

Universal Health Coverage as a Foundation for Peaceful Societies: Insights from Brazil's Unified Health System (SUS)

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Abstract:

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is a critical driver of social cohesion and national stability. In a global context where catastrophic health expenditures fuel social unrest and marginalization, Brazil's Unified Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde – SUS) stands as a landmark example of health as a fundamental human right. This article examines SUS through a social justice lens, analyzing how its constitutional principles function as a safety net that fosters a resilient society. The methodology consists of a narrative review of scientific literature, policy documents, and institutional reports examining the intersections between Universal Health Coverage, social inclusion, institutional trust, and democratic stability. The discussion highlights how universality promotes a shared sense of citizenship, while equity-oriented policies mitigate territorial and social inequalities through targeted allocation of resources. Furthermore, the Family Health Strategy demonstrates how primary healthcare can strengthen institutional trust by materializing the presence of the State within vulnerable communities. Despite chronic underfunding and recent fiscal constraints, SUS has maintained a remarkable capacity for resilience, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Brazilian experience suggests that universal health systems may contribute not only to improved health outcomes but also to the structural prerequisites associated with Positive Peace. In this sense, SUS offers valuable lessons for how Universal Health Coverage can support democratic stability, social cohesion, and the reduction of inequalities in contemporary societies.

Keywords:

Universal Health Coverage, Unified Health System, Positive Peace, Social Cohesion, Primary Health Care, Health Policy.