

The Utilization of the Community on the Department of Health Priority Programs: Basis for Health Awareness Program Enhancement

Maria Francisca F. Palicpic¹, Joel John Dela Merced²

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-2440-2690>¹

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1459-5274>²

St. Bernadette of Lourdes College, Inc.^{1,2}

mpalicpic@sblc.edu.ph¹; jdelamerced@sblc.edu.ph²

ABSTRACT

*This study assessed the utilization of **priority health programs** of the **Department of Health (DOH)** and explored ways to improve community health awareness in selected district health centers in Tacloban City. Using a descriptive-correlational design, 286 respondents from **five district health centers** were surveyed through stratified sampling and a structured questionnaire. The findings showed that most respondents were 26–35 years old, female, married, college graduates, and earning ₱10,001–₱20,000 monthly. Respondents reported utilizing DOH priority programs through health center visits, awareness of available services, and satisfaction with healthcare workers, although perceptions of service accessibility and availability were neutral. Most participants demonstrated good health literacy and awareness, while socioeconomic and cultural factors had a moderate influence on healthcare utilization. Statistical analyses revealed significant relationships between demographic characteristics and factors influencing program utilization, as well as a significant positive correlation between DOH program utilization and health literacy and awareness. The study concluded that **health education quality, service availability, and socioeconomic conditions** influence community participation in health programs and served as the basis for proposing **an enhanced community health awareness program** to improve the utilization of DOH priority services in Tacloban City.*

Keywords: *Priority health programs, Department of Health, five district health centers, health education quality, service availability, socioeconomic conditions, enhanced community health awareness program*

INTRODUCTION

The priority health programs of the DOH include maternal and child healthcare, immunization, tuberculosis prevention, family planning, nutrition, and non-communicable disease prevention. It aims to examine the community's awareness, access, and participation in these services, as well as identify the factors that influence their utilization. Despite the availability of these programs, challenges in understanding, accessibility, and engagement continue to affect their effectiveness. By assessing how these health services are used and the barriers community members face, the study seeks to provide insights to improve health education, awareness, and service delivery. Ultimately, the findings are intended to support the development of more responsive, inclusive, and sustainable healthcare programs that promote better health outcomes and overall community well-being.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to assess the community utilization of the DOH Priority Programs as a basis for awareness program enhancement. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Sex
 - 1.3 Marital Status
 - 1.4 District Health Centers
 - 1.5 Educational Attainment; and
 - 1.6 Monthly Family Income
2. What is the level of utilization of the DOH Priority Programs by the community, in terms of:
 - 2.1 Frequency of visits to Rural Health Units
 - 2.2 Awareness of available DOH services
 - 2.3 Access to and availability of health services; and
 - 2.4 Satisfaction with the services provided
3. What is the level of influencing factors affecting the utilization of the DOH Priority Programs by the community in terms of:
 - 3.1 Socioeconomic factors
 - 3.2 Accessibility and availability of health services
 - 3.3 Health literacy and awareness; and
 - 3.4 Cultural and personal beliefs
4. Is there a significant relationship between the level of influencing factors affecting the utilization of the DOH Priority Programs and the demographic profile of the respondents?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the level of utilization of the DOH Priority Programs and the level of influencing factors affecting the utilization of the DOH Priority Programs?
6. Based on the findings of the study, what awareness program may be enhanced to improve the community utilization of DOH health services?

Scope and Delimitations

The study assessed respondents' demographic characteristics; the extent of utilization of DOH priority programs, including healthcare visits, awareness, accessibility, availability, and satisfaction with services; and factors influencing utilization, including socioeconomic conditions, health literacy, health awareness, accessibility, and cultural beliefs. It also examined the relationships between demographic characteristics, influencing factors, and program utilization. Although limited to selected district health centers and based on self-reported survey data.

Review of Related Literature

According to Ronald M. Andersen (1995), healthcare use depends on predisposing, enabling, and need factors. Studies by Dans et al. and Reiteration et al. found that financial constraints, awareness of benefits, trust in healthcare providers, and service accessibility

significantly affect healthcare utilization. Research by Abrio et al. emphasized the importance of adequate healthcare workforce distribution and implementation capacity, while Perry et al. and Heisler et al. highlighted the crucial role of community health workers in promoting health education and increasing service utilization. Studies by Ahmed et al., Serafica et al., Chen and Kumar, and Garcia et al. further demonstrated that awareness, health literacy, geographic accessibility, and culturally appropriate health promotion programs are essential for increasing participation in public health services. Overall, the literature consistently indicates that improving health education, strengthening community engagement, addressing socioeconomic and cultural barriers, and enhancing healthcare accessibility are key strategies for increasing the utilization and sustainability of DOH priority programs.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the Behavioral Model of Health Service Use by Ronald M. Andersen and the Health Promotion Model by Nola J. Pender. Andersen's model explains that healthcare utilization is influenced by predisposing factors (e.g., age, sex, marital status, and education), enabling factors (e.g., income, accessibility, availability of services, and healthcare resources), and need factors (e.g., perceived health needs and motivation to seek care). Pender's model emphasizes the role of health awareness, health literacy, perceived benefits and barriers, cultural beliefs, self-efficacy, and social influences in shaping health-promoting behaviors. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how demographic, socioeconomic, behavioral, cultural, and psychological factors influence community participation in the DOH's priority programs.

Conceptual Framework



METHODOLOGY

It covered the research design, study area, study population, sample size calculation, sampling technique, research instrument, instrument validation, pilot testing, data-gathering procedure, and data-analysis procedure. These procedures ensured a scientific and systematic analysis of the utilization of the DOH Priority Programs and helped determine the factors affecting the utilization of healthcare services in the selected District Health Centers in Tacloban City.

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the demographic characteristics of respondents, the extent of their use of DOH priority programs, and the factors influencing healthcare utilization. The descriptive method was used to describe respondents' profiles and assess their use of health services, while the correlational method was used to determine the relationships among demographic factors, healthcare utilization factors, and the level of utilization of DOH priority programs. This design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to analyze existing relationships among variables without manipulating them,

providing evidence-based information for improving community health awareness programs.

Research Steps

The study followed a systematic process that included securing ethical approval, obtaining institutional permission, validating and pilot-testing the research instrument, administering the survey questionnaire, collecting and analyzing data, and interpreting the results to develop recommendations and a proposed leadership training program.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

Data were collected through a structured survey questionnaire administered to 57 respondents from each of the five district health centers. Participants were selected by a stratified random sampling technique based on established inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure relevance to the study objectives.

Data Analysis Methods

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to describe respondent characteristics and study variables, while Chi-Square and Pearson r were utilized to determine significant relationships among variables.

Research Hypotheses and Validation

The study tested the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the level of utilization of the DOH Priority Programs and the level of influence of factors affecting their utilization. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings, the research instrument underwent content validation by a panel of experts and pilot testing among 30 respondents. The instrument's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a coefficient of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable, indicating good internal consistency.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The study focused on the District Health Centers selected in Tacloban City and may not be representative of all healthcare users in other communities and healthcare institutions. Ethical principles were upheld through informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and approval from the appropriate ethics review committee.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study found that, overall, community members were using health services provided by the DOH. Other respondents also reported their satisfaction with services received from health centers, including the professionalism of health workers and the provision of health information. There were, however, areas that need improvement – accessibility and availability of health services, socioeconomic problems, and awareness activities in the community. The results also indicated that health literacy and awareness levels have a significant impact on the use of DOH priority programs, and that access, socio-economic status, and cultural beliefs can also influence individuals' access to health services. The results suggest that community health awareness programs should be intensified to provide adequate information to the people about

the various health services available and also to motivate them to participate actively in the health programs.

SUMMARY

Respondents from five selected district health centers in Tacloban City utilized the Department of Health's priority programs, particularly for consultations, immunizations, maternal and child health care, and preventive services. While awareness of DOH services and satisfaction with healthcare workers were high, accessibility and availability of services were rated as neutral. The findings also revealed significant relationships between demographic characteristics, healthcare utilization factors, and the level of utilization of DOH priority programs, with health literacy and health awareness emerging as the strongest factors influencing participation in healthcare services.

CONCLUSIONS

Community members in selected areas of Tacloban City generally had good access to and awareness of the DOH's priority health programs and were satisfied with the services provided by health workers. However, challenges remained in service accessibility and availability, particularly related to transportation, medicine supply, and convenience of service delivery. The results also showed that demographic characteristics and factors such as socioeconomic status, access to services, health literacy, and cultural beliefs significantly influenced healthcare utilization, with health literacy and awareness identified as the strongest predictors of participation in health programs and preventive care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthen health awareness and education programs through regular campaigns, seminars, and community outreach to improve understanding and utilization of the priority programs of the DOH. LGUs and healthcare institutions should improve access to services by addressing transport, medicine availability, and financial barriers, especially for low-income households, while ensuring continuous training for healthcare workers to enhance service delivery and community engagement. In addition, collaboration with community leaders and organizations is encouraged to strengthen participation and trust.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We express our gratitude to all individuals who helped complete this research. We would also like to express our gratitude to our colleagues and friends for their unwavering encouragement, support, and valuable comments over the entire process. Ultimately, our families warrant gratitude for their enduring patience and unwavering support throughout the entire process. These individuals contributed to the feasibility of this research.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

REFERENCES

Abrigo, M.R.M., Opiniano, G.A., & Tam, Z.C. (2021). Process evaluation of the Department of Health Human Resources for Health Deployment Programs. Philippine Institute for Development Studies.