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Barriers and facilitators affecting healthcare delivery in Rural Philippines: A Thematic Analysis of Ethnographic Data

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Abstract

Background: The Philippines is a Low – Middle income Country (LMIC) with over 50% of its inhabitants living in rural areas. Healthcare in these areas face significant delivery challenges due to limited access and resource disparities. This study works with the SOLACE project, a collaborate effort with UK-based and Philippines-based researchers to engage with local communities and co-produce public health initiatives in the Philippines.

Methods: Using a qualitative research methodology, this study conducts an in-depth analysis of ethnographic field notes and semi-structured interviews originally collected by the SOLACE project. Narratives and experiences from two rural communities, Laoang and Catarman, were examined. The analysis focused on identifying and understanding the underlying themes that influence healthcare dynamics.

Results: The study highlights several key barriers including cultural stigma against seeking medical assistance and logistical issues such as geographical remoteness and low socioeconomic status. There was also a significant reliance on traditional healers due to reasons such as mistrust towards the formal healthcare system. Lack of education and stigma caused many inhabitants to believe mental health issues could not be treated with medicine.

Conclusions: The findings coincide with previous literature and elaborate on the socio-cultural, economic, and infrastructural challenges impacting healthcare delivery in rural areas of the Philippines. While the study operates independently, it builds upon the data and insights provided by the SOLACE project, underlining the necessity for culturally adapted and geographically tailored public health interventions.

Keywords: Healthcare Delivery | Rural Health | Philippines | SOLACE project | LMIC | Healthcare Barriers | Qualitative Research |

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