposed Plan.

Data gathering procedure

Before gathering data, permission to conduct the study was formally obtained from the Office of the City Mayor of Laoag City, the city nutrition action officer (CNAO), and the punong barangays of the 80 barangays in Laoag City. Then the researcher conducted separate orientation meetings with four college-educated enumerators, the BNSs' supervisor, and all BNSs.

During the data collection phase, the researcher, with the assistance of the enumerators, distributed copies of the survey questionnaire to the BNSs and the punong barangays during their monthly meetings with the supervisor. The researcher explained the items, and the enumerators provided clarifications as needed to ensure responses were accurately recorded. The enumerators also assisted the punong barangays in understanding the items. After a week, the enumerators returned to the BNSs and punong barangays to retrieve the questionnaires. During the retrieval meetings, unstructured face-to-face interviews were conducted with the punong barangays. The supervisor responded to the questionnaire on her own time. A separate face-to-face interview was also conducted with the supervisor.

After a week, the enumerators personally returned to the barangays to collect the completed questionnaires and conduct. The researcher used unstructured face-to-face interviews to enrich the study's findings.

Using the validated Document Analysis Guide, the researcher systematically examined quarterly and accomplishment reports with photo documentation submitted by the BNSs to their supervisor for the calendar year 2025 over a period of at least two weeks, conducted at a time most convenient for the researcher.

After the data tabulation and initial analysis of results, the researcher deemed it necessary to conduct follow-up interviews with the supervisor of the BNSs and selected BNSs themselves to enrich and clarify the study findings.

Statistical treatment of data

The frequency and percentage were used to describe the demographic profile of the BNSs. The mean was used to describe, analyze, and interpret the extent of competencies possessed by the BNSs and the extent of values they demonstrated.

An independent-samples t-test was employed to determine whether the competencies possessed and the values demonstrated by BNSs differed significantly between the two groups (BNSs and punong barangay). The significance level of 0.05 was used to interpret the data.

Data obtained through document analysis were coded and systematically analyzed to highlight patterns and trends across the documents in relation to the study variables. These data were compared with the questionnaire responses and interview results, thereby achieving triangulation.

The mean was used to analyze and interpret data on the validity of the Competency Building and Values Development Plan.

Ethical considerations

Ethical principles were carefully observed throughout this study to ensure the protection of the rights and dignity of all participants. The researcher, in collaboration with enumerators and participants, strictly followed established

national and institutional ethical guidelines, ensuring that every stage of the research—from recruitment to data collection and reporting—upheld the highest standards of integrity, confidentiality, and participant autonomy.

Data presentation and analysis

SoP 1: What is the demographic profile of BNSs in Laoag City, as to sex, age, educational attainment, and length of service?

The data in Table 1 show a workforce that is overwhelmingly female, with females comprising 97.50 percent of the respondents, while males account for only 2.50 percent. The finding aligns with data from the Philippine Statistics Authority’s 2020 Census of Population and Housing, which showed that Laoag City had slightly more females than males in its population (PSA, 2020). Among the BNSs, however, the number of female BNSs (78) is overwhelmingly a lot more than the number of males (2).

In terms of age, 47 percent of BNSs in Laoag City fall within the midlife age group of 40-49 years, followed by those aged 50-59 years at 25 percent. Only a small proportion, 12.50 percent, belongs to the younger age groups, with 12.50 percent aged 20-29 years and 2.50 percent aged 30-39 years. In the midlife years (40-49 years), 47.50% of the BNSs fall into this bracket, suggesting they possess the maturity, experience, and stability needed to manage community health responsibilities effectively. They are likely to have established social and family networks, making them more available to commit to the program, and their prior education and work experience enable them to handle both the technical and interpersonal aspects of nutrition work.

Sixty-five percent of BNSs in Laoag City are college graduates, followed by those with vocational or technical education (21.25%) and high school graduates (13.75%), with none having only elementary-level education.

This finding suggests that BNSs with relatively high levels of formal education may be better equipped to perform technical tasks, such as documentation, reporting, and coordination with health professionals.

Based on the data in Table 1, 68.75% of BNSs in Laoag City have served from zero to five years, followed by those with six to ten years of service (18.75%), while only a small proportion have accumulated more than a decade of experience. This distribution indicates that most BNSs are relatively new in their roles, with only a few having served as long-term program implementers.

Table 1. Demographic profile of barangay nutrition scholars in Laoag City

Indicators of Demographic Profile	Barangay Nutrition Scholars	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	2	2.50
Female	78	97.50
Age^b		
20-29 (Early adulthood)	2	2.50
30-39 (Early mid-adulthood)	10	12.50
40-49 (Midlife)	38	47.50
50-59 (Late midlife)	20	25.00
60-69 (Young-old)	10	12.50
Educational Attainment		

Elementary graduate	0	0.00
High school graduate	11	13.75
Vocational/Technical graduate	17	21.25
College graduate	52	65.00
Length of Service (years)		
0-5	55	68.75
6-10	15	18.75
11-15	4	5.00
16-20	3	3.75
21-25	3	3.75

Source of data: Nicolas (2026), ^a N=80 ^b Gallahue et al. (2013)

SoP 2: To what extent do the following BNSs possess the competencies along the following domains: a) knowledge on nutrition, b) technical and functional skills, c) monitoring and documentation, and d) planning and resource mobilization?

Table 2 presents the mean ratings for the five competency indicators of BNSs as perceived by the BNSs themselves, their supervisors, and the punong barangays.

The data reveal an overall grand mean of 4.68, interpreted as *very highly competent* (VHC). All five indicators were rated descriptively at the VHC level, indicating consistently strong performance across competency domains.

The consistently very high ratings across respondent groups in Laoag City suggest the presence of strong local training structures and supportive supervision mechanisms. This highlights the importance and effectiveness of competency-based training for sustained high performance. However, the very high composite means across all competency indicators need to be sustained through a competency-building program. UNICEF Philippines (2024), Salalima (2025), NNC (2023), WHO (2018), and DOH (2022) all recommend that knowledge updating and data management be continuously reinforced.

Table 2. Competencies of barangay nutrition scholars

Indicators of Competencies	Barangay Scholars	Nutrition Supervisor	Punong Barangays	Mean of Means
A. Knowledge of nutrition	4.51 VHC	5.00 VHC	4.45 HC	4.65 VHC
B. Technical and functional skills	4.65 VHC	5.00 VHC	4.64 VHC	4.76 VHC
C. Monitoring and documentation	4.74 VHC	4.40 HC	4.73 VHC	4.62 VHC
D. Planning and resource mobilization	4.74 VHC	4.60 VHC	4.73 VHC	4.69 VHC
Grand Mean	4.66 VHC	4.75 VHC	4.63 VHC	4.68 VHC

Source of data: Nicolas (2026), ^a Taburnal (2017), and Alaba et al. (2017)

Legend:

Ranges of Means **Descriptive Interpretations (DI)**

4.51-5.00	Very highly competent (VHC)
3.51-4.50	Highly competent (HC)
2.51-3.50	Moderately competent (MC)
1.51-2.50	Slightly competent (SC)
1.00-1.50	Not competent (NC)

SoP 3: To what extent do the BNSs demonstrate the values of: a) integrity and accountability, b) compassion and commitment, c) equity and fairness, and d) efficiency and excellence in service?

The results in Table 3 indicate that BNSs in Laoag City consistently exhibit very high values across all measured domains, with grand mean scores ranging from 4.69 to 4.91. *Equity and fairness* received the highest overall rating (4.91 VHD), followed by *integrity and accountability* (4.89 VHD), *compassion and commitment* (4.88 VHD), and *efficiency and excellence in service* (4.69 VHD). These findings suggest that BNSs not only uphold technical competence but also integrity and accountability, compassion and commitment, and equity and fairness. These behaviors reflect the internalization of values as guiding principles, consistent with the theoretical expectation that values drive ethical and effective professional conduct.

Table 3. Values of barangay nutrition scholars

Indicators of Values ^a	Barangay Nutrition Supervisor Scholars	Punong Barangays	Mean of Means
A. Integrity and accountability	4.84 VHD	5.00 VHD	4.83 VHD 4.89 VHD
B. Compassion and commitment	4.82 VHD	5.00 VHD	4.81 VHD 4.88 VHD
C. Equity and fairness	4.87 VHD	5.00 VHD	4.87 VHD 4.91 VHD
D. Efficiency and excellence in service	4.79 VHD	4.50 HD	4.78 VHD 4.69 VHD
Grand Mean	4.83 VHD	4.88 VHD	4.82 VHD 4.84 VHD

Source of data: Nicolas (2026), Taburnal (2017), and Alaba et al. (2017)

Legend:

Ranges of Means	Descriptive Interpretations (DI)
4.51-5.00	Very highly demonstrated (VHD)
3.51-4.50	Highly demonstrated (HD)
2.51-3.50	Moderately demonstrated (MD)
1.51-2.50	Slightly demonstrated (SD)
1.00-1.50	Not demonstrated (ND)

SoP 4: Is there a difference between the perceptions of the BNSs and punong barangays on: a) the extent to which BNSs possess their competencies, and b) the extent to which values are demonstrated by the BNSs?

The results showed no significant difference in competencies [$t(158) = 0.423, p = 0.673$], indicating that the extent of competencies did not differ significantly between the groups. Similarly, the extent of values showed no significant difference [$t(158) = 0.227, p = 0.821$], as the computed p-value exceeded the 0.05 level of significance.

The non-significant p-values indicate that the differences in mean perceptions between BNSs and punong barangays are statistically negligible. This suggests that both groups hold similar views on the extent of BNSs' competencies and values. In practical terms, this means the BNSs' self-ratings largely align with the ratings they receive from punong barangays.

This means that the BNSs' punong barangays recognize the competencies and values of BNSs as observable and effectively applied in practice. This also suggests that the foundational competencies (the basic skills required for the job) are clearly defined and consistently demonstrated. Because these competencies are observable—such as conducting *Operation Timbang* or filling out health logs—there is a perceptual alignment between the BNS (the performer and self-rater) and the punong barangay (the observer and external rater). Both groups of respondents recognize that the BNSs have met the essential technical benchmarks required by the NNC.

Table 4. Difference in perceptions on competencies and values of barangay nutrition scholars

Variable	t	df	p
Competencies ^a	0.423 ^{ns}	158	0.673
Values ^a	0.227 ^{ns}	158	0.821

ns – Not significant when $p > 0.05$

* Significant when $p \leq 0.05$

Source of data: SPSS and Nicolas (2026), *Taburnal (2017)*, and *Alaba et al. (2017)*

SoP 5: What competency-building and values development plan for BNSs may be developed based on their existing competencies and values?

The proposed plan is structured around two main dimensions: 1) Competency Building and 2) Values Development. Its scope covers all active BNSs in Laoag City, targeting both new and experienced members of the workforce. While the plan is comprehensive, it is context-specific to Laoag City and may require adaptation for other geographic or organizational settings.

The purpose of this development plan, formulated as an output of the study, is to sustain and further strengthen the capacity of BNSs in Laoag City to deliver efficient, ethical, and high-quality community nutrition services, taking into account their demographic profile, competencies, and values.

By integrating the study findings, the plan ensures that both competencies and values are strengthened and operationalized in daily practice.

Expected outcomes of this plan include: 1) Improved technical proficiency – enhancing the ability of BNSs to plan, execute, and monitor community nutrition programs effectively; 2) Enhanced decision-making and planning abilities – enabling BNSs to prioritize interventions and allocate resources efficiently, reflecting both competency and ethical judgment; 3) Consistent adherence to ethical standards – reinforcing values such as integrity, fairness, and compassion to maintain equitable and trustworthy service delivery; and 4) Heightened community engagement and trust – ensuring that services are responsive to the needs of all households, including those in disadvantaged or remote areas.

SoP 6: How valid is the competency building and values development plan for BNSs in Laoag City?

The results in Table 5 reveal a grand mean of 4.51, interpreted as *very highly valid* (VHV), indicating that the proposed plan is generally sound, well-structured, and highly acceptable for implementation.

Among the indicators, *Objectives* and *Implementation Strategy* both obtained the highest mean rating of 4.55 (VHV). This suggests that the goals of the development plan are clearly defined, aligned with beneficiary needs, and realistically achievable.

The *Content and Activities* component received a mean rating of 4.45 (HV). Although still at a high level of validity, this slightly lower rating may indicate minor areas for refinement, such as improving activity sequencing, enhancing contextual relevance, or strengthening learner engagement strategies.

Similarly, *Monitoring and Evaluation* and *Overall Acceptability* both garnered a mean of 4.50 (*Highly Valid*). These findings demonstrate that the mechanisms for tracking progress, assessing outcomes, and ensuring accountability are appropriate and functional.

Table 5. Validity of the proposed research-based competency building and values development plan

Indicators of Validity	Validators ^a Mean and Descriptive Interpretation
A. Objectives ^b	4.55 (Very highly valid)
B. Content and Activities ^c	4.45 (Highly valid)
C. Implementation Strategy ^d	4.55 (Very highly valid)
D. Monitoring and Evaluation ^e	4.50 (Highly valid)
E. Overall Acceptability ^f	4.50 (Highly valid)
Grand Mean	4.51 (Very highly valid)

Source of data: Nicolas (2026)

^a N=5

^b Garcia et al. (2023), NNC (2023), United Nations (2015) et Whitaker et al. (2025)

^c Abadejos y Almerino (2025), Siri et al. (2025), UNICEF (2024), Whitaker et al. (2025)

^d DBM (2022)

^e Bhandari (2020), Marasigan (2025), and UNICEF (2024)

^f Abadejos and Almerino (2025), Aquino et al. (2023), ASEAN Villages Network (2023), Marasigan (2025), Linstone (1975), National Nutrition Council (2023), and Schwartz (1992, 1994)

Discussion

The findings on sex distribution illustrate that while BNS recruitment is formally sex-neutral, the higher number of female BNSs can be partly attributed to cultural associations of women with caregiving, empathy, and attentiveness to health and nutrition. The consensus among punong barangays that males and females are equally respected reflects an institutional commitment to fairness and capability-based assessment, yet individual preferences and societal norms continue to shape sex representation.

The respondents' comments in interviews show that BNSs aged 40-49 have valuable experience, understanding, and a sense of responsibility, which enhance their ability to implement nutrition programs effectively. Their

maturity and life experience also appear to foster strong support and cooperation with barangay leadership. The responses of the young BNSs indicate a high level of self-awareness and willingness to learn. They illustrate a conscientious approach to responsibility despite their limited experience.

The study findings highlight the perceived importance of formal education, particularly college-level attainment, in the performance of BNSs. A college graduate possesses broader knowledge and skills that he/she can use to improve nutrition programs in the barangay.

The high proportion of new BNSs may be due to the voluntary nature of their work, as well as to career changes, family responsibilities, and other personal considerations that may prompt them to seek better-paying jobs. Despite their limited tenure, however, the dedication of these newer BNSs is highly valued. Their supervisor said that most of them have demonstrated motivation, a willingness to serve, and personal responsibility, all of which are critical to sustaining the program's effectiveness. Long-serving BNSs have been observed to have more knowledge of processes and tasks compared to newly appointed BNSs.

In terms of knowledge on nutrition, the findings show that despite 68.75 percent of BNSs having relatively short lengths of service, with 68.75% serving only from zero to five years, they exhibit strong knowledge on nutrition. This suggests that the DOH-sponsored training programs they all underwent equipped the BNSs with functional competencies, despite limited field experience. This also shows high technical knowledge, a critical determinant of BNS competency, enabling them to translate theoretical principles into practical interventions. These competencies enable them to deliver nutrition services effectively at the barangay level. The very high mean ratings by the three groups along *technical and functional skills* suggest a shared recognition of BNSs' competence in specific functional tasks, highlighting consistency between self-assessment and community leadership evaluation. The BNSs not only perceive themselves as capable in these areas, which is confirmed by their supervisor and the punong barangays. Despite the challenges encountered in *monitoring and documentation*, the BNSs consistently demonstrate functional competence in completing their tasks. These experiences demonstrate that while BNSs are competent in understanding and executing their documentation responsibilities, enhancing their technical skills, access to digital tools, and time management strategies could further strengthen the efficiency and reliability of monitoring and documentation practices. The study findings on *planning and resource mobilization* suggest that the BNSs have developed the capacity to effectively translate planning frameworks into actionable interventions and to leverage successful utilization of available community and institutional resources. The BNSs are proficient in planning nutrition activities, identifying resources and partners, prioritizing households, and engaging in community mobilization; they support local studies. They can identify resources efficiently and target interventions to households most in need.

These findings indicate that the BNSs demonstrate a strong sense of internalized ethical standards and self-regulation. They are perceived to uphold integrity even without external monitoring. They consistently observe governance-related ethical practices. These are values observed in the BNSs by the supervisor and punong barangays align with the findings of De la Cruz and Uy (2021) and Ramirez et al. (2023) that compassionate service in community nutrition work, shown in willingness to go beyond the minimum, which reflect a high level of professional commitment, resilience, and responsiveness, are essential qualities for effective implementation of community nutrition programs. The study also indicates a strong commitment to impartial service, which suggests that equity and fairness are not only a professional obligation but also a deeply internalized value guided by personal ethics. The BNSs also actively allocate time and resources to marginalized households and maintain impartiality when addressing competing needs, thereby promoting community trust and strengthening program legitimacy. This is reflected in the reports they submitted to their supervisor. The findings of this study on

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efficiency and excellence in service indicate that BNSs in Laoag City consistently demonstrate high levels of professional competence, attention to quality, and operational effectiveness in carrying out their responsibilities.

The findings that the BNSs consistently translate clearly defined knowledge and functional skills—such as planning, monitoring, documentation, and technical tasks—into effective, observable performance support the Competency Theory (Boyatzis, 1982). The BNSs’ high self-assessments are corroborated by their supervisors’ and the punong barangays’ assessments.

Likewise supported are the principles of Schwartz’s (1994) Values Theory, as evidenced by consistent observations across respondent groups that BNSs internalize and operationalize ethical principles, including integrity, fairness, compassion, and commitment, in their professional behavior and decision-making. These values are observable, acknowledged, and consistently applied in community service.

This study recommends that the City Government of Laoag implement a research-based Competency-Building and Values-Development Plan for Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs) in coordination with partner agencies. It emphasizes continuous professional development through training, mentoring, and values formation, with experienced BNSs serving as role models. Supervisors and local leaders should provide coaching, feedback, and support to strengthen competencies, documentation, and accountability. Recognition programs, such as an “Outstanding BNS” award, are encouraged to motivate excellence. Partner agencies, including the National Nutrition Council, should deliver standardized training and ensure program sustainability. Community participation and collaboration are essential, alongside the replication of the framework in other areas. Policymakers should ensure that competency and values frameworks are measurable and integrated into programs, while future research should examine their impact, explore digital tools, and assess long-term outcomes across different LGUs.

Conclusion

This study assessed the demographic profile, competencies, and values of BNSs in Laoag City to inform the development of a research-based competency-building and values-development plan.

The BNS workforce in Laoag City is predominantly female, mostly middle-aged, college graduates, and new to the BNS program. Nevertheless, they consistently demonstrated very high competencies across all domains of nutrition knowledge, technical and functional skills, monitoring and documentation, and planning and resource mobilization.

Similarly, the BNSs demonstrated very high levels of values across all measured domains. Equity and fairness received the highest rating, followed by integrity and accountability, compassion and commitment, and efficiency and excellence in service.

The independent-samples t-test revealed that the study accepted the null hypothesis – There is no significant difference in perceptions of the BNSs and the punong barangays on the BNSs’ competencies and values. This indicated a shared recognition and consensus among the respondent groups regarding the demonstration of competencies and possession of the BNSs.

Based on the findings, a Research-based Competency Building and Values Development Plan for Barangay Nutrition Scholars in Laoag City was proposed, providing a structured, research-based framework that addresses both technical competencies and ethical values to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of nutrition

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service delivery. The plan was rated as very highly valid, theoretically grounded, and feasible, as it aligns with the study's findings and ensures systematic reinforcement of skills and values across all BNSs.

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