

1 **EXPLORING EFFICIENT CEMETERY MANAGEMENT: PRACTICES,**
2 **CHALLENGES, AND INNOVATIONS AT NEW BILIBID PRISON**
3 **CEMETERY AS A BASIS FOR IMPROVED OPERATIONAL**
4 **EFFECTIVENESS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

5 **ABSTRACT**

6 Efficient cemetery management is crucial for ensuring operational effectiveness
7 and sustainable development, particularly in facilities with unique challenges like the
8 New Bilibid Prison (NBP) Cemetery. This study investigated the existing practices,
9 challenges, and suggested innovative strategies to be implemented at the NBP Cemetery
10 to improve its management and operations. Employing a mixed-methods approach, data
11 were gathered through surveys and semi-structured interviews with six personnel
12 responsible for cemetery operations. Findings highlight the identified existing cemetery
13 practices, the challenges faced by NBP Cemetery in terms of its operational effectiveness
14 and sustainability and lastly, the identified innovative solutions to be implemented in
15 addressing these challenges.

16 **Keywords:** cemetery management, challenges, practices, cemetery policies, NBP
17 cemetery

18 **INTRODUCTION**

19 A cemetery is a place where dead people's bodies or their ashes are buried. It is
20 where the remains of people, either intact or cremated, are interred in a grave,
21 mausoleum, niche, or other edifice for the dead, either below or above ground. How the
22 dead are buried reflects the geography, religious beliefs, social attitudes, and aesthetic
23 and sanitary considerations of the community in which they are located. Its functions

24 includes disposal of human remains, archive of tombstones, to be used in studying
25 history and reservoirs of history. (Ypil, 2023) Cemeteries serve many functions but vary
26 across cultures. In the Philippines, cemeteries serve many functions, including providing
27 a final resting place for the deceased, offering a space for families to grieve, and
28 preserving historical information.

29 Philippine cemeteries are subjected to various policies. Aside from prescribing
30 and imposing the operations of cemeteries, these policies also govern the people within
31 them. Regarding managerial aspects, workers of the cemeteries are expected to be
32 knowledgeable about these policies. (Dizon, 2023)

33 The government plays a crucial role in preserving and sustaining cemeteries being
34 relevant in society . Cemeteries require regulation to maintain order, uphold public health
35 standards and ensure respectful practices .To achieve the above, cemeteries need
36 appropriate management (Dizon, 2023). In the Philippines, cemetery regulations are
37 usually under the jurisdiction of municipalities and cities, generally local government
38 units (LGUs). Furthermore, RA 7160 devolves to LGUs the responsibility of enforcing
39 certain regulatory powers, such as reclassifying agricultural lands, enforcing national
40 building codes and managing cemeteries (Brilliantes, 2002) .

41 In the year 2021, the Crematorium and NBP Cemetery Management Section
42 under the GSD (General Services Division) was formed at NBP (New Bilibid Prison),
43 Muntinlupa City. This aims to reduce and eliminate possible sources of corruption in the
44 management of NBP Cemetery. This way, all the BuCor Personnel and PDLs (Persons
45 Deprived of Liberty) at NBP are encouraged to become fully aware of their respective
46 duties in the community. Furthermore, PDL cadavers, especially those who are forgotten
47 and have no relatives, have been lodged in the Eastern Funeral Home. It is costly for the
48 Bureau to keep the PDL cadavers for an extended period. Thus, apartment type niches
49 are one of facilities the NBP cemetery have. It is not only to save funds but also to
50 combat the spread of Covid-19 during that time. The Bureau extened its services through
51 partnership with the City Government of Muntinlupa and DOH not only to govern its
52 people but also to protect the health and safety of the community. To address the
53 problems and orderliness of NBP Cemetery, the Chief, CSO4 Arnold D. Pague, created

54 guidelines in operating and stopping any illegal activities. The guidelines is the core of
55 this section where it states who are allowed to be buried and utilize its jurisdiction. The
56 NBP Cemetery now is only exclusive for BuCor Personnel, retired, 1st degree family
57 member, and PDL. For the meantime, the NBP Cemetery doesn't allow creating niches,
58 instead, it only allows to overlap to their old niches and exhumate. To process their
59 request, it must have complete requirements and must be approved by the Chief, GSD or
60 Deputy Chief, GSD. All the available and vacant niches will be turnedover to Bureau for
61 further future approved requests. For the meantime, the NBP Cemetery are fixing the
62 policy that will be approved by the Doctrine and Policy Making Board through project
63 Management and Doctrine development Division. The main work of NBP cemetery
64 Office are to maintain the AOR and assist requests for burials and exhumations. Because
65 it's a new section, the office needs more equipment and tools to be used in the office and
66 at the cemetery, including number of personnel and knowledge.

67 **Review of related literature**

68 Dizon, K., & Donguiz conducted a study (2023) examining the socioeconomic
69 status and social protection of Baguio City Cemetery Workers, as well as their
70 knowledge of cemetery policies. The findings indicate that the cemetery workers in
71 Baguio City have a partial level of satisfaction with social assistance programs, have
72 limited awareness of social awareness, of social insurance programs and labor marker
73 programs provided by the government. Additionally, their knowledge regarding policies
74 governing cemeteries is considered moderate. Thus, the researchers recommended that
75 the Baguio Cemetery workers should have orientation sessions to enhance their
76 awareness and comprehension regarding the government's social protection programs.

77 Dizon (2023) delved into the level of knowledge Baguio cemetery workers have
78 on policies governing cemeteries. The result showed that respondents are moderately
79 knowledgeable of the identified cemetery policies. Therefore, the study recommended
80 that the LGU of Baguio and CEPMO must maintain the level of knowledge of cemetery
81 workers regarding cemetery policies by the continuous orientation of workers.

82 Magarang-Mocsanat , E., & Salapa (2024) explored on the challenges and coping
83 mechanisms of public cemetery caretakers of Panabo City and scrutinized existing
84 policies, programs, and initiatives aimed at ameliorating the burdens faced by caretakers
85 and enhancing their well-being. The findings of the study calls for collaborative efforts
86 from legislators, local authorities, and relevant stakeholders to develop long-term
87 solutions to support cemetery caretakers and improve management practices in Panabo
88 City.

89 Oyeleke, O. O., & Oloukoi (2024) examined the long-term viability of urban
90 management systems for the deceased and the facilities and services provided by
91 cemeteries. The findings showed that scarcity of amenities and services in cemeteries
92 causes problems for urban management systems, such as adequate burying space, upkeep
93 and surveillance. Inefficient methods of handling the demands of city dwellers near
94 cemeteries in city planning should be handled to enhance citizens' quality of life and
95 protect and enhance the urban area.

96 **Objectives of the study**

97 Although studies have been conducted looking into the needs and challenges of public
98 cemetery workers, there was a limited study conducted to look into the practices,
99 challenges, and innovations for efficient cemetery management specifically in New
100 Bilibid Prison.

101 Therefore, this study aims to look into the practices, challenges, and innovations
102 for efficient cemetery management of the New Bilibid Prison. It seeks to: 1. determine
103 the existing cemetery management practices at NBP Cemetery
104 2. investigate the major challenges faced by NBP Cemetery in terms of operational
105 effectiveness and sustainability
106 3. determine suggested innovative solutions to be implemented in cemetery
107 management at NBP Cemetery

108 **Significance of the study:**

109 It will benefit the cemetery administrators, caretakers and stakeholders as it
110 provides the best practices and innovative strategies to enhance the management and
111 operation of cemeteries in order to improve its efficiency, sustainability and function. It
112 can also serve as a reference for local governments and policymakers in drafting
113 guidelines for cemetery management. The study also adds to the existing literature on
114 cemetery management providing insights that can be applied to other studies globally.

115 **METHODOLOGY**

116 **Study Design:**

117 This study employs a mixed-methods research design to examine the current practices,
118 challenges, and innovations in cemetery management at the New Bilibid Prison (NBP)
119 Cemetery. A structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide will be utilized
120 to gather quantitative and qualitative data.

121 **Population of the study:**

122 The respondents are 5 uniformed personnel and 1 non uniformed personnel
123 currently working in New Bilibid Prison Cemetery, Muntinlupa City. To formally access
124 the respondents, a letter (refer to appendix A) was sent to the General director's office
125 requesting to conduct the study and gather data. Then, the researcher personally
126 approached the respondents and explained why the research is being conducted before
127 assisting them in answering the questionnaire.

128 **Data Gathering Tools and Procedures**

129 The data collection process started with the distribution of the questionnaire to the
130 participants. Participants will have a week to complete the questionnaire, which will be
131 available in printed form. Following the questionnaire, participants will be invited for
132 interviews to further explore themes identified in the initial survey responses. Interviews

133 will be conducted either in person or via virtual platforms, depending on participant
134 availability and preferences.

135 **Treatment of the data**

136 All data were stored securely to maintain confidentiality. Quantitative data
137 gathered from the questionnaire were analyzed using statistical tools, while qualitative
138 data from the interviews were examined through thematic analysis to uncover patterns
139 and insights. This integrated approach offers a comprehensive framework for
140 understanding the challenges and identifying potential solutions in cemetery
141 management.

142 **Results and Discussion**

143 Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
A. Role at NBP Cemetery		
Custodial	3	50
Administrator	2	33.3
Chief	1	16.66
Total:	6	100
B. Highest Educational Attainment		
Technical/Vocational Training	0	0
Bachelor's Degree	5	100
Master's Degree	0	0
Total:	5	100
C. Length of service in the cemetery		
1-5 years	3	60
Less than a year	2	40

Total:	5	100
D. Size of the cemetery you manage		
Medium (5-15 hectares)	2	40
Large (more than 15 hectares)	3	60
Total:	5	100

144 The respondents are composed of 3 custodial, 2 administrator and 1 chief, all holding a
145 bachelor's degree and are currently on duty at NBP Cemetery, which was established in
146 2021. Three of them have been working for 1-5 years while the two worked for less than
147 a year. Most participants manage more than 15 hectares and all follows a Standard
148 Operating Procedures (SOP) for their day-to-day operations. Findings show that the
149 cemetery allows Correctional Officers even retired COs, Persons Deprived of
150 Liberty(PDL) and 1st degree Family relatives of COs are allowed to bury at the
151 cemetery. Cemetery spaces are allocated for exhumed niche, personnel, retired CO, and
152 family plots.

153 *Problem 1: What are the existing cemetery management practices at NBP Cemetery?*

154 Common practices in cemetery management at NBP Cemetery includes traditional
155 burials, landscaping and beautification, record-keeping and administration and
156 exhumation. They are currently implementing other practices including regular
157 maintenance of grave sites, digital record-keeping of plots and burials, community
158 engagement activities, customer service and communication and Japanese cemetery
159 assistance. Most participants agree that these practices are very effective. The cemetery
160 currently uses digitized and paper records as record-keeping methods. According to most
161 participants, these practices are reviewed and updated daily and weekly.

162 *Problem 2 What are the major challenges faced by NBP Cemetery in terms of operational*
163 *effectiveness and sustainability?*

164 Water management, land degradation and pollution are some of the environmental issues
165 which concerns the cemetery's sustainability. There was a technological innovation being
166 used in cemetery operations which include the use of biodegradable.
167 Most agree that technology is somehow effective in improving cemetery management.
168 For NBP Cemetery's sustainable development, most respondents are unsure of any
169 existing sustainable plan in place for the cemetery. The researcher noted sustainable
170 practices currently being implemented as identified by the respondents. These includes
171 the use of eco-friendly materials for burials, water conservation management and energy
172 efficiency measures. Most respondents believe that sustainability is very important in
173 cemetery management. Most agree that technology is somehow effective in improving
174 cemetery management. For NBP Cemetery's sustainable development, most respondents
175 are unsure of any existing sustainable plan in place for the cemetery. The researcher
176 noted sustainable practices currently being implemented as identified by the respondents.
177 These includes the use of eco-friendly materials for burials, water conservation
178 management and energy efficiency measures. Most respondents believe that
179 sustainability is very important in cemetery management.

180 *Problem 3. What suggested innovative solutions needs to be implemented in cemetery*
181 *management at NBP Cemetery?*

182 The respondents have suggested and recommended innovative solutions to
183 improve the cemetery's operational effectiveness which includes additional personnel,
184 trainings and seminars and specific rules and regulations on burial procedures. The
185 cemetery should also allocate areas for families to grieve and for leisure. It should also
186 provide guidelines on visitations. Respondents suggest that there should be public
187 involvement on cemetery enhancements and policies. It must also provide
188 wheelchair accessible pathways. Records must also be enhanced and updated. It should
189 prioritize setting clear rules and guidelines for visitors, community involvement and
190 maintaining and beautification of cemetery grounds. To address challenges on cemetery
191 management, there should be integration of technology and digital tools, strengthening

192 security of the cemetery's premises and providing Eco-burial options such as
193 biodegradable caskets. Innovative strategies and forward-thinking developments,
194 creating virtual memorialization platforms and providing pathways for visitors will
195 contribute to the cemetery's operational effectiveness. To address environmental
196 sustainability issues, respondents recommended that mowing should be limited, there
197 must be involvement of the community which includes tree-planting and clean-up drives
198 and lastly, adapting eco-friendly practices. All respondents agree that they all follow
199 specific regulations and policies during cemetery operations. All the identified cemetery
200 challenges limit all the personnel work load which impacts the operational effectiveness
201 of the cemetery. The respondents agree that all personnel must have training to enhance
202 the cemetery's management. Currently, no recent innovations or new technologies have
203 been implemented in the cemetery. Thus, the respondents suggest that there should be
204 technology integration and smart infrastructures.

205 **Conclusion:**

206 Based on the findings, the following conclusions have been drawn. First, the
207 cemetery has several existing management practices, such as traditional burials,
208 recordkeeping, and landscaping, which are effective in maintaining day-to-day
209 operations. Second, the NBP Cemetery faces notable challenges, including limited
210 resources, environmental concerns, and gaps in personnel training, which hinder
211 operational effectiveness and sustainability. Lastly, there is a need for innovative
212 solutions, such as integrating technology, improving policies, and adopting eco-friendly
213 practices, to address these challenges and enhance the overall management of the
214 cemetery.

215 **Recommendations:**

216 For further studies, researches can look into the guidelines and policies
217 implemented for the cemetery management. There is also a need to for interventions such
218 as providing trainings and seminars for all the personnel which is considered beneficial.
219 By implementing these recommendations, the NBP Cemetery can achieve significant

220 improvements towards enhancing the success and effectiveness of cemetery practices and
221 management.

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