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ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNMENT POLICY INTERVENTIONS ON RATIONAL DRUG USE IN RURAL HEALTH UNITS LOCATED IN DISTRICT IV–LAGUNA

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ABSTRACT

Rational drug use (RDU) is essential in ensuring patient safety, treatment effectiveness, and efficient utilization of healthcare resources. This study assessed the implementation of government policy interventions on rational drug use and determined their influence on rational drug use practices in rural health units located in District IV–Laguna. A quantitative descriptive-causal research design was employed involving 100 healthcare personnel, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and pharmacy assistants. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire and analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and regression analysis. Findings revealed that government policy implementation was highly evident in terms of policy dissemination, availability of essential medicines, enforcement of prescribing and dispensing regulations, monitoring and supervision mechanisms, and training of healthcare personnel. Likewise, compliance with rational drug use practices was consistently high across all measured indicators. Regression analysis further showed that government policy implementation significantly influenced rational drug use practices. The study concludes that strengthening policy implementation contributes to improved prescribing, dispensing, and medication management in rural health units. Continuous policy dissemination, monitoring, adequate medicine supply, and regular capacity-building activities are recommended to sustain rational drug use.

INTRODUCTION

Rational drug use ensures that patients receive appropriate medicines in correct doses, for an adequate duration, and at the lowest possible cost. Despite existing health policies in the Philippines, irrational drug use remains a concern due to inappropriate prescribing, misuse of antibiotics, inadequate monitoring, and inconsistent adherence to treatment guidelines. Government initiatives such as the Generics Act, the Cheaper Medicines Act, the Philippine National Formulary, and the Universal Health Care Act were established to address these concerns by promoting access to quality medicines and improving medication management.

Government policy interventions influence medication practices through policy dissemination, availability of essential medicines, enforcement of regulations, monitoring mechanisms, and healthcare personnel training. However, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the effectiveness of these interventions in rural health units located in District IV–Laguna. This study was conducted to determine the level of policy implementation, assess compliance with rational drug use practices, and examine whether policy implementation significantly influences rational drug use among healthcare personnel.

Statement of the Problem

This study sought to determine the influence of government policy interventions on rational drug use in rural health units located in District IV–Laguna. Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Determine the level of implementation of government policy interventions in terms of:
    - dissemination of drug-related policies and guidelines;
    - availability of essential medicines;
    - enforcement of prescribing and dispensing regulations;
    - monitoring and supervision mechanisms; and
    - training and capacity-building of healthcare personnel.
2. Determine the extent of compliance with rational drug use practices in terms of:
    - appropriateness of drug prescribing;
    - accuracy of drug dispensing;
    - correct patient use of medicines;
    - compliance with standard treatment guidelines; and
    - reduction of unnecessary and inappropriate drug use.
3. Determine whether government policy implementation significantly influences rational drug use practices in rural health units located in District IV–Laguna.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicated that the implementation of government policy interventions on rational drug use was consistently rated **high** across all dimensions. Respondents agreed that healthcare facilities effectively disseminated drug-related policies, maintained adequate supplies of essential medicines, enforced prescribing and dispensing regulations, conducted regular monitoring activities, and provided training opportunities for healthcare personnel.

Similarly, the extent of compliance with rational drug use practices was also rated **high**. Healthcare personnel generally demonstrated appropriate prescribing practices, accurate dispensing of medicines, proper patient counseling, compliance with standard treatment guidelines, and efforts to minimize unnecessary or inappropriate drug use.

Regression analysis revealed a significant influence of government policy implementation on rational drug use practices, indicating that stronger implementation of government policies contributes to improved medication management within rural health units. These findings support the importance of continuous policy dissemination, effective supervision, adequate medicine availability, and regular professional development in promoting rational drug use. The results further emphasize that sustained government support and institutional commitment are necessary to maintain quality pharmaceutical services and improve patient outcomes in primary healthcare facilities.

Table 1.1. Level of government policy implementation on rational drug use in rural health units located in District IV, in terms of dissemination of drug-related policies and guidelines.

Item Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1. Drug-related policies and guidelines are clearly communicated to healthcare personnel.	3.15	0.8919	Agree
2. Written copies of drug-related policies are readily available in the facility.	3.16	0.8130	Agree
3. Regular updates regarding drug-related policies are provided to staff.	3.14	0.9537	Agree
Mean	**3.15**	**0.8862**	**High**

Legend: (4) 3.50-4.00 Very High/Strongly Agree; (3) 2.50-3.49 High/ Agree; (2) 1.50-2.49 Low/Disagree; (1) 1.00-1.49 Very Low/Strongly Disagree

Linear Regression

Model Summary - Rational Drug Use

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	RMSE
M_0	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.286
M_1	0.204	0.042	-0.009	0.288

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AI Declaration

The researcher used ChatGPT (OpenAI) as AI-assisted tools during the preparation of this manuscript. Their use was limited to improving grammar, sentence structure, language clarity, organization, and formatting. AI was also used to assist in summarizing sections and enhancing readability. The conceptualization of the study, literature review, research design, data collection, statistical analysis, interpretation of results, and conclusions were performed by the researcher under the guidance of the thesis adviser. All AI-generated suggestions were critically reviewed, verified, and revised before incorporation into the final manuscript. No AI tool was used to generate or interpret research findings independently.