

# THE SILENT STRUGGLE: NURSING AIDES' EXPERIENCES AMIDST THE COVID-19 CRISIS

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## Abstract

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of nursing aides in selected hospitals in Cebu amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, the experiences of nursing aides have remained limited in the Philippines, specifically in Metro Cebu. Husserlian's descriptive phenomenology was utilized to examine and define their lived experiences. The researchers utilized purposive sampling based on the established inclusion criteria: resident of Metro Cebu, working during the pandemic, employed in private or government hospitals with 2 years or more of working experience, and owned a communication device. The data were analyzed using Colaizzi's method. The study yielded two major themes along with five sub-themes. The study found that. Nurse aides seek to be recognized and appreciated for their efforts in the healthcare system. Increasing the budget allocated for nurse aides, benefits, hazard pay, and implementing recognition programs or appreciation events are some of the recommendations that can be proposed to the hospitals or LGUs to motivate them to continue upholding relevance to healthcare, with their scope of practice.

Keywords: nursing aide, nursing assistant, healthcare workers, COVID 19 pandemic, challenges

## Introduction

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has sustained a substantial impact on healthcare systems globally. It has put healthcare providers under tremendous physiological and psychological strain, with most of their workforce being deployed to effectively manage and prevent the spread of the illness (Eftekhari Ardebili et al., 2021). The emergence of this pandemic has influenced the media in its focus and significantly increased the outpouring of public recognition on nurses and physicians. However, there are still other health workers who contribute in numerous ways, exposing themselves to the threat of COVID (White, 2021, pp. 1-10; Bailey, 2020).

One of the frontline heroes are the nursing aides who play a vital role not just in combating the virus, but in all patients' medical needs. Nursing aides give direct patient care as much as the nurses do because they perform direct patient care and activities of daily living. (Cambridge College of Healthcare & Technology, 2020). They provide support and assistance to patients in accordance with the policies set by the healthcare institutions and aim to enhance the quality and comfort of their patients' stay in healthcare facilities. (Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2005, as cited in Travers, et al., 2020).

In Western countries, such as in the United States of America, CNAs or Certified Nursing Assistant or Certified Nurse Aide is considered as an in-demand job for preventive medical care. In 2018, a surge of over a million jobs in this field was also recorded. (RegisteredNursing.org Staff Writers, 2021).

In the Philippines however, the words "Nursing Aide" or "Nursing Assistants" are not commonly known. Nurses are customarily known as primary health care providers. Only a few know that side-by-side with the nurses are the nursing aides. Like the United States and other countries, they undergo classes and training to earn certificates and licenses to practice the said profession. On the other hand, the Nursing Aide or hospital assistant must earn a certificate in Health Care Services, recognized as the National Certificate II (NC II) in the

Philippines. They are trained to assist with the mobility of the patient, to transport, and support with the patients' biopsychosocial care and to handle waste in health care settings (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, (TESDA) n.d.). Other employers locally and abroad require the Nursing Aide to complete specialized courses such as Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), first aid and food handling/sterile processing to qualify for the job. (Bureau of Local Employment, Department of Labor, and Employment, n.d.).

In December of 2019, the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) was first identified in Wuhan, China. Authorities implemented a lockdown to the area. However, the Hubei province failed to contain the outbreak. It spread to mainland China then unfortunately to the whole world, thus naming it as a global pandemic. (World Health Organizations, 2020). The significant increase in numbers of infectious cases overwhelmed the workload in various healthcare sectors around the world.

In February of 2020, Cebu became the epicenter of the COVID 19 pandemic with the average number of 165 cases daily of coronavirus disease (Cariaso, 2021). Healthcare workers in Cebu such as doctors, medical technicians, nurses, nursing aides, and other members of the healthcare team, have joined forces and worked tirelessly in battling the COVID 19 pandemic.

Despite the integral role of Nursing Aides in caring for the patients, there is limited research taken to explore their experiences while working in the hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, published data regarding the experiences of Nursing Aides during COVID-19 remain limited particularly in the Philippines, specifically in Metro Cebu. Thus, the researchers' interests were ignited. They believed that this phenomenon is worthy of discovery and sharing to the public. It is the hope of the researchers that through this study, this can cultivate awareness among the public and be able to portray the experiences of the nursing aides here in Metro Cebu.

This study also aims to explore the lived experiences of the nursing aides in selected hospitals of Cebu amidst the battle of the COVID 19 pandemic. The findings of this research will be the basis for a Proposed Nursing Aides' Appreciation Program to boost the morale of the nursing aides by acknowledging their extraordinary contribution to the healthcare community.

### Literature Review

Certified Nursing Assistants/ Aides, also known as CNAs, are tasked to assist the nurses, and making patients feel at ease during their stay in healthcare facilities. They provide limited patient care, which frequently includes taking vital signs, cleaning rooms, and feeding, bathing, and dressing patients in need. CNAs report to Registered Nurses for supervision. They usually work in nursing homes or assisted living facilities, assisting patients in long-term care settings to feel at ease (Goodwin University, 2019).

In the USA, before entering the workforce, Certified Nursing Assistants must complete a state-approved certificate program. The requirements for these programs vary by state, but most of them include classroom learning, hands-on training, and on-the-job training. Candidates must also take and pass a competency exam after completing this program. After passing the competency exam, a candidate is placed on a state registry of Certified Nursing Assistants and can begin looking for work in hospitals, nursing homes, and other healthcare facilities (Cambridge College of Healthcare & Technology, 2020).

Nurse Aides are also important in keeping the nurses informed about the patient's condition (Community College of Denver, 2018). Though these professionals are not nurses, however, they are on the frontline of contact between medical staff and patients. For many nurses, this role implies a significant ease on their part and serves as a point of their nursing intervention (Malvik, 2020).

Based on the Training Regulations for Health Care Services NC II (n.d.), to be qualified to work as a Nursing Aide in the Philippines, one must first obtain a certificate in Health Care Services, known as the National Certificate II (NC II). NC II is a short TESDA course wherein they will be trained on how to assist and care for patients in a medical facility. Some of the core competencies they will learn in this program include proper infection and control guidelines implementation, bed preparation and maintenance, collecting and maintaining linen stocks at end-user locations, assisting with patient mobility, assisting in transporting patients, assisting with biopsychosocial support care of patients, handling waste in a health care environment, and applying basic first aid.

According to the Department of Labor and Employment (n.d.), a Nursing Aide in the Philippines earns an entry-level salary range of P8,000-P10,000 per month, based on 2011 rates. A Nursing Aide's average monthly pay in the United States and Canada is \$2,003, or approximately \$24,040 per year. The basic educational requirement is an associate degree, which consists of a two-year course, wherein a licensed health professional supervises a practical nursing orderly program. Some employers may also require specialized training in areas such as CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation), first aid, and food handling/sterile processing. For a two-year course in Practical Nursing, the cost of education ranges from P13,000 to P30,000

per semester. However, some training schools provide an 8-month Healthcare Services training course.

CNAs are often the primary caregivers in nursing homes and residential care facilities, with more direct contact with the residents as compared to other staff members, according to the U.S Bureau of Labor and Statistics in 2021.

Since the 1918 influenza, which brought a widespread global effect, COVID-19 has been recorded as the first respiratory pandemic. It started when a novel type of coronavirus which has never been identified in humans, caused the viral pneumonia outbreak in Wuhan City as announced by the Chinese health authorities. The World Health Organization has considered COVID-19 as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), twenty-three days later. On the same day, the first imported COVID-19 case in the Philippines was confirmed by the Secretary of Health. The first case of localized COVID-19 transmission was confirmed by the Department of Health on March 7, 2020, then a day after, the President recognized it as a threat to national security (Nicomedes et al., 2020).

Over 10,000 healthcare workers in Africa were infected with this coronavirus, the World Health Organization (WHO) African Regional Office in Brazzaville reported (African Regional Office (AFRO)/World Health Organization (WHO/OMS), 2020). Moreover, on September 2, 2020, 570,000 healthcare workers were infected and 2,500 were dead due to COVID-19, the WHO Pan American Regional Office in Washington, DC published (PanAmerican Health Organization (PAHO)/World Health Organization (WHO), 2020). Last September 17, 2020, the WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, emphasized that “thousands of health workers infected with COVID-19 had lost their lives worldwide” during the announcement of the WHO Health Worker Safety Charter (WHO Geneva, 2020).

The significant increase in numbers of infectious cases overwhelmed the workload in various healthcare sectors around the world (The Lancet, 2020, p. 922). It brought several consequences on human life's culture, economy, and even politics. This not only affects the present but also the future. This pandemic has been a huge test for the healthcare systems in terms of their weaknesses and capabilities (Ardebili et al., 2020, Derasin et al., 2021).

Based on the study by Osakwe et al., (2021) entitled, “All alone: A qualitative study of home health aides' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic in New York”, COVID-19 pandemic has put a significant strain on the US healthcare system, as well as with home healthcare (HHC) agencies. The HHC workforce consists of nurses, therapists, social workers, and home health aides (HHAs).

Nursing homes have been in the spotlight as important sites of transmission for COVID-19 since a nursing home in Washington became the first site of the virus's outbreak in the United States in early 2020. Consequently, it has led to 180,000 COVID-related deaths in nursing homes nationwide in the United States after a year. To maintain their services and keep themselves and residents safe, nursing home staff, as well as the CNAs, had to face challenges, especially since residents are vulnerable to COVID-19 due to some factors such as their age, their condition, and being placed in a closed setting. Also, despite the importance of nursing homes in the overall trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic, empirical evidence documenting

nursing home workers' perspectives and experiences is surprisingly limited. Furthermore, when family visitations were not allowed in nursing homes nationwide during the pandemic, CNAs played an important role in serving as emotional companions to their residents. In fact, they spend more time with the residents than other workers. CNAs' work is critical to the 1.3 million nursing home residents housed in 15,600 facilities across the country (Ecker et al., 2021).

In The Philippines, an estimated 23,000 shortfall of nurses nationwide with the situation getting worse and most Filipinos die without medical professional consultation. Nurses and other medical workers are left with no choice but to extend on longer shifts because of lack of human resources (Sadang, 2020). Concerns over insufficient capacity to care for COVID-19 patients prompted authorities to take initiatives to increase the supply of such healthcare workers (Epstein & Sarna, 2021).

According to the One Hospital Command Center, hospitals nationwide are suffering from a manpower shortage due to rising COVID cases, as reported by Mayen Jaymalin in The Philippine Star on June 18, 2021. The national government is deploying additional healthcare workers (HCWs) to augment the workforce in places where COVID is on the rise, according to OHCC operations chief Bernadette Velasco (Jaymalin, 2021). To augment the manpower in the healthcare system, nursing aides play an important role in this time of crisis. Unfortunately, despite their significance, there are no published studies pertaining to their experiences during the Covid- 19 pandemic in the hospitals.

According to Prof. Jasmine Travers (2020) and her colleagues, the public's focus, and appreciation on workers in the healthcare industries has been limited to nurses and doctors during the COVID 19 pandemic. Travers said, "Nurse aides are the eyes and ears of the clinical staff and can readily alert them of changes or declines in a patient's condition". For people like nursing assistants, who spend the most time caring for patients and are one of the frontliners who give direct patient care, are critical to the quality of care and decision-making efforts in the face of uncertainty (Sapega, 2018). NAs comprise an essential part of the patient care team. This is the reason why giving acknowledgment to these "frontliners" is important during the COVID-19 pandemic, for they have shown inherent resilience and dedication despite the great personal risk involved (Liu et al., 2020).

In conclusion, the literature review gave readers information regarding Nurse Aides and their significance, roles, and contributions to the healthcare system, especially during the pandemic. To give acknowledgment and recognition, one must know and understand the lives of the nursing aides here in the Philippines, as we focus our attention on the nursing aides particularly here in Metro Cebu. It is evident from the related literature and studies, the lack of research studies and information about the lived experiences of the nursing aides/nursing assistants working in the hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, their stories need to be shared with the public, especially their highs and lows while working during the pandemic. It is essential to conduct this research not just for the population of nursing aides or assistants in the Philippines that is growing, but also for the future researchers and for the public to know about them as well. Lastly, the researchers seek to explore the lived experiences of Nursing Aides in selected

hospitals of Cebu amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This will help the researchers better apprehend the phenomenon since only a few studies are present with topics that directly tackle the researchers' intended subject.

### Methods and Materials

This study utilized Edmund Husserl's descriptive phenomenology as a methodology to answer the research questions. Moreover, the study was conducted within the areas of Metropolitan Cebu, Philippines. Metro Cebu is the country's second-largest metropolitan area. Located on the east coast of Cebu Island in the Visayas region. It comprises four cities (Cebu City, Mandaue, Lapu-Lapu and Talisay) and seven municipalities in surrounding areas namely Carcar, Compostela, Consolacion, Cordova, Danao, Liloan, Minglanilla, Naga and San Fernando. Likewise, In this study, the researchers utilized a non-probability sampling approach, specifically purposive sampling, to ensure the richness of the data. In purposive sampling, the goal is not to randomly select participants from a specific population to create generalizations, instead, participants are chosen based on the judgment of the researchers whom they think are the best suited for the study.

Furthermore, The researchers utilized 10 Certified Nursing Aide study participants from different areas within Metro Cebu who are working in the hospitals during this time of pandemic. The following are the criteria that the participant must possess: (1) resident of Metro Cebu; (2) must be employed in any private or government owned hospitals with 2 years or beyond working experience during COVID-19 pandemic; (3) age range is within 25 years old and above, regardless of gender; (4) owns a communication device such as mobile phones, tablets or laptop; (5) willing to participate in the study; (6) have a good or stable internet connection to allow smooth-sailing interview; (7) able to give and sign the informed consent.

On the other hand, the exclusion criteria are: (1) other healthcare workers except from nurse aides; (2) Nurse aides that are working during covid pandemic but not in the hospitals; (3) informants that are part of the vulnerable population such as pregnant women and those that are sick or not feeling well during the conduct of the study; (4) unable to sign the informed consent; and (5) those who do not agree to be interviewed.

Finally, The researchers analyzed the data by utilizing Colaizzi's method of data analysis to search for the real essence of the phenomenon under investigation (Morrow et al., 2015). Firstly, the researchers read the transcription of the interviews several times to gain an overall and deeper understanding of the data. Secondly, the researchers analyzed the data and after analyzing, significant statements were extracted. Thirdly, recurrent statements of opinion were encoded and collected. After collecting the recurrent statements, they were classified according to sub-themes. Next, major themes were summarized based on the generated sub-themes. Lastly, researchers verified the results by returning them to the interviewees. All these steps are significant to ensure credibility and reliability of the results (Zhang et al., 2020).

### Results and Discussion

The findings of this research were clustered into 2 themes: "Adversities yielded from the situation" and "Resiliency of nursing aides". The adversities yielded from the situation were:

“Working in a new susceptible environment”, “Organizational and administrative challenges”, and “Stigmatization on their roles as nursing aides”. The Resilience of nursing aides was achieved due to their “Sense of duty”, and “Provision of basic needs for the family”.

### **Main Theme 1: Adversities Brought by the Situation.**

Since the emergence of COVID-19, healthcare workers, specifically nursing aides, had to face challenges in their everyday lives, especially as frontline workers, they faced situations that they had not faced before. As a provider of care to patients, taking risks is part of their job to continuously provide the essential care that patients need. As we know, COVID-19 has greatly affected healthcare systems worldwide. Due to frequent contact with patients who are infected with the virus and exposure to a highly contagious working environment, healthcare workers who are caring for these patients are at a high risk of contracting the virus. This sudden emergence of the crisis has led healthcare workers to face several issues that they must deal with (Setiawa et al., 2021.)

#### **Sub-theme I: Working in a new susceptible environment.**

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on healthcare systems globally. Due to the coronavirus disease's (COVID-19) mode of transmission, which is primarily spread from person to person through droplets, and its contagiousness, a protective measure was applied. The wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE) was mandated. For nursing aides to minimize their exposure to hazards and the virus, personal protective equipment (PPE) is worn. Personal protective equipment (PPE) works as a barrier against the infectious agent; this will allow them to protect themselves. The nursing aides continuously expressed how they struggled with work while wearing the PPE. Moreover, wearing full PPE became a barrier to acquiring the basic needs of a human being, such as elimination and proper nutrition.

Alongside the hot temperature, the personal protective equipment (PPE) also conveys heat burden to the person wearing it. Body heat temperature is not the only one increasing in this situation; the fear and anxiety of nursing aides about contracting the virus are also increasing. The nursing aide participants in this study expressed their concerns about acquiring the virus as well as being carriers of the virus and, thus, spreading the virus to their families.

“It was very difficult starting from the wearing of PPE, mask, goggles, face shield. By wearing those alone, it was never easy... Wearing of PPE, is very hot, that after taking them off, our shirts looked like it's newly washed because it's full of sweat. PPE is already hot plus the temperature of the area. That time, the utilization of aircons was not allowed to limit the spread of the virus.” I-10

“Ma'am, it was really not easy... every day you cannot stop yourself from worrying or having fears due to the virus... I was really worried during that time every day, especially when COVID cases continue to rise as well as the death cases... Since my work requires taking care of patients, being afraid is normal knowing that we are at risk for contracting the virus while taking care of COVID positive patients. Especially when you go home to your family, it's scary too since you might be able to spread the virus to them. Sometimes it's depressing, because every day,

you have no idea on what would possibly happen to you or to your family... Even in your own family, you'll get a hard time getting close to them because you're afraid that they might contract the virus from you.” I-09

The COVID-19 outbreak has altered the working environment in the hospital setting. Since this pandemic is new, healthcare workers faced challenges they had not experienced before. Nurse aides feared contracting the virus and spreading it to their loved ones. On the other hand, due to shortage of staff, they often had to work additional shifts, thus increasing their workload. Aside from their fear of the virus and increased workloads, wearing PPE has aggravated the exhaustion they feel. These are some of the challenges they faced in their day-to-day lives as they worked in this new working setup brought by the pandemic.

#### **Sub-theme II: Organizational and administrative challenges**

The coronavirus disease caused a strain in the medical field and the healthcare industry. Due to the rapid spread of the infection and increased patient volume, the healthcare system was forced to adapt to the new environment. New protocols and rules were raised, and procedures were altered to limit the spread of the virus. However, due to the wide spread of the infection, which resulted in a global pandemic, the demand for protective tools increased.

There was a high demand for masks, gloves, and other protective tools, yet there was a delay in the supply chain due to suspended production, which resulted in the nursing aides having to produce alternative protective equipment. The nursing aide participants in this study expressed how they used full-body raincoats as an alternative for the PPE suit as well as masks.

“During that time, there was really shortage of the supplies... even masks, it's not easy to purchase since it was really expensive that time even just 1 box... The hospital didn't even have enough alcohols and masks, so we just improvised using the available resources we had, in order for us to have something we could use to serve as our PPEs... there was urgent, imperative demand for supplies but it was hard to obtain them because of the shortage of PPEs, sometimes we just used raincoat as alternative and washed it after use.” I-08

“The hospital lacked supplies... Even PPE, we ran out of it, as well as masks, alcohol, and etc.” I-09

One of the major problems faced during the pandemic, especially at the beginning of the outbreak, was the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies. PPEs are crucial tools for keeping healthcare personnel safe and preventing the spread of infection. However, because it affected healthcare globally, the demands increased while the supply could not suffice. It caused anxiety and fear among the participants and was one of the major concerns they had. Hospitals nonetheless continued to operate despite the presence of the virus, and they could not refuse to take care of patients just because of the shortage of PPE supplies. That's why health workers, including nurse aides, opted to make a temporary solution for the problem and created improvised PPEs to continue their services.

#### **Sub-theme III: Stigmatization on the role of nursing aides**

The high contagious rate of the coronavirus disease made people more conscious of the mode of transmission of the disease. The virus was easier to acquire. Due to this, there was discrimination



against the health workers, as our recipient expressed in the interview.

“Of course...they would avoid us... they got scared...Then also when I waved at jeepneys or taxis, some would not stop or gave me a ride...there were also some people that if they saw you or they knew you were working in the hospitals, they would look at you differently...you could obviously see the fear on their faces whenever they looked at you.” I-01

“They didn’t want to get near or close to you...before when I worked at the hospital, others would say “ahh he’s assigned in the COVID area, he’s working at the hospital”, that’s the mindset of the people during pandemic.” I-04

A stigma of making nursing aides as health workers unsafe around the public for being a carrier of the disease, resulted in nursing aides having difficulty accessing services in the community, such as public transport. Participants voiced their concerns regarding the discrimination they experienced during the pandemic. People viewed them as someone who should be feared and avoided since they worked in hospitals and might spread the infection if they stayed near them. Even though the reaction of the people around them was understandable, they are still human beings capable of getting hurt. The discrimination they experienced had affected them emotionally and psychologically. On the other hand, despite their sacrifices and contributions to healthcare, most of them did not receive the recognition they wanted.

### Main Theme 2: Resilience of Nursing Aides

The population of people needing care from the effects of the Covid-19 virus during the pandemic was increasing, yet the lack of nursing personnel had resulted in burnout, high turnover rates, and low job satisfaction among nursing professionals. Resilience, which is the capacity to adjust to challenging circumstances, has been demonstrated to be beneficial in lowering stress and burnout and enhancing mental health in nursing aides. (Chang & Kim, 2022)

According to American Psychological Association, Resilience is the ability to adapt or cope with challenging situations. Since hospitals or healthcare facilities are one of the workplaces that have been tremendously affected during the pandemic, the workforce has also been put under stress. Healthcare workers face a variety of challenges every single day which is why resilience is one of the most important aspects that a health worker must have. Resilient people have optimism and confidence to be able to control circumstances even in unfavorable conditions (Setiawati et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 outbreak had a variety of effects (Canque et al., 2021; Canque et al., 2023; Rome et al., 2023; Carredo et al., 2022, Derasin et al., 2023), including difficulties for nurse aides who continued to work despite the risk. They had demonstrated tenacity and a strong sense of responsibility to their patients and families. The determination and feeling of responsibility displayed by nursing aides during the outbreak should serve as a reminder of the crucial role they played in the healthcare system. Despite their difficulties, providing basic requirements for their families was a key drive for them to keep working. It was impossible to overestimate the importance of these healthcare providers in assuring the safety and well-being of individuals in their care. The pandemic had highlighted the critical role and sacrifices of healthcare personnel, emphasizing

the importance of providing them with the support and resources they needed to continue their work. Nurse Aides continue to show resiliency by continuing to work, providing care to patients, for the sake of their families, and because it is the calling of their profession.

### Sub-theme 1: Sense of duty

Despite the risk and challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has brought, the nursing aides we interviewed to convey their will to work due to their diligent compassion towards their job. The nursing aides stayed with their personal and work values.

“We endured it because, it’s our job...we made an oath...It’s our service for the people...that’s why we had to commit with what we oathed for.” I-03

“And also when you see patients or you recall those that died because of the virus, you start to think and question yourself about what are the things that you can do or how can you help, since you are already in a situation or in that job....so you have no other choice but to continue to work.” I-08

Due to the dynamic situation, nursing aides embraced a deeper sense of duty on their roles in the healthcare community. The pandemic became an opportunity for nursing aides to reflect on how they view their jobs and roles. Along with the increased demand of work, nursing aides also stepped up to supply this demand by ameliorating their quality of care (Chang et al., 2022). It’s significant to remember the difficulties and sacrifices the nursing aides made throughout the pandemic. Many people have been forced to work long hours in challenging and occasionally dangerous situations with little access to resources and support. Despite the limitations on physical touch and engagement, they have had to learn new rules and procedures and discover ways to comfort and care for their patients (Travers et al., 2020).

### Subtheme 2: Provision of care for family members

One of the main reasons why nurse aides continued to work despite the risks involved in COVID-19 was due to their families or loved ones. Based on the interview, most of them were concerned about what would happen to their families when they stopped working. Despite the strong urge to stop working due to the various struggles and difficulties they had faced which overwhelmed them, they could not easily quit because their job was their main source of income. For them to be able to continue to support the basic needs of their families, they must sacrifice and choose to be strong.

“Despite of all the difficulties I had with my work during pandemic, I couldn’t do anything about it but to continue to work, for my family.” I-09

“It’s family. I mean we had to work in order to have something to provide for the family.” I-10

Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, nurse assistants were essential to the delivery of patient care. Due to their frequent contact with patients who were infected, they were among the healthcare professionals who were most at risk of getting the virus. Many nurse aides continued to work despite the hazards to support their family and loved ones. The epidemic had brought to light the significance of their profession and the costs they bear to continue caring for patients. These healthcare professionals merit appreciation and backing from the public as well as their employers. It is essential to recognize and reward

the effort and dedication of nurse aides and other healthcare professionals who continue to work despite the pandemic (Greene, 2020).

### Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has created numerous problems that have impacted many parts of society. Because of the nature of their job, which involves being at the forefront of patient care, the nursing aide profession, in particular, has encountered enormous obstacles. Despite the risks, they have continued to care for and support patients. The emergent themes in the study illustrate nursing aides' lived experiences throughout the pandemic in selected hospitals in Cebu, involving the different adversities they faced and their fortitude in overcoming them. One of the most prominent themes that emerges is the nursing aide's feeling of responsibility, which encourages them to continue working despite the hazards. Furthermore, their provision of basic needs for their families serves as a critical motivator for individuals to persevere in the face of adversity. These findings highlight the necessity of recognizing the problems that nursing aides confront, who are frequently regarded as the unsung heroes of healthcare. Lastly, all frontliners have different importance during the fight against the pandemic. Nursing aides seek to be recognized and appreciated for their efforts in the healthcare system.

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