

ISLA IS LIFE: THE ENDURING HEALTHCARE OF AN ISOLATED ISLAND FROM THE LENS OF THE LOCAL NURSES

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Abstract

Background: Isolated islands are one of the most under-served areas in the community, especially in healthcare, and they continue to face challenges, including inadequate resources, facilities, and staff shortages. Isla Pamarawan, a rural area, has also faced these challenges that have greatly impacted the community's healthcare system.

Purpose: This study aims to address the experiences and issues of nurses concerning healthcare services in the rural area of Isla Pamarawan. This study will serve as a tool for the local government unit to identify areas within the current healthcare system of Isla Pamarawan that demand improvement.

Methods: Seven nurses with at least 1 year of experience in the Isla Pamarawan were interviewed. A descriptive phenomenological approach was used to explore the experiences of local nurses, and Colaizzi's method was utilized as a guide in data analysis.

Results: During data analysis process, three major themes emerged, namely, (1) Navigating Challenges and a Call for Health: Context of Healthcare Services in an Island; (2) Adaptation and Resiliency: Professional Nurses' at Your Service; (3) Provision of Healthcare for All: Meeting the Needs of the People in a Remote Island, with two corresponding minor themes each.

Conclusion: It was concluded that the nurses not only faced challenges in delivering healthcare, but they have experienced personal and professional growth while meeting the health needs of the people in Isla Pamarawan. Despite the inadequacy, they showed their resiliency through strategies, collaboration, and reinforcement of positive change.

Keywords: Isla Pamarawan; Isolated Island; Island Healthcare; Qualitative Research; Descriptive Phenomenology.

Introduction

According to Regis College (2022), currently the healthcare industry is facing several issues which can affect the health of the majority of the populace. One of which is the High Cost of Healthcare. According to Montero et al. (2022) the survey result of the Kaiser Family Foundation in 2022 shows that more than 45% of American adults considered healthcare as expensive to cover, and over 40% still have medical debt. Moreover, it also shows that the cost of healthcare frequently prevents people from getting essential care or from finishing their medications. One-fourth of adults report cutting tablets in half, skipping doses, or failing to fill a prescription for themselves or a loved one. Second is the concern for health equity. The healthcare industry displays a disparity in health outcomes within the population. This disparity is caused not solely by financial status, but rather by environmental factors including, the quality of air and water, and access to jobs, housing, education, transportation, and food. Lastly is the shortage of healthcare providers. Different grounds for the shortage of healthcare providers are identified including the overwhelming number of patients which causes additional shifts, insufficient medical staff within local regions, and cases that require critical medical care which causes healthcare provider burnout.

In 2022, the World Health Organization stated that the role of the government is to support healthcare

to ensure that all those in need may access and afford high-quality healthcare services. Nevertheless, despite having the support of the government for the healthcare system, it is bound to arouse the dilemma of access for the residents within the community (urban or rural), which might impact the disparity in healthcare outcomes, such as mortality rates, and lower the overall quality of health.

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (2021), rural health is the health of people living farther from urban areas or cities shows a result that the residents from rural areas are more susceptible and at high risk of acquiring disease and illness compared to urban areas, resulting in a higher mortality rate.

In 2019, the Philippine Government signed the Universal Healthcare Law that sets forth a compelling agenda for the nation's efficient administration of the health workforce. The UHC Law emphasizes the significance of the primary care strategy and promotes the development and enforcement of health human resource policies and strategies according to the health demands of the community. UHC allows everyone access to competent healthcare experts who are also aware of cultural differences. However, an occurring phenomenon can be observed at the rural health system of the Philippines, where it encounters several dilemmas that are becoming a trend regarding the allocation of the resources, services, manpower, and facilities whereas it affects the overall quality of health services that are provided to the community.

According to MedHyve (2021), the Philippines' rural areas face numerous challenges because of its remote location, which makes it difficult to obtain the necessary medical supplies, and equipment. Furthermore, according to the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), insufficient healthcare workers threaten approximately 75% of the cities and municipalities of the Philippines in which according to the study of Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2020), lack of medical personnel, medical facilities, and specialized services may restrict access to care, which would subsequently worsen the health condition. Similar study by Aytona, et. al (2022), shows the correlation between healthcare facilities' staffing shortage. Following that some nurses are overworked, 10 rural health units have no medical technologist, and midwives at Barangay Health Stations (BHS) show minimal workload Similarly in 2023, Aliwudwud claimed in his study that the structural causes of burnout among Filipino nurses, such as poor compensation, delayed benefits, understaffing, overwork, and unstable employment, must be

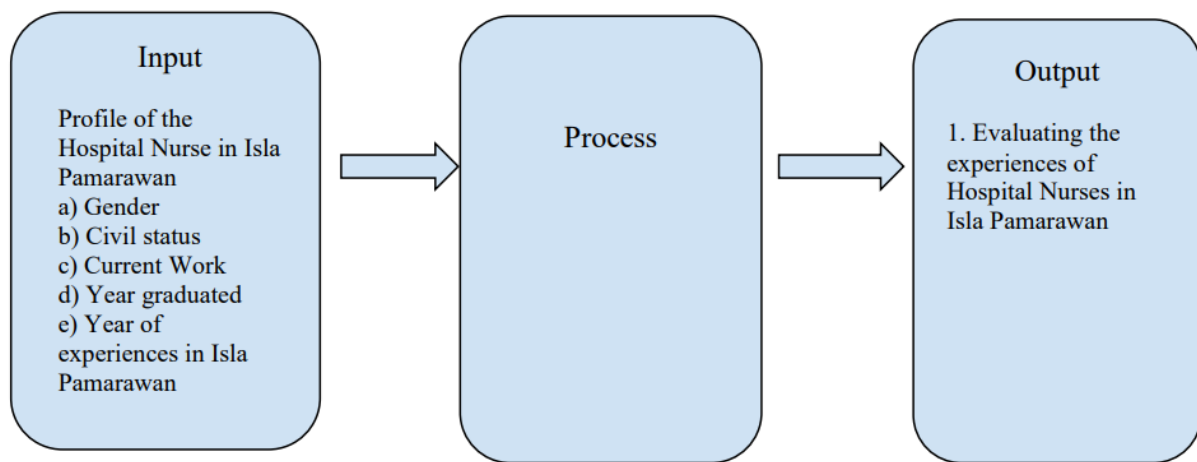
addressed in addition to workplace mental health programs and interventions which clearly shows in the rural health unit. Moreover, according to Jaeger et al. (2018), the main workplace challenges included a high workload, a lack of training and support for managing a complex caseload on a single nurse, unsatisfactory working conditions, issues with the surrounding communities, and the impact of postings on nurses' personal lives. Poor working conditions and a sense of being undervalued were determined to be the main demotivating factors.

Researchers have thoroughly discussed the healthcare system within the rural area and several struggles of healthcare workers. However, there is an evident lack of investigation regarding the experiences of nurses in providing healthcare to rural areas, that in accordance with the study conducted by Smith, Sim, and Halcom (2019) entitled "Nurses Experiences of Working in Rural Hospitals: An Integrated Review", which resulted in demand for further research exploring the nurses working experiences in rural hospitals, job satisfaction impact, turnover intention, and patient safety. Thus, researchers conducted this study in Isla Pamarawan, a rural area located in Malolos Bulacan, Philippines to gain a detailed understanding and in-depth knowledge regarding healthcare worker's experience. Furthermore, the result of the study contributed towards the proper allocation of government support such as funding to rural areas in order to cater quality health services to the community.

Conceptual Framework (SEC Approach)

The figure represents the input, process, and output. The profiles of the hospital nurses on Isla Pamarawan, which comprise their gender, civil status, place of employment, year of graduation, and experience, are included in the INPUT data. Hospital nurses are involved in campaigning for health initiatives and serving as educators to lead the community toward healthy living. These nurses also assess and monitor patients.

Additionally, the input data which comprises hospital nurses' data collection, responses, and data analysis or inferences will be given to PROCESS. All of these serve as a method to collect data and facts for a variety of OUTPUT-related objectives. Discover the difficulties, coping mechanisms, and tactics employed by the hospital nurses on Isla Pamarawan to help them identify the demands that must be satisfied at certain medical facilities on the island.



Statement of the Purpose

This study aims to unveil the experiences of hospital nurses providing health services in Isla Pamarawan, Malolos, Bulacan.

Scope and Delimitation

This study is mainly centered on the performance of nurses who previously worked in Isla Pamarawan within Malolos, Bulacan, during the years 2021 - 2022.

This study was designed to find workers in the health sector levels of satisfaction, issues, difficulties, and ways on how to live on the entire island. The interview schedule of the researchers covered the time from January through March 2024.

The researcher accomplished the data gathering through the use of a semi-structured interview, which introduced the use of questionnaires and solitary interviews in the gathering of data. Furthermore, the participants in this research is limited to only 7 healthcare workers who have experience working in Isla Pamarawan.

Methodology

Research Design

Researchers used a descriptive phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of local nurses providing care in a rural area. This approach has been selected to understand more about the quality of life and the quality of medical care that people in Isla Pamarawan receive. The researchers want to investigate and analyze the various experiences of the residents by employing the phenomenological technique. The aim of the researcher in descriptive phenomenology is to achieve transcendental subjectivity, which is defined as a situation in which "the researcher's impact on the inquiry is constantly assessed and biases and preconceptions neutralized so that they do not influence the object of study." (Shorey, S., & Ng, E. D. 2022)

Participants/Respondents of the Study

The researchers' participants came from the Hospital Nurses. The participants have at least 1 year of experience working as a nurse. The researchers conducted a one-on-one interview with a target of 10 participants. The results of the interviews revealed important details about the situation of community health care today and pointed out development opportunities. The objective of the research was to make a valuable contribution toward the advancement of evidence-based tactics and treatments that improve the caliber and availability of community healthcare services.

Instrument/s of the Study

Researchers formulated their own instrument; thus, this study did not adopt an instrument from other studies or literature in order to gather the necessary data from Isla Pamarawan. Moreover, the interview guide questions were validated by research advisers and panelists for appropriateness.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher obtained consent from the school and the research participants to ensure that all parties understood the goals of the research. Ethical approval for questionnaires and methods of data collection was obtained from the professor. Also signed the consent form. This study had a number of seven healthcare workers also a resident from Isla Pamarawan. This study has a qualification of one year of experience. The formulation of criteria was pursued strictly to avoid imprecise data acquisition. The researchers give precise terminology to ensure an accurate date. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather information on the participants while using open-ended questions. The researchers conducted strict conditions to ensure confidentiality. The data was assessed periodically to improve reliability and accuracy. The researchers allow the participants to voice their opinions and concerns during the data collection process. After the interview, all the data was collected and arranged for analysis. The researchers then proceed to summarize

the statements and practical guidelines based on the data collected. The data collected were encoded and transcribed manually. Following the six steps of Colaizzi's method, researchers analyzed the data, generated codes, grouped and further reduced, them until eighteen initial codes surfaced. Data were further analyzed and organized into themes, separating major and minor themes and integrating them into a comprehensive description. Correspondence, audit trail, and member checking were employed to ensure the credibility of findings.

Ethical Considerations

With the university's consent, the research team conveyed their plan to the school principal and research adviser. The ethical issues were controlled by taking the necessary precautions, such as the participants being informed of the intentions of the study beforehand. The researcher explained the consent process and participants in detail. The process involved explaining that their participation in the interview was voluntary and that they would be allowed to withdraw from the process at any time that suits them. This researcher recruited and interviewed people face-to-face. These people understood from the beginning that all their answers would be handled strictly and confidentially. It was documented that an interview respondent cannot disclose interview content to anybody, and that the researcher would be the sole person to access the info. According to RA 10173, the Data Privacy Act, we pledge to keep all information secret. Privacy should be valued for all survey participants, who shall not be disclosed in any method. In this respect, this aids in demarking and safeguarding their privacy, allowing them to stay anonymous and away from harm. Beyond that, to ensure that the confidentiality of the participants was protected, only those in the research team who had authorization to access the data from the study participants were allowed to do so. It should also be noted that the researcher who conducted this study decided to store the data using Google Drive and it will remain there until the research is complete.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The researcher utilized Lincoln and Guba's Framework (1985, 1994) to establish the study's quality and integrity. The study's credibility was demonstrated through prolonged engagement with the participants, persistent observation, verbatim transcription, and reflexive journaling. The aim was to describe the experience from the perspectives of the participants. It focused on accurate descriptions of their experiences, such as using in vivo statements or terms. Field notes were also kept by the researcher detailing research interactions and personal reactions while demonstrating engagement in the research process. Spending a considerable amount of time with the participants until their trust was

established ensured the authenticity of the data collected.

Another way of enhancing rigor was through the demonstration of dependability. The dependability of a study is evident when the process and data can be audited, and information is found to be accurate. The use of detailed interviews, maintenance of the audit trail (which consisted of raw data, data reduction, and analysis products), process notes and materials relating to intentions and dispositions supported the dependability of this research. Additionally, reflexivity on the researcher's part provided the same purpose. To that end, the researcher kept a personal journal detailing the internal and external dialogue occurring throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Confirmability of the study was achieved by returning to the participants after the initial collection of the data. Follow-up interviews were conducted for any clarifications or verifications to transcribe, coding, and categorize data. After data analysis and identification of the key themes, the researcher presented these to the participants and asked for their validation/ review. Each participant approved and validated the key themes of the study, which further enhanced its confirmability. Confirmability was also evident from the elements of the study, such as audio records of the interviews, detailed transcripts, notes taken during the interviews, and a detailed trail of data analysis.

Another aspect of trustworthiness is transferability, the extent to which qualitative findings can be transferred to other settings. The researcher provided a "thick description" of the phenomenon, a detailed and thorough description of the research participants and setting, and of observed processes context so that others can make inferences about contextual similarities.

Results and Discussion

The central question of the study "What are your experiences in providing healthcare services to the people of Isla Pamarawan?" was answered by the three (3) major themes and a total of six (6) minor themes (2 minor themes for each major theme).

1. 1st Major theme: *Navigating Challenges and a Call for Health: Context of Healthcare Services in an Island.* This theme focuses on the difficulties involved in providing immediate medical care on a remote island. It encapsulated 2 minor themes:

Scarcities and Difficulties: Challenges in facilities, supplies, and healthcare providers - it describes the experiences of the informants about limited resources in providing healthcare services such as supplies, facilities, and manpower.

A call for health: Accessibility amidst isolation - it entails the difficulties that the people on the island experienced in accessing healthcare services because of its remote and isolated location.

2. 2nd Major theme: Adaptation and Resiliency: Professional Nurses' at Your Service. It tells the stories of the ability of nurses to adjust and resolve the challenges they have encountered. 2 minor themes that surfaced are:

The Nurse and the Island: Transition and Community Engagement - shares the role of the nurses in providing healthcare services by engaging with the community and adapting to the situation.

Nursing as a Calling: Nurses Adaptation and Resiliency - focuses on the commitment, calling, and resiliency of nurses in fulfilling their duty to provide professional healthcare in times of challenging circumstances.

3. 3rd Major theme: Provision of Healthcare for All: Meeting the Needs of the People in a Remote Island, depicts providing everyone on the island equal access to healthcare services. The 2 minor themes are:

Striving for Holistic & Patient-Centered Care in Resource Limited Setting - it elucidates stories on how essential it is to provide comprehensive patient-centered care, especially in their context.

Reinforcing Change: Positive Transformation and Collaboration in Healthcare Experiences - which covers the positive changes and collaboration that led to better healthcare in the community island.

Conclusion

The study elucidates the challenges encountered and the resilience of the nurses in providing the healthcare needs of Isla Pamarawan. In an isolated island setting, the balance between resilience and scarcity, adaptation and commitment, and isolation and accessibility, becomes evident. It underscores the unique condition of healthcare within the island making their experience in providing healthcare even harder. The healthcare services on the island face serious obstacles due to the shortage of resources and location due to its geography, while the nurses, despite these challenges, showed their resiliency and commitment, responding to their calling by creating solutions to meet the very needs of the people while maintaining a holistic approach. They also presented collaborative efforts, reinforcing change by showing dedicated team effort in improving their services despite inadequacy, and transformation through professional growth. These experiences are captured by the framework developed, "The Enduring

Healthcare of an Isolated Island from the Lens of the Local Nurses" which illuminated their stories.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended to invest in improving professional experience through partnering with healthcare organizations outside Isla Pamarawan. Nurses in the remote island community will benefit from the provided seminars and training that focuses on skills like being innovative and resourceful. Although the network being unstable and transportation is limited, more specifically by boat, the meeting between the healthcare professionals in Isla Pamarawan and outside island communities can begin first through telecommunications. If plans are once set, transportation by boat is still possible if weather conditions permit. But in the long run, interchange face-to-face meetings and sending recorded videos as a response to address the issues proposed by the healthcare providers in the island community should suffice.

2. It is recommended to address limitations of resources by looking or reaching out for donations of medical supplies from medical organizations, hospitals, and individuals who are willing to support healthcare in remote communities. In addition, it is also better to look for other locally sourced or alternative supplies that are more readily available for medical use on the island. Exploring alternatives or looking for other ways of utilizing the available resources can further aid in providing healthcare in Pamarawan.

3. It is recommended to optimize medical resource utilization such as the medical devices that can be reused to diagnose and treat multiple patients. This is done by practicing strict reprocessing of used medical supplies by ensuring that it is sufficiently clean or maintains sterility to its greater extent and properly functioning, and will not pose a risk to the patient for whom it will be used. However, the practice of reusing one-time use supply should be strictly within international standards since the practice of reuse is regulated in many countries but the risk should not be overlooked.

4. Strict management of inventory to prevent wasting resources and ensure that supplies are used efficiently to their extent. Also, establishing a system of sharing supplies among healthcare facilities prevents depletion of resources, thus providing further extent of healthcare services.

5. Collaboration with stakeholders such as government agencies, NGOs, and media communications channels. This allows greater spread of awareness about the challenges faced by the healthcare providers and locals in the remote island community and to seek further support for

sourcing and funding supplies. For media communications, this allows them to spread awareness about the healthcare issues faced by the locals in the remote island community.

6. For the nurses in Isla Pamarawan, it is recommended to amplify their experiences to bring out more of the positive transformation that would aid them in greater challenges in the future that would remind them of the challenges they are facing currently or even more difficult. This recommendation focuses on their experiences that will be integrated with useful elements to increase their resiliency, empathy, and understanding of the difficulties offered by remote island communities. Elements such as embracing the difficult experiences that lead to their personal and professional growth; encouraging building stronger relationships with colleagues, patients, and the community to foster connection and learning; practicing self-care by encouraging the nurses to prioritize their health and well-being to reduce burnout; celebrate achievements no matter how small to keep themselves motivated against the challenges that Isla Pamarawan has to offer.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this manuscript. Results have been deduced objectively; nothing influenced this result by any individual, monetary, or institutional interests. In effect, utmost endeavors were in order to conduct a bias-free operation of gathering and analyzing the data into interpretation and producing a study based on merit, away from research inconsistencies.

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