



Understanding the Intersection of Culture and Environment in the Experiences of Filipino Healthcare Workers During COVID-19

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BACKGROUND

- COVID-19 disproportionately affected Filipino Healthcare Workers (**FilAm HCWs**).
- High infection risk from frontline. **overrepresentation** and **health disparities**.
- Faced **racist rhetoric** and **inadequate safety** measures.
- **Structural risks** and inequities deepened the impact on overall well-being.
- **Data aggregation** lumps FilAms into the broader Asian category, **masking group-specific risks**.
- Experiences of Filipino HCWs during the pandemic remain **underexplored**.

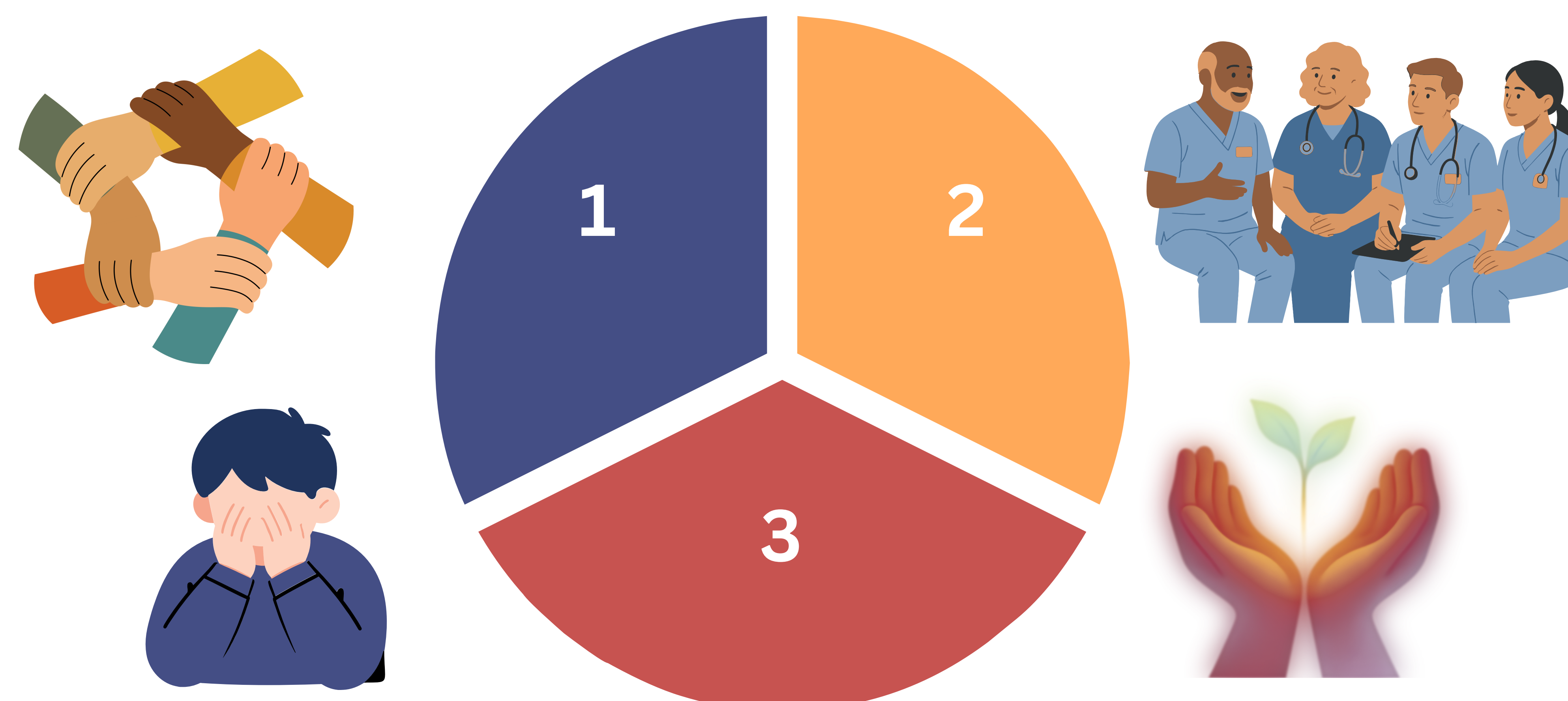
PURPOSE

- Examine experiences through a **cultural lens**.
- Identify factors that contribute to Filipino HCWs **resilience** and **vulnerability** during the pandemic.
- Understand how values **cultivated strength** and **perpetuated disparities**.
- Underscore the need for **culturally responsive systems** that address the social and cultural realities of minoritized HCWs.
- Inform strategies to **enhance workplace inclusivity and support**; encourage further **longitudinal research**.

METHODS

- **Design:** Qualitative study of Filipino HCWs' COVID-19 experiences (who, what, when, where).
- **Recruitment:** Digital fliers posted on social media, physical fliers handed out during health fairs in LA.
- **Purposive sampling (7):** Filipino/FilAm, 18+, English-speaking, patient-facing HCWs (Mar 2020–Mar 2021).
- **Data Collection:** Qualtrics survey & 1-hour interview.
- **Theoretical Framework:** Sikolohiyang Pilipino, Nadal's 4 Filipino Values & Colonial Mentality.
- **Thematic Analysis:** Three distinct themes were identified, each diverging into related subthemes.

Thematic Analysis with *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, Virgilio Enriquez, and Kevin Nadal's FilAm Cultural Values



1) Navigating Relational Struggles and Strength on the Frontlines: The Role of Kapwa

Subthemes: Relational Strain Through Kapwa, Collective Resilience Through Kapwa

"I still have in me—the Filipino values that my parents instilled in me. We don't only see them as patients, but we kind of treat them as family." (P5)

"So during the pandemic, I lost my dad... I think at the time, that just had me put in extra hours so I didn't have to think a lot about it." (P4)

"One of the good things about being in the hospital during COVID is [that] your friends are there." (P2)

2) Familial Obligation and Solidarity: The Role of Utang na Loob and Pakikisama

Subthemes: Familial Motivation to Work, United Strength in Pakikisama

"It's part of our culture that you help out family members. I send money to my parents regularly... The extra money—if [I worked] overtime—would be a big help in supporting not just my family, but my family in the Philippines." (P5)

"We all work[ed] well together as a team because if we didn't work well as a team, then I don't think I would have lasted working in that department." (P3)

"We were all tired from working all the hours, but there was teamwork and we were helping one another. Especially with reminding how to gown up or just sanitizing everything, we were all together." (P7)

3) Pandemic Insights on Personal Wellness: Exposing the Gaps and Positive Changes

Subthemes: The Role of Hiya and Utang na Loob, Renewed Strength in Faith, New Career Callings

"I felt like if I call off work, that will affect my coworkers—especially if there's like a lot of workload. But that's why I try to be healthy. I follow guidelines, procedures in order to avoid getting infected..." (P5)

"Sometimes I [felt] depressed...[but] because of my faith in God, I try to fight it off. I just pray." (P5)

"Like compared to working at the clinic, I feel like I have a well-balanced life now...I'm able to sleep, have a good night's sleep... I go home not feeling tired, not anxious." (P3)

DISCUSSION

- Our study highlights the **cultural implications** that may exacerbate the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 for Filipino HCWs.
- **Future studies** should focus on **longitudinal effects** of Filipino HCWs who worked through COVID-19.
- Qualitative comparative study comparing Filipino immigrant and US-raised Filipino HCWs **may better reveal** the impact of **colonial mentality**.
- Highlights the **need for an intersectional approach** for culturally responsive approaches in minoritized worker safety.

CONCLUSION

- **Hiya** (shame/fear of burdening others) and **Utang na loob** (obligation or indebtedness), may have negatively affected well-being by **discouraging** FilAm HCWs from **speaking up**, **refusing unsafe conditions**, or **prioritizing their own needs**.
- **Kapwa** (shared identity and interconnectedness) and **Pakikisama** (solidarity with others), had the potential to foster **resilience**, **emotional support**, and **community** during the pandemic.
- The pandemic significantly **influenced the career paths and perspectives** of many FilAm HCWs—prolonged **stress**, **trauma**, and **workplace inequities** can affect **retention** in healthcare professions.
- **Healthcare systems** must **implement stronger protections** that recognize the cultural backgrounds of diverse minoritized workers, while also **promoting leadership** that advocates for the workforce.

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