



# Understanding the Impact of Culture and Environment on Filipino Healthcare Workers During COVID-19

Gianpiero Monreal, BS; Allison Blancia, Derek Lance, BS;  
May Nicole Cagulada, Elisa Añel, Alyssa Cua, Bea Cruz, Dante Anthony Tolentino, PhD, RN  
University of California, Los Angeles



## Background

- COVID-19 disproportionately affected Filipino HCWs—high infection risk from frontline overrepresentation and health disparities
- Faced racist rhetoric and inadequate safety measures
- Structural risks and inequities deepened impact on well-being
- Experiences of Filipino HCWs during the pandemic remain underexplored

## Purpose

- Examine experiences through cultural lens
- Understand how values cultivated strength and perpetuated disparities

## Methods

- **Design:** Qualitative descriptive study of Filipino HCWs' COVID-19 experiences (who, what, when, where)
- **Purposive sampling:** Filipino/FilAm, 18+, English-speaking, patient-facing HCWs (Mar 2020–Mar 2021)
- **Data Collection:** Qualtrics survey & 1-hour interview
- **Theoretical Framework:** Nadal's Filipino values & colonial mentality
- **Thematic Analysis**

## Discussion

- Study described COVID-19 Filipino HCW experience and cultural drivers that shaped experience
- Highlights cultural implications that may exacerbated 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 impact of colonial mentality
- Highlights need for intersectional approach for culturally responsive approaches in minoritized worker safety

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## ROOTED IN VALUES: CULTURE SHAPED FILIPINO HEALTHCARE WORKERS' COVID-19 EXPERIENCES

“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.”

“One of the good things about being in the hospital during COVID is your friends are there.”

### Navigating Relational Struggles: The Role of Kapwa

**Subthemes: strain and connectedness, resilience through kapwa**

### Filipino Identity in Healthcare

**Subthemes: motivations for healthcare, unity, and caring for others**

“We're known to take care of, you know, like, especially with our family... Even if you do your research on Filipino caregivers, like a lot of the people here, the Americans, they like, you know, particularly Filipinos, because they take care of the patients like they take care of your of their family.”

“I feel like a lot of Filipinos, especially in the Gen X and then older... they're working to either get their child through college or to send back to the Philippines. And they are mostly working a lot of overtime.”

### Pandemic Illuminations on Personal Wellness

**Subthemes: internal conflicts, renewed faith, and new occupations**

“I still wanted to work even though I was hurt. I think that's just being a stupid Filipino nurse.”

“Sometimes I feel like... depressed... because of my faith in God, I kind of like try to fight it off. I just like pray.”

### Journey Through the Unknown: Navigating New Threats

**Subthemes: resource shortages, distrust, and reminders of purpose**

“...there was a time during in that first six to eight months where, um, you had to just kind of like hold on to your N95 mask, uh, because there, there wasn't enough.”

“I have so much distrust after what they did in COVID. Um, there's so much research out there, both international and national, and I didn't know how much like politics came into play. With, um, COVID 19, um, there was so much politics.”

## Hiya

- Describes Filipino cultural concept of shame
- Hiya main motivator for many Filipino HCWs to not call off work during pandemic
- Personal wellness often overlooked in order to continue working

## Utang na Loob

- Describes debt of reciprocity within Filipino culture
- Sense of indebtedness to coworkers, taking more hours to fill short-staff
- Provide financial help to family back in the Philippines

## Pakikisama

- Translates to getting along with others (social acceptance, conformity)
- Filipino HCWs acting optimistically through harsh circumstances
- Friendly gestures and teamwork attitude grew strength during pandmemic

## Kapwa

- Refers to deep sense of shared identity, mutual support
- Many relationships suffered during lockdown, not seeing family & friends
- Work friends, united in hardship, grew resilience and support system