

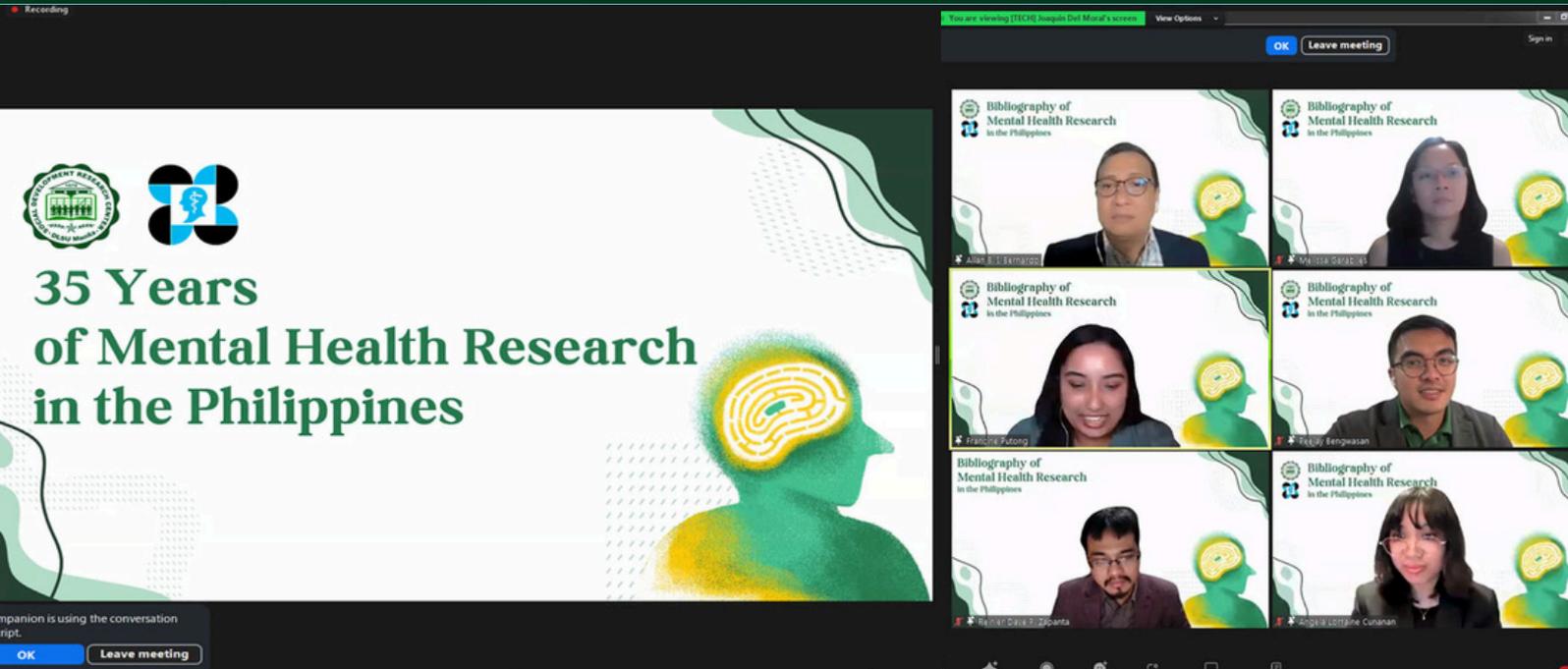


DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTER UPDATE

VOL. 6 ISSUE NO. 5

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2025



BUILDING A RESEARCH FOUNDATION FOR PHILIPPINE MENTAL HEALTH

The Social Development Research Center (SDRC) marked a milestone in advancing mental health scholarship with the recent completion of the project Bibliography of Mental Health Research in the Philippines, led by Dr. Allan B. I. Bernardo. Funded by the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD) through the Mental Health Research Advisory Group (MHRAG), the one-year study (September 2024 to August 2025) culminated in the online event “35 Years of Mental Health Research in the Philippines: A Scoping Review” and the launch of the Mental Health Research Database on July 25, 2025.



SDRC Project in Focus



The initiative responds to the call of the National Mental Health Research Agenda (NMHRA) to make local mental health studies more accessible, systematic, and evidence-informed. It produced both an enumerative bibliography and a systematic narrative review of mental health research involving Filipinos from 1990 to 2024. These outputs aim to guide future research directions and strengthen the scientific foundation for policy and program development under the Philippine Mental Health Act (RA 11036).

Guided by the framework of Arksey and O'Malley (2005), the SDRC team conducted a scoping review to systematically map the existing body of mental health research in the Philippines. A scoping review aims to examine the extent, range, and nature of research activity, identify key concepts and knowledge gaps, and clarify areas for future investigation. Following this approach, the team identified the research question, searched relevant databases (PubMed, Medline, and Google Scholar), selected studies based on inclusion criteria, and charted data according to thematic categories. This process allowed for a comprehensive overview of peer-reviewed studies focusing on the prevalence, determinants, and interventions related to mental health.

SDRC Project in Focus



The project team included Dr. Melissa Garabiles, Dr. Peejay Bengwasan, Ms. Angela Lorraine Cunanan, and Mr. Reinier Dave Zapanta. Together, they shared key insights from the scoping review, highlighting trends in research populations, methodologies, and intervention types.

Through the creation of the open-access Mental Health Research Database, SDRC and MHRAG have established a lasting foundation for future researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. This digital resource is envisioned to support the continued growth of Philippine mental health research and to ensure its cultural relevance and policy impact.

PROJECT DETAILS:

Project Title: Bibliography of Mental Health Research in the Philippines

Principal Investigator: Dr. Allan Benedict I. Bernardo

Project Level Staff: Dr. Melissa Garabiles

Project Technical Specialist: Dr. Peejay Bengwasan

Project Technical Assistants: Ms. Angela Lorraine Cunanan and Mr. Reinier Dave Zapanta

Funding Agency: Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD)



SDRC Project in Focus

EVALUATING THE KADIWA PROGRAM:

Linking Producers
and Consumers
for Food Security

The KADIWA ni Ani at Kita Program of the Department of Agriculture (DA) continues to serve as a key initiative to connect farmers and fisherfolk directly with consumers, particularly those in low-income urban areas. Through this effort, the DA aims to provide affordable and accessible agri-fishery products while ensuring that producers receive fair returns for their labor.

At the 12th National Monitoring and Evaluation Network Forum held on September 29, 2025, at Crowne Plaza Manila Galleria, Dr. Arlene B. Inocencio of the Social Development Research Center (SDRC) presented the findings of the Process Evaluation of the Implementation of the KADIWA ni Ani at Kita Program in the Philippines. The study assessed how effectively the program has been implemented, the extent to which it has adhered to its intended design, and how its resources and partnerships have contributed to its outcomes.

SDRC Project in Focus



Anchored on a clear theory of change, the evaluation examined the program’s chain of results, from mobilizing financial, human, and institutional resources to achieving outcomes such as increased producer income, improved consumer access to food, and localized price stability. Using a mixed-methods approach, the team conducted surveys, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions in selected provinces across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Participants included DA field offices, local government units, cooperatives, and private partners.

Findings emphasized three key lessons. First, coherence between program design and implementation is vital to success. Second, targeting and monitoring systems should be embedded early in the program to guide adjustments and ensure accountability. Third, sustainability depends on more than continued funding—it requires stronger local ownership among LGUs, cooperatives, and micro-enterprises.

SDRC Project in Focus



The evaluation also outlined several policy recommendations, including the creation of a unified KADIWA National Framework, the institutionalization of supplier development programs, the use of DSWD's 4Ps database for urban poor targeting, and the modernization of data systems through a digital KADIWA Management Information System.

The study offers evidence-based guidance for scaling up and sustaining KADIWA. It contributes to strengthening the DA's efforts to make food systems more inclusive and resilient. As Dr. Inocencio noted, empowering both producers and consumers through coherent planning, digital integration, and local partnership is key to realizing KADIWA's promise of food security for all.

PROJECT DETAILS:

Project Title: Process Evaluation of the Implementation of the KADIWA ni Ani at Kita Program in the Philippines

Project Director: Dr. Arlene B. Inocencio

Co-Investigators: Dr. Zaldy C. Collado, Dr. Marlon DL. Era, and Dr. Christopher Cabuay

Evaluator: Dr. Marites M. Tiongco

Project Manager: Ms. Maria Anttonette Vinteres

Funding Agency: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA)



Researcher Spotlight

Cindy J. Xie, M.C.P.

Visiting Researcher
Massachusetts Institute
of Technology (MIT), USA

FALLING FORWARD: My Experience as a Visiting Researcher at SPPHERE Lab and SDRC



It was Sunday afternoon by the time our ferry pulled into Palompon Pier, after a three-hour boat journey from Cebu City. As we turned onto Rizal Street, we were met with vendors and shopkeepers, potpot, van, and tricycle drivers, and passerby bracing the afternoon heat. A commonly voiced sentiment during our initial round of online interviews had been the growing unpredictability of the weather patterns in Leyte; our fieldwork trip during the rainy season in August underscored this point. As we grabbed a late lunch, rain suddenly started to pour outside the window. As quickly as it began, it stopped.



Researcher Spotlight

I joined our research trip to Leyte as a visiting researcher at SDRC and the Sustainability Psychology and Planetary Health Research Lab (SPPHERE Lab) under Dr. John Jamir Benzon Aruta. Working under the AXA Research Fund “Rising Faster than the Sea Levels” project, I have been contributing to qualitative data analysis and focus group discussions on the impacts of climate change on young people’s mental health in Leyte. This project has been an incredibly meaningful experience that has taught me much about the growing nexus of climate change and mental health in the Philippines through a research lens that combines lived experience, participatory methods, and climate justice.



I flew to Manila from my hometown of Los Angeles in July, not knowing what to expect of my visit. I had just completed my master’s degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in May, and was in the midst of a transitional period post-graduation. Upon my arrival in the Philippines, things began to fall naturally into place (even with the unpredictability of typhoon weather): days spent working in the SDRC office, activities and webinars hosted by SPPHERE Lab, meetings with students and researchers at the university. From breaktimes in the office to celebrating my birthday in Manila, my colleagues at DLSU went out of their way to make me feel at home.

Researcher Spotlight



During my visit, I was often met with questions about my experience here in comparison to growing up in the US. As a Chinese American, the feeling of being caught “in between” is one that is familiar. Yet I found myself continuing to reflect on these questions about identity during our Leyte research trip, toward the latter half of my stay in the Philippines. What did it mean to be a foreigner and particularly a citizen of the US, doing this work that focused on regional and global climate injustices? How should one navigate the power dynamics, emphasized by factors such as language barriers, embedded within the research exchange experience?

As it turned out, the answers to these questions are complex, context-dependent, and sometimes uncomfortable. Yet they begin in a place of relationship and personal connection: the connections formed between and amongst “researchers” and “participants.” During the last evening in Palompon, after we had wrapped up our final focus group discussions my team member and I debriefed over dinner at Jollibee’s. When prompted, I shared about the lingering doubts I had regarding navigating my positionality as an American. My colleague’s reply was thoughtful, reflecting on the past two months,. “In our first emails, I remember that you asked many questions and were very accommodating,” they said. “As we established relationships [amongst our team], I saw how over time you were able to overcome those initial barriers.”

This conversation led me to realize that perhaps it was not so much about the impossible task of erasing the power dynamics inherent in social science research, so much as seeing and accepting their presence. And having done that, taking up the ongoing, continued responsibility of recognizing and responding to them. Yet while social differences might be more obvious in an international research exchange, don't they show up as well in countless other ways, in the places and people we have grown up knowing as home? Perhaps these skills of reflexivity, so stressed in research, also have the power to inform how we approach our everyday lives: as colleagues, as community members, and as citizens and friends.

As I wrap up my time here, the overwhelming emotion I feel is of gratitude: for our participants who trusted us with their stories; for the natural ecosystems that continue to sustain us in the face of climate crises; and for the friends, colleagues, lessons, and experiences formed during my brief yet fruitful time here as a visiting researcher. I know that these things will stay with me for the years to come, as I continue to grow in my personal and professional journey. In these last days in Manila, I find myself uttering a chorus of goodbyes. Ingit, take care, zàijìàn. Until we meet again...

