

Dangal as Experienced by Barangay Workers in the Context of the Pandemic

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Abstract

This work investigated the *dangal* (dignity) of barangay workers amid the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines. The study aimed to know what is *dangal* for barangay workers during the pandemic, what factors enhanced and limited their *dangal*, and how can their *dangal* be promoted. This research is significant due to lack of studies about the personnel serving in barangays - the smallest local government unit in the country. Barangay officials, employees, and volunteers were interviewed, and their responses were evaluated based on themes. Analysis of data revealed that barangay workers had to face several risks and challenges amid their longing to fulfill their duties and responsibilities as public servants. They employed various coping mechanisms although such were insufficient to adequately promote their dignity. *Dangal* for barangay workers has external and internal domains. The external domain is comprised of their physiological needs and social identity. In the internal domain, *dangal* is affected by self-fulfillment in performing duties and responsibilities, especially through *pakikipagkapwa* or the provision of services and assistance to community members. To promote the barangay worker's *dangal*; national, provincial, city, and municipal policies must be implemented. For the external domain, remuneration, compensation, benefits, and recognition must be provided. For the internal domain, it is critical that they thrive in an environment that discourages corruption and support actions that reflect honor, excellence, and integrity.

Keywords: Dangal, Dignity, Barangay, Barangay Workers, COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

There is a lack of literature on the promoters and barriers of positive *dangal* (dignity) experiences based on the perspective of barangay workers at the time the COVID-19 pandemic affected the Philippines. *Dangal* refers to the innate attribute which enables human beings to "shine despite the grime" (Enriquez 1992, 46). For this research, barangay workers

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refer to the officials, employees, and volunteers who lead the programs and projects within the jurisdiction of the barangay.

The barangay was the earliest known form of government in the Philippines. Dating back to pre-Hispanic times, the term barangay referred to the sailboat that was used for trading by early settlers from Indonesia and Borneo (Britannica 2015). The same term was also used to refer to communities that settled on the nearby shores where trade took place. A barangay usually consisted of thirty to a hundred families. On December 31, 1972, through Presidential Decree No. 86, citizen assemblies or barangays were created. These served as administrative arms by which government action was set to take place through citizen participation.

At present, the barangay retains its form as the smallest formal unit of government. It is the political organization that is closest to the citizens and most visible in the community. As stated in Republic Act No. 7160, An Act Providing for a Local Government Code of 1991, the role of the barangay is to "serve as primary planning and implementing unit of government policies, plans, programs, projects and activities in the community, and as forum wherein the collective views of the people may be expressed, crystallized and considered, and where disputes may be amicably settled". The elected barangay officials are composed of the punong barangay (chairperson) and seven members of the sangguniang barangay (council). They are elected into office with the sangguniang kabataan (youth council) chairman. On the other hand, a barangay secretary and a barangay treasurer are appointed by the Punong Barangay. Currently, there are 42,046 barangays throughout the islands of the Philippines.

This study employs Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino Psychology) as its epistemology and dangal (dignity) - kapwa (fellow human being) as its ontological lens. Sikolohiyang Pilipino was a response to the demand to interpret the Filipinos' social behavior based on the Filipino perspective (Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino: Theory, Methods, and Applications*, 2022). Enriquez (1992), in the seminal paper in Sikolohiyang Pilipino, argued that values emanate from the central value called kapwa, practiced through pakikipagkapwa. The different behavioral exchanges under the umbrella of pakikipagkapwa can be categorized as either outsider (ibang-tao) or one-of-us (hindi ibang-tao) (Enriquez 1992). The theory of kapwa by Enriquez denotes karangalan or dignity as a societal value (Enriquez 1994). According to Lavides (2020), kapwa and dangal both assume the equal status of all human beings and the two concepts were interconnected since dangal was a prerequisite to kapwa. She argued that

it is the acknowledgement of the presence of dangal in human beings which sets the condition that every human being be regarded with pakikipagkapwa.

There is a lack of studies on the concept of dangal among barangay workers especially the factors which serve as enablers and obstacles of constructive dangal experiences. Lavides (2020) provided a dangal framework according to children's perspectives. Based on the findings of her research, dangal as perceived by the biracial child participants had external and internal domains. The outer domain pertains to children's experience of their physical environment and is promoted through functionality. The inner domain refers to the psychological aspects of their experiences and is upheld through pakikipagkapwa. Considering the lack of dangal framework based on adults' perspective, addressing this gap is one of the goals of this study.

The objective of this paper is to investigate the concept of dangal for those working in barangay governments at the time of the pandemic and to identify the factors which restricted and upheld their dignity. This study aims to answer these research questions:

1. What is dangal for barangay workers during the pandemic?
2. What factors enhanced and limited their dangal?
3. How can the dangal of barangay workers be promoted?

The study of dangal in the context of public service is important to clarify the principles involved in serving the government and citizens. The promotion of dangal as a national policy is emphasized in Article Two, section 11 of the Philippines' 1987 Constitution which declares that "the State values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights". Dignity is crucial as it is the basis for being accorded with human rights (Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*, 2023). Accordingly, the Philippines was the initial party that approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (Britannica 2024).

This work presents barangay workers' understanding of the notion of dangal especially in performing their duties for the community. This study is a significant contribution to the fields of governance and public administration as well as to the study of Filipino Psychology and social science.

LITERATURE REVIEW

***Dangal* as a Major Construct**

"Dignity" is the nearest English translation for the Filipino/Tagalog notion of *dangal* which is synonymous with honor, worthiness, and self-respect. *Karangalan* is a noun derivative of *dangal* which means honor and esteem. According to Enriquez (1992), *karangalan* has both internal and external dimensions embodied by *dangal* and *puri*. *Puri* comprises the external dimension and is exhibited through the giving of approval or commendation (e.g., someone granting dignity to someone). *Papuri* means according compliment or praise to someone which may come in the form of applause, verbal compliments, or even an award. *Puri* may also mean "purity" or "virginity" (e.g., not having engaged in a sexual contact). While *puri* is external, *dangal* constitutes the internal dimension or "honor from within." *Dangal* is inherent to a person and may be sourced from one's triumphs, accomplishments, respect by others, and self-respect. Hence, rape victims' *puri* might have been taken away but not necessarily their *dangal*. Such inherent *dangal* gives ordinary Filipinos the self-confidence and the power within themselves to deal with the influential members of society self-assuredly and steadfastly (Enriquez 1992).

Salazar (in Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000, 57) suggests that the "internality-externality component" of the Filipino personality (e.g., as shown in *dangal* and *puri*), may not be exclusive to the Filipinos but it is crucial to be aware of the presence of duality (e.g., internal-external) of many Filipino concepts.

Dangal, when withheld, may result in anger, regrets, and vindictiveness (Tabbada 2005) while a show of embarrassment or "*hiya* may be a manifestation of *dangal*" (48) since an eroding honor, whether due to one's fault or other people's doing, paves the way for individuals to experience shame.

Enriquez (1992) surmised that Filipinos give importance to protecting their *dangal*. As such, those Filipinos who would risk their *dangal* for a certain cause are likewise risking their personhood or *pagkatao*; thus, they would exert all possible means to succeed.

Based on the research of Palmer and Brown (1998), tarnished *dangal* can motivate individuals to be revengeful or to decide to end their lives. Furthermore, the ethnographic research on the experience of urban slum dwellers in Metro Manila argued that the phrase

'You're a beast' ("*Hayop ka*") was the verbal retaliation used against those who disrespect one's *dangal* or treat them like a beast (*hayop*) (Kusaka 2017, 275).

Dangal is a determinant of status and social acceptance (Enriquez 2012). In some circumstances, protecting one's dignity entails practicing values even if it is contrary to one's belief. For example, some mature women may be pressured to get married at a certain age and defy their personal choice to raise a family/bear children, all for the social pressure and the fear of being teased as "*matandang dalaga*" (old maid).

Dangal is of extreme importance that groups could resort to uprising if such is the sole means to rebuild their stained dignity. It is for this reason that the Filipinos fought the Western colonizers who treated them like lowly beings and degraded their dignity (Tabbada 2005).

While *dangal* is integral in all people, it can still be further developed. Individuals' perception of themselves or their self-dignity affect their *dangal* (Tabbada 2005) together with the group's values system.

He further suggests that *dangal* can be promoted and maintained through display of prosocial behaviors (e.g., being considerate, supportive, affectionate, empathetic, and tolerant). Behaviors associated with *pakikipagkapwa* or treating others as *kapwa* promote the "the dignity and being of others" (Tabada 2005, 106).

Thus, granting awards or exercising *pagpaparangal* molds *dangal* towards its best shape. For example, during *parangal* or "rites of social approval" (Enriquez 1992, 46), *dangal* in others is promoted (Lavides 2020).

While *dangal* may be an intrinsic worth, it may also be violated. Tabbada (2005) pointed out that the onerous contradiction of *pagpaparangal* is *paglalapastangan*. To commit *paglalapastangan* is to commit actions characterized by rudeness or discourtesy.

Lavides (2020) explained that *dangal* as ontological lens in research implies that participants must be regarded with *pakikipagkapwa*. She added that the use of *dangal* to investigate cases that concern human beings' dignity is possible at the micro as well as macro level.

Barangay Workers as Frontliners During the Pandemic

On 30 January 2020, the Department of Health confirmed the first case of novel coronavirus in the Philippines. Less than two months later, a State of Public Health Emergency

was declared nationwide to curb the threat of COVID-19 with travel restrictions, mandatory testing, and quarantine requirements. The role of the barangay as a subnational government unit has been crucial in trickling down guidelines through the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases as well as enforcing measures (such as restriction of mobility) to mitigate the spread of the infection. This changed the nature of the work of barangay workers to include enforcing different levels of public health protocols and distribution of relief from economic lockdowns and quarantine measures in terms of cash and goods. In other words, the barangay workers have been catapulted into a landscape of shifting protocols, conflicting guidelines, and confusing directives. Amid the additional workload, they provided essential services through direct interaction with their constituents. Hence, they faced various risks and challenges while fulfilling their duties and responsibilities to their constituents.

However, the financial compensation and benefits do not appear to be commensurate with the imminent threat to their health and safety. These barangay workers receive no salary but only a minimal honorarium (Department of Budget and Management 2012). They are not qualified to receive COVID-19 hazard pay nor do they enjoy basic employment benefits such as PAG-IBIG, PhilHealth or GSIS despite putting their lives on the line daily to deliver food, social amelioration benefits, COVID-19 transport to hospitals, as well as vaccinations and boosters to their communities (H.R. 8349, 116th Cong. (2020)).

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the existing systemic weaknesses in protecting the life and health of all workers. Moreover, the International Labor Organization (ILO) defines “frontline workers” as those in healthcare and those categorized as “key workers” such as seafarers and other transport workers, rural workers, food supply workers or law enforcement workers (ILO 2020, 15). This definition excludes the group of workers in barangays.

The *Bayanihan to Recover to Heal as One Act 2020* (RA 11494) also precludes barangay workers as frontliners from receiving benefits, and only covers public and private healthcare workers, students, teachers, indigents, SMSEs and others. Even the DBM Joint Circular No. 1, s. 2020 effectively ignored the barangay workers as frontliners when it specified who is qualified to receive the COVID-19 Active Hazard Duty Pay with its definition of Human Resources for Health (HRH) as those “assigned in hospitals, laboratories, or medical and quarantine facilities.” In a study on the Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team (BPAT) of selected

barangays in Ozamiz City, Laroza and colleagues (2022) found that the BPAT received a small honorarium of at least four thousand pesos per month only.

These barangay frontline workers are unsung heroes who forge on beyond the call of duty despite constantly being overlooked, overworked, and underpaid. Just compensation and fair wages provide human dignity and respect. On the other hand, the barangay workers' low pay equates to their low self-esteem, self-value, and self-worth or low *dangal*. Denying the barangay frontline workers their right to compensation and benefits commensurate to the public health risks and occupational hazards that they constantly hurdle is a deplorable situation that dehumanizes, degrades, and dishonors them.

Aside from the lack of financial incentives, barangay workers had to grapple with social, political, and economic challenges amid the pandemic (Chakas, Lopez, Galangco, et al. 2021). Political challenges were the lack of clear and sustained directives from the national government or inconsistencies in the orders of the different higher offices. Examples of economic challenges were difficulties in mobilizing resources within the barangay and the municipal levels for survival, which is likely connected to another identified challenge – the lack of clear guidelines by the national government in the disbursement of funds. Under social challenges were the public's non-compliance to the safeguards as well as negative perceptions of barangay officials and workers. In another study, barangay frontliners reported encountering difficulties in enforcing protocols, especially during the early days of the pandemic (Ayeo-eo, Paet, and Repoyo 2022). People in the community demonstrated difficult behaviors such as *pagsusungit* (obstinate), *pagiging pasaway* (impunity) that range from unfriendly to hostile responses such as sulking, badmouthing, and even harassment.

Despite the different constraints, barangay workers cite factors intrinsic to the work that they do as motivators. Cruz and colleagues (2021) identified "call of duty" as the reason given by their barangay *tanod* (watchman) participants for acceptance of their role during the pandemic. Their dedication and commitment enabled them to manage the fear of getting infected with the virus as well as handle the exhaustion with the added duties (e.g., manning checkpoints for temperature checking) and the somewhat altered tasks from their usual (e.g., community disinfecting instead of morning sweepings). Chakas et al. (2021) found that their participants took care of meal and transportation expenses out-of-pocket as they went around their respective communities.

This paper examines the importance of *dangal* as experienced by barangay workers as frontliners during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they are the touchpoints within their immediate communities. Their personal stories give insights into how they have focused on providing exemplary service to fulfill their calling despite the odds.

RESEARCH METHODS

The term “barangay workers” was used to refer to all barangay personnel or those who were elected and appointed as well as those who were serving on a voluntary basis. Ten barangay workers were recruited to participate in this research. Among the ten participants, five were male and another five were female. All of them were from Luzon, with seven from Metro Manila and three from Central Luzon. Out of the ten participants, three were elected barangay officials, five were appointees, and two were barangay volunteers.

Semi-structured interview was the method used in data collection and informed consent was solicited before each interview. Majority of the participants were interviewed online while some were engaged via face-to-face interviews with observance of required health protocols. The participants were asked to describe their experience as barangay workers during the pandemic, including the challenges they encountered and the measures they adopted to address those. There were also questions about their views and attitudes towards their roles as barangay workers amid the pandemic. The participants were also requested to share their understanding, perception, and experience of *dangal* concerning their jobs in their barangays, as well as their suggestions on how the government could assist them. The interview data were transcribed and analyzed using the thematic method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Pandemic’s Implications on the Dangal of Barangay Workers

In the succeeding paragraphs, we provide the effect of changes in the nature of jobs of barangay workers, the multi-faceted challenges that they hurdled, and the coping mechanisms that they employed. Aside from describing their experience, the implications on barangay workers’ *dangal* of such changes, challenges, and coping mechanisms are presented.

The Risks and Stresses Brought by the Pandemic Degraded the Barangay Workers' Dangal

The barangay workers described the nature of their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic as risky and stressful. Fulfilling their duties and responsibilities is deemed to be risky when the worker may be exposed to danger or infection, that may lead to death. In the beginning of the pandemic, there were no medicines nor vaccines that could protect them from COVID-19. Early cases in the ICU meant mechanical ventilation or death. The barangay workers expressed fear of getting infected themselves, fear of bringing the virus home and infecting family and loved ones, and fear of dying. A barangay treasurer confided, "Naririnig lang natin fatal siya, pag nahawa ka puwede ka mamatay, so personally siyempre natakot ako." [We have heard that it is fatal, if you contract it, you could die, so personally, of course, I was afraid.]. A kagawad (councilor) confided that the demands of his job forced him to overcome his fear of infection. He also reported the severe COVID-19 symptoms that he and his wife endured, with the latter almost coming close to death. The fear of infecting family and loved ones from potential work-related exposure is top of mind for an executive assistant who shared, "Hindi ka muna papasok ng bahay. Kasi iniisip mo di yung sarili, iniisip mo yung dadatnan mo. Ano ba yung dala mo mula doon sa trabaho?" [You don't enter the home immediately because you are not just thinking of yourself, but of those whom you will find at home. What if you are carrying the virus from work?]

On top of the stress from acquiring or passing on the disease, the state of personal finances has always been a major stressor for workers, most especially barangay workers who have been surviving on meager compensation. One kagawad bravely declares, "Below minimum wage pa silang mga personnel. Yung mga BPSO's na yan, yung mga eco-aid na yan, yung iba diyan ilang years na sa barangay, minimum wage lang ang sweldo." [The personnel get below minimum wage. The BSPOs and eco-aid, some have been serving in the barangay for many years, yet they only receive minimum wage.].

The financial stress is compounded by the fact that there is a marked increase in workload during the pandemic. Barangay workers are tasked with operationalizing the national COVID-19 policies for rollout in the communities. One interviewee quipped that although the usual work in the barangay has disappeared, her work has doubled when COVID-19 happened. Another opined that during the pandemic, his work has piled up and

that his workload has increased. An administrative clerk clarified, “Di maiiwan ang trabaho sa pagmonitor sa mga tao sa barangay. Minsan nagkakapatong yung ayuda then yung relief nung bumagyo.” [You need to continuously monitor the people in the barangay. Sometimes, the work piles up on each other such as the distribution of dole-outs and relief goods when there is a typhoon.]

The stress from the workload during the pandemic includes the enforcement of the protocols, which can be either health- or work-related. Two separate barangay secretaries shared their frustrating experiences dealing with the members of their community. One described the difficulty in convincing people who try to circumvent the health protocols, “Yung pagpapaliwanag sa tao na mga kini-kwest'yon nila tungkol sa protocol. Na kung minsan eh gusto nilang pangatwiranan yung gusto nilang kontrahin. Yung pinapaliwanag nilang yun po ang regulasyon eh. Yun po ang ilinabas ng IATF eh.” [We need to explain to people who question the protocol because they don't want to follow them. We explain that it is the regulation. That is what IATF released.]. Meanwhile, another barangay secretary expressed that there were some challenges in explaining work memos because they were released in English. He explained that their barangay is situated in the mountains, where there are many illiterate residents.

Definitely one of the biggest challenges confronting the barangay workers would be the overwhelming coordination work with hospitals, Local Government Units (LGUs), or the National Government in operationalizing the roll-out of national COVID-19 policies. A barangay volunteer affirmed that coordinating between the barangay and area hospitals was a major problem.

However, despite all the risks and stress, the participants expressed that their job was fulfilling because they felt a sense of accomplishment through selfless service. They were fully dedicated and committed to their jobs because they saw themselves as serving a higher purpose. One of the kagawad participants reveals, “Yung sense of purpose na kailangan mag-serve, not for anything pero you're helping other people because that's how you're made by God. You have to help other people.” [The sense of purpose that you have to serve, not for anything but you're helping other people, because that's how you're made by God. You have to help other people.].

Barangay workers believe that they are tasked with an important mission that has value for their community. Since their jobs provide them with a sense of their identity, this translates to their self-value and self-worth. Two participants shared their thoughts, “Mahalaga ang tungkulin ko, mahalaga ang trabaho ko. Mahalaga mag-implement ng programs kahit na pandemic. Continuous pa rin yung pagserve.” [My role is important, my job is important. It is important to implement the programs even during the pandemic. I continue to serve.]. Another participant concludes, “Yan yung magiging resulta ng pagiging public servant mo. Diyan makikita yung kalalabasan ng ginagawa mo, yan yung legacy.” [That’s going to be the result of your work when you enter into public service, that’s your legacy].

Factors that are Associated with Dangal

Self-respect is key to dangal. A barangay secretary used the term “discipline” to refer to one’s ability to keep oneself in check in situations when temptations abound. He said “Kapag wala kang dangal, ibebenta mo ang kaluluwa mo sa konting barya. Ang dangal ay nakasalalay sa kung paano mo minahal ang sarili mo. May integrity ako, respect for myself, at discipline.” [When you do not have honor, you will sell your soul for a few pennies. Honor rests on how you love yourself. I have integrity, self-respect, and discipline.] He pointed out that to not have honor is akin to selling one’s soul. His use of the phrase “sa konting barya” [a few centavos] implies a lopsided transaction where the value of what was sold was much greater than what it was traded for. For him, to engage in dishonorable activities is a result of losing one’s positive regard for the self.

Courage is important to protect one’s dignity since the observance of dangal could entail not joining the bandwagon or having the guts to face the consequences of going against the grain. A barangay kagawad considered dangal as a value that guides her in doing what she believes to be right, even if it goes against popular opinion. A barangay kagawad is voted into position; as such, gaining the favor of the majority of the constituents ensures the continuation of one’s term. However, she does not see herself as beholden to those who voted for her such that she will bend her beliefs to seek their patronage and avoid criticism. In a similar vein, a barangay treasurer stated that dangal is influenced by one’s sense of personal accountability, such that if ever she is found to have done something wrong, she is prepared to face the truth.

The type of leadership at the barangay level is crucial in promoting dangal among barangay workers. A barangay treasurer reported that their barangay chairperson runs a tight ship and makes sure that everyone carries out the mandates of their posts as public servants. Similarly, an executive assistant to the barangay chairperson described how their barangay chairperson led them so that there is dangal in what they do. The strictness of the chairperson dissuades the workers from breaking the rules and engaging in activities that are considered to be illegal or immoral. The urging of the chairperson that they ought to extend services to everyone, regardless of differences in belief and values, made an impact. The chairperson did not just emphasize a sense of duty but also promoted unity.

On the other hand, an administrative clerk found that leadership in her barangay leaves much to be desired since the *padrino* (patronage) system was tolerated by barangay officials. Another barangay worker lamented that politicking persists amid the pandemic.

Access to funds and facilities had an impact on barangay workers' dangal. A concern that was commonly mentioned by the participants was the lack of resources to be mobilized in their lines of work, such that there have been occasions when they had to dip in their allocation of personal resources. For example, a barangay kagawad recounted that sometimes people would visit his home and ask for financial assistance. Knowing the state of resources in the barangay yet not finding the heart to turn away someone who is clearly in need, he would share the meager resources that he had. He reasons that, after all, he is still in a better state compared to others in his barangay during the pandemic.

Aside from the limited resources that could be mobilized, there was the issue of the lack of remuneration and work benefits, especially those connected to healthcare since they were rendered vulnerable in their roles as frontliners. A barangay secretary reported that their dangal was compromised by this: "Minsan may nahihirapan kaya minsan nadedemoralized... yung paghihirap, yung pangangailangan, lumalabas na dapat ayusin, kaya napipilitan po sila lumipat, maghanap ng ibang trabaho." [Sometimes, there are some who find the poor system of compensation and benefits difficult so sometimes they get demoralized. The difficulty, the need, needs to be addressed. That is why they are forced to transfer jobs, and look for another line of work.]

However, many of the participants, while they expressed dissatisfaction with the material rewards, felt that dangal was more like the work that they were doing as public servants. A

barangay tanod shared that the work was more important than the salary: “Di namin inaano yung sahod namin, yung sa honorarium, di namin inaano yun. Ang inaano namin yung trabaho.” [We do not think of the salary or the honorarium. What we think about is the work.] Work is marangal because it is important to society and it is personally meaningful. They believe that the pandemic had elevated the importance of the role of the barangay as a mediator between the national government and people on the ground, which contributed to their sense of pride as a public servant.

In contrast to monetary rewards, social rewards such as positive feedback/praises, recognition, and expressions of appreciation seem to be closer to influencing one’s dangal. Some of the participants’ meanings of dangal had something to do with doing the work well such that they can hold their heads up high. They perceive that they are doing their work well when they are recipients of social rewards from the members of their respective communities. Accordingly, the participants shared frustration about negative feedback that ranged from rude to hostile/offensive that some constituents expressed in person or on social media. One barangay worker complained that it was tough being the brunt of people’s ire, especially during the time that the guidelines from the different national agencies were different and sometimes conflicting.

Coping Mechanisms of Barangay Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic

A theme that emerged as a foremost means of coping was their dedication to their work and duties in the barangay. Because the nature of the crisis centered on health-related concerns, the respondents had to accept the responsibilities as the nearest government unit in the community with resolve. There arose a sense of duty and an opportunity to be visible in the community despite the cries of frustration among their constituents. There were certainly a number of respondents who went out of their comfort zones in order to address the needs of the moment. All of the respondents felt that selflessness is a stance that each of them should take. This is why it was important for them to work in close coordination with the various government agencies, private organizations, and people’s groups. During their interactions with these groups, there was a hovering urgency that everyone felt. This was a time for quick yet careful decision-making. Here, cooperation was another theme that floated from having to work with those outside the barangay.

In the midst of the urgency and the feeling of being obligated to serve the community, the workers often encountered all sorts of reactions from their constituents. During the early part of the pandemic, there was a lot of confusion and panic which caused people to lose their cool and the barangay employees to face the struggles of losing their patience. In these circumstances, there is a high probability that unrest may have led to more aggressive behaviors. On the other hand, they responded by controlling their temper and letting their patience extend as much as they could. In responding to immediate needs that not only pertain to health but ultimately, to survival, it is observed that cooperation can be successfully brought about by imbibing a calm demeanor as well as taking to heart one's sense of duty that goes beyond one's qualms and concerns.

Along the respondents' line of duty rose a sense of self-discovery and more so, a sense of self-fulfillment that strengthened one's motivation to face the struggles of dealing with the sick, the needy and the helpless. As these barangay workers saw that people were being assisted and helped, they expressed their realization about how capable they were in serving people during a burdensome health and economic crisis. If not for the challenges they faced, the extent of their capabilities would have been undiscovered. Consequently, this brought about agency and initiative to continue serving. Some respondents used their creativity and initiative (e.g., tapping into one's resources and network).

Coping with the demands and challenges of a barangay worker during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic was seen as a hurried lesson to be learned and immediately applied. This took a great deal of putting aside worries and anxieties due to personal concerns vis a vis the needs of more people in need. The process of coping initially stemmed from a sense of duty and responsibility to one's sworn oath to serve the community. Then this proceeds to have other people's needs met as a means to draw out patience and emotional control; hence, the term "masaya na mahirap (fun that's hard)." Although these respondents admitted that it was difficult dealing with the circumstances, they still found fulfillment and positive self-discovery. This later on led most of them to pull out resources even from their own chests as well as from their network of friends, non-government organizations, and private groups.

CONCLUSION

The barangay workers' concept of *dangal* (dignity) encompasses both external and internal domains. Externally, *dangal* is supported by meeting their physiological needs, such as through adequate compensation and benefits, and by the importance of their social identity, which hinges on how they are perceived and treated within their community. Internally, *dangal* is influenced by the self-fulfillment they derive from performing their duties, particularly when these duties reflect *pakikipagkapwa* (communal unity) and service to others, and by maintaining their *paninindigan* (moral stance), which involves standing up for what is right, honest, and appropriate. The *dangal* model observed in barangay workers shares similarities with Lavidés' (2020) framework, which also highlights internal and external dimensions, but places greater emphasis on social identity in the external domain and on *paninindigan* in the internal domain. To promote the *dangal* of barangay workers, policies at various government levels should ensure sufficient remuneration, benefits like insurance and scholarships, and public recognition to enhance their social identity. Additionally, addressing administrative challenges and providing resources are essential for enabling barangay workers to fulfill their duties effectively, thereby enhancing their self-fulfillment and maintaining their *paninindigan* in an environment that upholds honor and integrity.

These findings resonate with those of Abelardo et al. (2021, 434) in which Barangay health workers experienced a drastic adjustment in their responsibilities during the pandemic. The lack of resources such as transportation, medicines, and primary healthcare equipment affected the discharge of their healthcare services and with the extra load they carry, an increase in compensation and complete medical healthcare equipment in their respective barangays are desired.

Similarly, in caring work, caregivers fulfill their ethical and moral responsibility by doing good including the courage to preserve dignity and human value through their service (Lindwall and Lohne 2021, 1041).

The Barangay Tanods in the study by Tus (2021) experienced greater exposure to health risks as well as some maltreatment of violators of health protocols. However, they received incentives from the government for their health needs.

The services of the barangay workers are important in the execution of government programs to protect the people of the communities and speed up their recovery from

the pandemic. However, to ensure success, the Governments need to communicate the strategies along with the collective and individual responsibility and build cooperation and trust among its citizens. (Nihlén Fahlquist 2021)

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