

JCSH-041

Resilience as a Double-Edged Sword: Key Factors Influencing Vaccine Hesitancy in the Bagobo Klata Community of Barangay Talandang

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bughat, postpartum, traditional
healers, traditional medicine,
ethnography, madness

Abstract

The study examines COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among the Bagobo Klata in Barangay Talandang. While hesitancy is often linked to misinformation and mistrust, this community's resistance is also shaped by their resilience, self-reliance, and autonomy, revealing a more complex interplay of factors. Over a month of immersive fieldwork in Barangay Talandang, we employed ethnographic methods—including interviews and participant observations—to investigate the factors influencing the Bagobo Klata community's hesitancy toward vaccination. It became evident that resilience plays a central role in shaping the community's stance on vaccination. This resilience is not merely toward the disease itself but an assertion of their capacity to endure the pandemic without government intervention or the restoration of restricted liberties, which were contingent on vaccination. Their sense of self-sufficiency is grounded in a robust network of support systems that provided sustenance during the pandemic, their ability to navigate and exploit loopholes in pandemic regulations, and deeply embedded knowledge systems and beliefs about health and the nature of COVID-19. While these factors empowered the Bagobo Klata to resist external pressures, they also contributed to the persistence of vaccine hesitancy. The reliance on these internal support structures and alternative knowledge paradigms sustained the community through the crisis but, paradoxically, reinforced a hesitance to engage with government-led health initiatives like vaccination. This research extends the conversation on vaccine hesitancy, offering nuanced insights into how resilience, autonomy, and cultural beliefs intersect to shape health-related decisions. It underscores the importance of understanding community-specific factors when crafting public health strategies that are attuned to the unique needs and values of indigenous populations.