



# Navigating Challenges and Coping Mechanisms of Public Cemetery Caretakers of Panabo City

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## Abstract

This study delves into the numerous challenges faced by public cemetery caretakers in Panabo City, focusing on their daily work experiences. It explores the complexities of maintaining the cemetery grounds amidst local government regulations, navigating instances of discrimination from clients, ensuring environmental protection and health safety for both caretakers and bereaved families, facing job safety concerns and inadequate wages, and negotiating interactions within the community. Through qualitative inquiry, the research illuminates the coping mechanisms employed by caretakers to address these challenges, shedding light on their resilience strategies and adaptive responses. Additionally, the study evaluates the support mechanisms provided by the government to assist public cemetery caretakers in Panabo City. It scrutinizes existing policies, programs, and initiatives aimed at ameliorating the burdens faced by caretakers and enhancing their well-being. By addressing these research objectives, this study aims to provide nuanced insights into the experiences of public cemetery caretakers, contribute to the understanding of their challenges, and inform the development of targeted interventions to improve their working conditions and foster a supportive environment for their vital role in the community.

## Keywords

Public cemetery, Public cemetery caretakers, Deceased, Local Government, Navigating challenges, Coping mechanisms

## INTRODUCTION

The Public cemetery caretakers play an important role in maintaining dignity, honouring the deceased with respect, and supporting grieving families by ensuring proper burial practices and handling gravesites with care and they follow the Local Government Unit protocols to preserve the dignity of the resting place. They are also responsible for various tasks such as preparing the burial site, transferring the bones of the cadaver to the bone crypt, landscaping, grave maintenance, ensuring a healthy environment, creating a peaceful and dignified space for families to remember and honour their loved ones, ensuring orderliness and cleanliness of the entire cemetery. Public cemeteries are silent witnesses to the passage of time and the stories of countless lives throughout the world.

According to the study of Bachelor (2020) Sorrow and Solace delves into the significance of cemeteries in the lives of ordinary mourners, exploring how individuals find meaning and derive value from their commemorative rituals. The death of a loved one is one of life's most profound experiences, prompting common responses such as visiting graves or memorials across many cultures. These memorial sites serve as crucial links to the departed, facilitating ongoing social bonds, and serve as important spaces for healing and personal growth. Despite the millions of daily visits to cemeteries, the extent of this activity and its significance to mourners have often gone unrecognized.

The management of Muslim cemeteries (MCM) in Malaysia according to the study of (Daud, Shafiqah, Sulaiman, & Ahmad, 2014) has become increasingly problematic due to the growing human population and rapid urban

development. Among the key issues faced is the shortage of land for burials, which has become prevalent in many developing Asian nations, including Malaysia. Additionally, the lack of systematic management of cemetery facilities has led to a decline in community interest in visiting these sites, perpetuating superstitions within the society. On this study aims to explore the challenges stemming from traditional Muslim funerary practices and highlight the broader issues surrounding land use planning for deceased individuals.

The funeral industry is understudied by (Gwenzi, 2021) regarding the occurrence and health risks of toxic organic contaminants (TOCs). This study addresses this gap, highlighting the funeral industry as a significant reservoir for various TOCs, posing risks to ecological systems and human health. TOCs found include embalming products, persistent organic pollutants, pesticides, pharmaceuticals, personal care products, and illicit drugs, with hotspots including human cadavers, waste, wastewater, and airborne particulates from funeral facilities. Exposure routes include ingestion of contaminated water and food, and occupational exposure through inhalation and dermal contact, with factors such as unhygienic burial practices and weak regulation contributing. Risks span genotoxicity, endocrine disruption, antimicrobial resistance, and ecosystem disruption.

In America based on the study of Vallesteros (2018), there were no cemeteries before 1831 but time comes the Mount Auburn Cemetery at Cambridge, Massachusetts built. As America's cemetery construction boom grew, the Mount Auburn Cemetery catalyzed the development of cemeteries that came to symbolize the political, social, religious, and cultural milieu of their era. However, Keith Eggener, an associate professor of art and architecture at the University of Missouri, noted that internal problems with church burial grounds preceded the current trend in cemetery issues: "they were inadequate, dangerous, crowded, expensive to maintain and possibly carriers of disease." Keith Eggener, highlighted internal challenges in the management of cemeteries, a theme still relevant today in both urban and rural settings. Eggener also delves into the influence of popular culture on cemetery design, noting a shift towards darker images and the societal taboo surrounding death, as evidenced in *Zombie* movies depicting urban chaos. The traditional ground burials remain prevalent in the United States, raising concerns about the sustainability of materials like wood, steel, and upholstery compared to eco-friendly alternatives in modern "green" burials.

Under Republic Act 7160 (RA 7160), commonly referred to as the Local Government Code of 1991, predominantly concentrates on transferring authority, duties, and assets from the national government to local government units (LGUs) throughout the Philippines. Although it doesn't explicitly discuss public cemetery caretakers as personnel, it does establish guidelines for overseeing and governing local government activities. This framework potentially encompasses the recruitment and employment of cemetery caretakers by LGUs. The law establishes the autonomy and powers of LGUs, including provinces, cities, municipalities, and barangays, to govern their respective jurisdictions. LGUs are responsible for providing basic services and facilities to their constituents, which may include the management and maintenance of public cemeteries, the Law provide guidelines for personnel and human resource management in LGUs. It empowers LGUs to hire, compensate, and manage their own employees, subject to civil service rules and regulations. Cemetery caretakers employed by LGUs would fall under these personnel management provisions. The law outlines the rights, benefits, and responsibilities of local government employees, including provisions for salaries, wages, and other benefits. While it does not specifically mention cemetery caretakers, they would generally be entitled to the same rights and benefits as other local government employees Bueno (2018).

In Panabo City, under City Ordinance Number 13-13 Establishing the new Panabo public cemetery and prescribing rules, regulation and imposing fees for its operation, this ordinance shall cover particularly the Panabo City Eternal Garden which located at Barangay Datu Abdul Dadia, composed of more or less 7.4 hectares. The establishment of the new public cemetery shall address the city's rapid population growth which likely increase the demands for burial spaces that could no longer be accommodated by the existing public cemetery. It shall offer the public quality standard memorial service with facilities that are affordable and reasonable and with a location that is accessible to the people.

However, the establishment of a new public cemetery is very challenging for cemetery caretakers because their workload increases they will follow new rules and regulations and they will manage a huge area different from the old public cemetery that will need more resources and maintenance. On this research study it is imperative to recognize the invaluable contributions of these caretakers to our communities. Their dedication and resilience in upholding the sanctity of these final resting places embody a profound sense of service and duty.

Dizon (2023) claims that the local government Unit in the Philippines is in charge of managing public cemeteries, including supervising caretakers. These graveyards are significant for the public even though they are often disregarded. They are the last resting places for the deceased. In addition, cemeteries function as a social hub, retain historical information, and offer emotional and spiritual support to the bereaved family. For cemeteries to remain orderly and respectable places for people to be laid to rest, the government must play a vital role in regulation and management. The researcher aims to identify the challenges and coping mechanisms of Public cemetery caretakers of Panabo City to address their needs effectively and ensure their contributions to society are recognized and valued.

This study poses the following questions:

- 1) What are the primary challenges by public cemetery caretakers in Panabo City, particularly in terms of their day-to-day work experiences and interactions within the community?
- 2) What are the coping mechanisms of the public cemetery caretakers in Panabo City on the day-to-day challenges?
- 3) What are the support mechanisms provided by the government to address the challenges faced by the public cemetery caretakers?

## CHALLENGES AND COPING MECHANISMS

The challenges faced by cemetery caretakers and the coping mechanisms they employ have been the subject of limited research. However, a growing body of literature has begun to shed light on the complex nature of cemetery management and the various stakeholders involved, as well as the psychological and emotional impacts of working in this unique and often overlooked sector.

A study by Williams et al. (2022) examined the structural challenges of power and whiteness in the context of historic Black cemetery restoration in the United States. The authors found that limited engagement, inappropriate conceptual framing, and resistance to power sharing compromised the potential of Black power in Black spaces. While this study focuses on a specific context, it highlights the complex nature of cemetery management and the various stakeholders involved, which may be relevant to understanding the challenges faced by public cemetery caretakers in Panabo City, Davao del Norte, Philippines.

Colombo et al. (2019) directly addressed the topic of challenges faced by cemetery workers and their coping mechanisms, focusing on the relationship between secondary traumatic stress (STS) and psychological and physical symptoms, exhaustion, and emotions among cemetery workers in northern Italy. The authors found that administrative and front office employees, as well as technicians and specialists of decoration and garden, showed the highest levels of STS and psychophysical symptoms, particularly related to anxiety, sadness, insomnia, and gastric and musculoskeletal disorders. The study highlights the importance of considering STS as an occupational risk factor for cemetery workers, as they are exposed to grief, death, and emotional distress in their daily work. Furthermore, the authors suggest the need for psychological support and training for cemetery workers to cope with the emotional demands of their job.

Cotrim et al. (2020) conducted a study to analyze the relationship between socio-demographic and psychosocial factors and work ability among cemetery workers in Lisbon, Portugal. The study found a high prevalence of unsatisfactory Work Ability Index (WAI) scores, indicating that many cemetery workers may be at risk of being declared unfit for their current jobs. The main predictors of work ability identified in the study were general health, burnout, temporary work impairment, job satisfaction, age, and quality of leadership. These findings highlight the importance of understanding the challenges faced by cemetery workers and developing targeted interventions to support their well-being and work ability. The authors emphasize the need for occupational health programs that address the specific needs of cemetery workers and aim to retain them until the legal retirement age.

Guidetti et al. (2021) investigated the role of job demands and resources in explaining occupational burnout among funeral industry employees in Northern Italy. The study found that stigma consciousness, supervisor incivility, and work-to-family negative spillover were significant factors contributing to burnout, while meaningfulness of work and family-to-work positive spillover served as potential resources to counter burnout. These findings provide valuable insights into the psychosocial working conditions that affect the well-being of workers in the funeral industry sector. The authors emphasize the importance of promoting resources to prevent burnout among funeral industry workers, highlighting the need for targeted interventions and support to improve occupational well-being in this often-overlooked sector.

Zavattaro and Guy (2022) shed light on the crucial role of emotional labor in the interactions between cemetery managers and the public, emphasizing the significance of the emotive component in citizen-state encounters. Through interviews with 35 U.S. municipal cemetery managers, the authors developed a holistic framework that incorporates both affective and cognitive dimensions, highlighting how public officials, such as cemetery managers, serve as the nerve endings of public policy, connecting with the public and bringing government to life. The study argues that emotion creates lasting impressions, whether positive or negative, and is as essential, if not more so, than the cognitive component in these interactions. This research provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by cemetery managers in their daily work and the importance of emotional labor in navigating these challenges.

The study by Soria Batista and Codo (2018) delves into the concept of "dirty work" as it pertains to morticians and funeral directors, exploring how they manage the stigma associated with their profession. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the research finds that moral stigma fosters solidarity among funeral workers. Socioeconomic status and race also influence societal perceptions of these professions and shape workers' identities. Before entering "dirty work," individuals face marginalization, leading to a shared identity among workers who see themselves as part of a marginalized group. The study suggests further research should examine the connection between workers and their occupations, considering Brazil's socio-historical context of class, race, and gender, and the types of stigma—physical, social, or moral—associated with such work.

Ashforth and Kreiner (2014) emphasize the importance of recognizing how physical, social, and moral stigma affect individuals' relationships with challenging occupations. They highlight how moral stigma uniquely shapes perceptions of work and fosters group cohesion. Additionally, the authors stress the influence of contextual factors, such as environment and societal circumstances, on the perception of "dirty work." They advocate for analyzing historical, cultural, and demographic factors to understand the nature of such work. The study explores workers' strategies to cope with stigma and maintain their identity and dignity within their roles.

This chapter of the study by Mendonca, A., D'Cruz, P. (2021) delves into the intersection of dirty work—marked by tainted tasks, marginalized social identities, and challenging work environments—and workplace bullying, emotional abuse, and harassment. It explores how the stigmatized nature of dirty work renders workers vulnerable to mistreatment within their occupational and organizational settings. The study covers various forms of internal and external bullying



affecting individuals in both low- and high-prestige dirty occupations. Factors unique to dirty work, such as social stigma and marginalized identities, contribute to harassment experiences. The chapter also examines strategies employed by dirty workers to manage stigma and cope with abuse, as well as avenues for intervention, such as promoting decent work standards and organizational governance and fostering collective action to address workplace mistreatment.

According to Lapatha et al. (2019), poverty in the Philippines leads to families residing in cemeteries, particularly public ones, where they engage in various activities like crafting epitaphs or selling flowers to survive. While some are driven by religious or cultural beliefs, many live there out of economic necessity. Despite the challenges they face, these families demonstrate resilience and resourcefulness in finding ways to support themselves. The cemeteries in Cebu City, particularly Carreta Cemetery, are home to numerous families living in poverty, with makeshift dwellings constructed atop tombs and mausoleums. Despite the challenges they face, such as lack of proper hygiene facilities and access to education, these families engage in various jobs within the cemetery to make ends meet. Children often assist their parents in earning income by selling candles and flowers or performing other tasks. The study suggests that while indicators of social well-being may be complex due to individual experiences, families living in cemeteries generally exhibit strong social well-being. However, there are still challenges such as defense against crime and ensuring equal opportunities for financial security, which require government intervention. The government should provide dignified housing and livelihood support to improve the well-being of these families.

According to the report of Merlinda A. Pedrosa of Sun Star Newspaper (2018) Jerome Solinap, head of the Bacolod City General Services Office (GSO), issued a warning to Ricardo Repogio, caretaker of Burgos Public Cemetery, for failing to adhere to instructions regarding the construction of new burial niches. Despite verbal instructions, Repogio allowed new niches to be built, contributing to overcrowding at the cemetery. Solinap assigned Erry Lagtapon to oversee the cemetery due to Repogio's negligence. Reports confirmed overcrowding, prompting Solinap to reprimand Repogio, who previously received warnings for negligence regarding missing niches. Solinap threatened further action if Repogio fails to address the situation, potentially leading to his replacement by the City Government.

Akpedonu (2016) highlights the challenge of preserving historic sites, even when designated as such by government agencies. Support for preservation declines if the site appears decaying and unmaintained. Despite the Chinese Cemetery administration's policy of prohibiting tomb maintenance without association dues, this poses a risk to its reputation and built heritage, as none of its historic mausoleums are nationally protected. However, the administration is recognized for maintaining the cemetery tidily, making it accessible and safe for tourists and visitors, thanks to strict security and supervision.

Based on the study of Neckel, Costa, Mario, Sabadin, and Bodah (2017) the cemeteries in Marau Township, RS, Brazil, pose a significant environmental threat due to open graves resembling landfills, lack of containment measures, and accumulation of contaminating materials. Abandoned vases and ornaments contribute to rainwater accumulation, fostering disease vectors. Without preventive structures, contaminants risk percolating into groundwater, requiring intensive monitoring. Neglected cemetery upkeep impacts aesthetics and sanitation, necessitating afforestation initiatives. Microbiological tests reveal health risks from elevated bacteria levels. Professionals advocate for vertical cemeteries to alleviate pollution and facilitate decomposition treatment. Recommendations include implementing Cemetery Management Plans and enforcing licensing criteria for environmental protection.

The Panabo City Council has raised concerns over the alleged illegal exhumation of bodies from the old public cemetery of Panabo City according to the report of Jun Ledesma (The Mindanao Journal 2022), without proper authorization. They've demanded to halt the unauthorized transfers to unlicensed private burial grounds. The situation worsened as backhoes were dispatched to demolish empty sepulchers, leaving relatives unable to locate tombs. Reports of health hazards and children scavenging for scraps have emerged, prompting calls for regional Department of Health intervention. The administration is urged to investigate and halt the illegal exhumations while assessing potential health risks to neighboring communities. Recommendations include collaborating with local health authorities to thoroughly assess potential health risks associated with illegal exhumations, including the spread of diseases and appropriate intervention measures to mitigate any identified health hazards.

However, the new public cemetery of Panabo City, known as the Panabo City Eternal Garden, is a modern concept cemetery that offers integrated types of burial, such as bone crypts, coffin crypts, mausoleums, estates, and lawn lots. The city will unveil its first masterpiece, envisioned to be one of the most beautiful memorial gardens in the region, offering affordable package prices with burial services. This includes the use of chapel facilities with special features, such as amazing landscapes and botanical gardens.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS**

The study of Zavattaro, S. M. (2022) delves into the realm of administrative burdens in citizen-state interactions, highlighting deathcare as a significant area where such burdens manifest for both service providers and users. Death managers, who handle the often overlooked "dirty work" associated with deathcare, frequently experience stigmatization due to the nature of their duties. Moreover, they often operate with limited resources, leading to high levels of burnout and stress. On the other hand, families and loved ones of the deceased encounter their own set of burdens, including navigating death-related paperwork and burial arrangements. By tapping into the insights of deathcare professionals in the United States, this research aims to expand the existing administrative burden framework by incorporating the concept of

"dirty work costs." Additionally, it sets forth a research agenda aimed at uncovering and ultimately mitigating administrative burdens for both citizens and death managers.

According to Dizon (2023), cemetery workers in Baguio show a moderate understanding of cemetery policies, attributed to orientation efforts by local government units like the City Engineering and Public Works Office (CEPMO) and City Health Services Office (CHSO). However, persistent issues persist, including delays in obtaining certificates and permits, concerns over exhumations, structural specifications for burials, and disputes over lot tenancy and headstone fabrication. Recommendations include sustaining education efforts through orientation sessions and seminars, creating Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials, and providing training and tools for safe and hygienic practices during exhumations.

The personnel of Panabo City Cemetery have their office within the site to ensure effective first-hand service to all prospective clients, from queries to actual showing around the cemetery. Transactions relevant to burial services under this public cemetery will be facilitated by designated personnel. The designated cemetery manager will oversee the entire operations, including the burial rules, regulations, and prohibitions under Article IV, as well as burial rates, payment methods, and penalties under Section 6, as outlined in City Ordinance Number 13-13.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Vallesteros (2018) highlights the growing pressure on Honolulu's urban cemeteries, which are struggling to accommodate the rapid population growth and densification. Traditional burial practices, while culturally significant, are deemed unsustainable due to their environmental impact, including soil excavation, embalming fluid use, and cremation. To address these challenges, there is a need for comprehensive design requirements that balance the sacredness of cemeteries with ecological concerns. Despite the pressures of urbanization, Hawaii's ecological systems, rooted in the Ahupua'a concept, remain significant, offering opportunities for restoration and conservation. Modern urban cemeteries in Honolulu can serve as models for designing future ecological cemeteries, integrating local landscape stewardship principles and considering ecological factors in end-of-life choices.

Löki, Deák, Lukács, and Molnár (2019)) highlight the importance of cemeteries and churchyards in preserving biodiversity near urban areas. Beyond their religious function, these sites serve as vital conservation areas, providing refuge for rare and endangered species. However, evolving societal attitudes and changing management approaches threaten these natural sanctuaries. The authors propose revitalizing local communities' social and spiritual traditions as crucial for conserving these valuable urban habitat.

The brief discussion of the Environmental Management Plan for the operation and maintenance of the public cemetery in Panabo City includes: 1. Air Quality Management, 2. Odor Management, 3. Noise Management, 4. Water Quality, 5. Litter and rubbish management, 6. Public Health and Safety and 7. Labor and Employment. The Environmental Plan also emphasizes that all emissions and effluents resulting from the project comply with DENR rules and regulations, including but not limited to RA 8749 (Clean Air Act); PD 984 (Pollution Control Law); RA 9003 (The Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000) (IEE Checklist of Panabo City Eternal Garden).

## **SAFETY AND HEALTH CONCERNS**

The study by Yoosefi Lebni et al. (2022) highlights the challenges faced by families of COVID-19 victims, including alienation, limited healthcare access, and disruptions to family dynamics. Difficulties in saying goodbye, the isolation of funerals, and feelings of shame and abandonment exacerbate the struggles of bereaved families. To mitigate these effects, actions are recommended such as destigmatizing the disease through media and education, providing home care options, and enhancing medical counseling and facilities. Ensuring respectful burial while adhering to health guidelines, offering virtual condolences for emotional support, and promptly providing psychological services are also crucial measures to prevent the social crisis resulting from COVID-19 deaths.

Boholano (2022) suggests initiatives to address challenges in the social construction of death and diverse perspectives on a "good death" through funeral rites. Recommendations include enhancing Catholic Church ministries for the departed and their families, adapting funeral ceremonies with technology and cultural sensitivity, and fostering public-private partnerships during pandemics. Acknowledging the role of digital technology in bringing people together, the study emphasizes the importance of ensuring an understanding of funeral rituals and adapting plans in response to COVID-19 safety measures enforced by local governments and health professionals.

According to the preliminary study of Pinheiro, Fernando & Fischer, Frida & Cobiانchi, Claudio. (2012) aimed to evaluate the work activities and health consequences of gravediggers, a group often overlooked in existing literature. Following Dejours' framework on psychic suffering and its connection to work dynamics, data was collected through interviews and observations at public and private cemeteries in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Four male gravediggers aged 45 to 60 were interviewed, and their daily activities were observed. The findings revealed significant physical and mental demands, along with feelings of public invisibility and social devaluation of their work. Key health issues included body pain and frustration. Despite the study's preliminary nature, it sheds light on the stressors and health impacts faced by gravediggers, an often "invisible" segment of society.

Panabo City has its main Health Stations in Barangay New Pandan. It also has a newly established Emergency Clinic and thirty-nine (39) Rural Health Stations in different barangays, complemented with midwives, Barangay Health Workers (BHWs), and Barangay Nutrition Scholars who are at the forefront of delivering health services. The City Health

medical personnel regularly conduct healthcare programs and inspections to prevent the spreading of diseases. With these health services, it has a significant impact on preventing health issues in cemetery operations (Panabo City Eternal Garden Feasibility Study).

To understand the study *Navigating Challenges and Coping Mechanisms of Public Cemetery Caretakers of Panabo City*, this study is grounded on the following theories:

Chambers (1997) emphasizes the importance of participatory development theory, highlighting its frequent failure when it overlooks the perspectives and realities of those most affected. He advocates for a participatory approach that prioritizes the voices and experiences of marginalized groups, urging policymakers and practitioners to start by listening to the most vulnerable individuals and communities. This approach, known as "putting the last first," underscores the active involvement of stakeholders in all stages of development, from planning to evaluation.

Applying this theory to the research on public cemetery caretakers in Panabo City allows for a deeper understanding of their Challenges and coping mechanisms. By actively involving caretakers in decision-making processes, interventions and policy modifications can be based on their actual needs and challenges, leading to more effective and sustainable solutions. Participatory development strategies such as participatory learning and action (PLA) and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) have demonstrated success in addressing various development issues globally, including natural resource management and poverty reduction. Drawing on these approaches, the research can provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by caretakers and contribute to the development of tailored interventions to support their well-being and financial security.

Dobson (2014) presents the Sensory Democracy theory, emphasizing the importance of respecting the identities, experiences, and rights of all individuals and groups in a democratic society. He highlights the need for inclusive representation, particularly for historically marginalized or excluded groups, within political institutions and structures. By fostering discussions and listening to diverse viewpoints, societies can promote reconciliation and solidarity, leading to greater social inclusion and justice.

Applying this theory to the research on public cemetery caretakers in Panabo City offers insights into addressing their Challenges and coping mechanisms in a more democratic and responsive manner. By encouraging communication among stakeholders and ensuring inclusive representation, efforts can be made to improve caretakers' livelihoods and address their challenges effectively. This approach aligns with the principles of social inclusion, equity, and justice, contributing to a more democratic and inclusive society.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The authors used a systematic review of literature to address a particular research question, a systematic review endeavors to compile all pertinent data that satisfies predetermined qualifying criteria. To reduce bias in the discovery, selection, synthesis, and summary of studies, it employs clear, methodical techniques (Moher et al., 2015).

The authors outline steps to streamline the process of conducting a systematic review of the challenges and coping mechanisms of public cemetery caretakers. The first step was to determine the types of review of literature to include, The Second step was to make the most of the information on websites belonging to organizations whose operations same as the study about public cemetery caretakers, The third step was looking through research articles published in the last ten (10) years, Fourth steps was Establishing a systematic process for screening and extracting data from identified studies use screening software to facilitate title/abstract screening and full-text assessment by multiple reviewers. Develop standardized data extraction forms to capture relevant study characteristics, challenges, coping mechanisms, and outcomes (Ouzzani M, Hammady H, Fedorowicz Z, Elmagarmid A. 2016).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

While the geographic locations and specific contexts may differ, the findings and recommendations from these studies provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by cemetery workers and the potential impact on their mental health and well-being. These studies can inform research on the challenges and coping mechanisms of public cemetery caretakers in other settings, such as Panabo City, Davao del Noret, Philippines. However, there is a clear need for further research that directly addresses the experiences and coping strategies of cemetery caretakers in different cultural and geographic contexts, as well as the development of targeted interventions and support to improve occupational well-being in this often-overlooked sector.

## **CONCLUSION**

To maintain the well-being of caretakers and the efficient administration of cemetery services, stakeholders must pay attention to the diverse issues that Panabo City's public cemetery caretakers encounter. Caretakers show resilience in their daily efforts to support mourning families and preserve the dignity of the deceased, even in the face of heavy workloads, emotional pressures, and resource constraints. Caretakers use coping strategies like smart scheduling, consistent exercise, emotional support, and creative problem-solving to carry out their duties well despite the many obstacles. Furthermore, it calls for collaborative efforts from legislators, local authorities, and relevant stakeholders to develop long-term solutions to support cemetery caretakers and improve cemetery management practices in Panabo City.

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## DECLARATION OF CONFLICT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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