



## Lived Experiences of Overseas Filipino Nurses in Western and Middle–Eastern Countries Amidst the Covid – 19 Pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

Nurses are one of the most vital frontlines in combating and alleviating the spread of the novel coronavirus, commonly known as COVID–19. The study aimed to describe the lived experiences of overseas Filipino nurses working in Western and Middle Eastern countries amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This study utilized a descriptive-phenomenological method research design and was conducted online in the City of Tacurong, Sultan Kudarat, Philippines. The respondents of this study were the selected five (5) Overseas Filipino Nurses in Western countries and five (5) Overseas Filipino Nurses in Middle–Eastern countries. Colaizzi's Thematic Analysis was used to analyze the data. This study presented emergent themes of stressors, coping mechanisms, short/long-term effects, and participants' responses based on their lived experiences. Overseas Filipino nurses are not just "modern-day heroes" but also "modern-day shepherds" who constantly look for greener pastures for their families in the Philippines. With family and friends as shoelaces that strengthen the difficult journey, overseas Filipino nurses put their "Leg – On," a term derived from the Ilonggo term "Malig- on," which means strong in facing the difficulties and realities of working in another country.

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### ARTICLE INFO

**Article History:**

*Submitted/Received 02 Feb 2023*

*First Revised 29 Mar 2023*

*Accepted 16 May 2023*

*First Available online 17 May 2023*

*Publication Date 01 Sep 2023*

**Keyword:**

*Coping mechanisms,*

*OFW resilience,*

*Overseas Filipino nurses,*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nurses are one of the most vital frontlines in combating and alleviating the spread of the novel coronavirus, commonly known as COVID–19. Their presence is seen not only in hospitals and quarantine facilities but also in border checkpoints performing several responsibilities from sanitation and hygiene, nursing interventions, and communicating government-imposed health protocols. They also have to render service beyond the regular work hours.

According to the *Journal of Nursing Management* in 2020, during times of infectious epidemic crises, the severity and lethality of illness, as well as the vulnerability to disease, may cause or increase worry and dread among nurses, possibly compromising their health and well-being as well as their ability to do their jobs effectively. [Alharbi et al. \(2020\)](#) concluded in their study that frontline nurses, particularly those who work directly with coronavirus patients, frequently witness patients suffering and dying, which harms their emotional health and can result in compassion fatigue and post-traumatic stress manifestations. [Labrague and Santos' \(2020\)](#) research showed that 37.8 percent of frontline nurses had problematic levels of anxiety linked to the COVID-19 epidemic. According to a comprehensive research analysis, nurses had a greater incidence of anxiety and depression than other frontline healthcare professionals ([Pappa et al., 2020](#)) and the general population ([Mo et al., 2020](#)).

As a result, it is critical to assist the nursing staff during the COVID-19 outbreak. A similar case of respiratory disease outbreak in Saudi Arabia in 2012 or otherwise known as the MERS – CoV. [Park et al. \(2018\)](#) concluded that the influence of stigma and hardiness on mental health was partially mediated through stress in nurses working at a hospital during a MERS-CoV epidemic. Their mental health was influenced more by direct effects than by indirect effects. In other words, stigma is a prominent issue among healthcare workers associated with infectious diseases due to their transmission characteristics.

During the pandemic, the Philippines called for registered nurses not practicing the profession to apply in hospitals or do volunteer service in public COVID facilities due to the country's lack of a nursing workforce. There was a shortage of nurses in the country because many opted to work overseas because of promising compensation and benefits. According to news portals in the Philippines, health workers seeking a pay hike say nothing has changed since the pandemic started. Aside from the inadequate salary during the pandemic, there were other significant problems confronting nurses in this scenario that are highly evident. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, in 2020, there were 2.2 million overseas Filipino workers (OFW) worldwide, and almost 20% of this number was from the healthcare profession. Therefore, it can be concluded that more healthcare professionals are opting to work abroad despite the job opportunities in the locality.

The lived experiences of overseas Filipino workers are often put aside and are not put into question. Job satisfaction, compensation, and policies are common in various studies. Matters such as stressors and coping strategies are often overlooked, especially with overseas health workers believing they live a lucrative life considering the ample compensation they are getting. In the study of [Acosta et al. \(2020\)](#), they discussed the bittersweet experiences of OFWs that can never be underestimated, for they have sacrificed a lot all for the sake of alleviating the lives of their family and could at least get rid of poverty. The results of their study recommended that this sad reality enables OFWs to adapt and have the proper mindset of accepting changes in their working environment. They should learn to bloom wherever they may be planted.

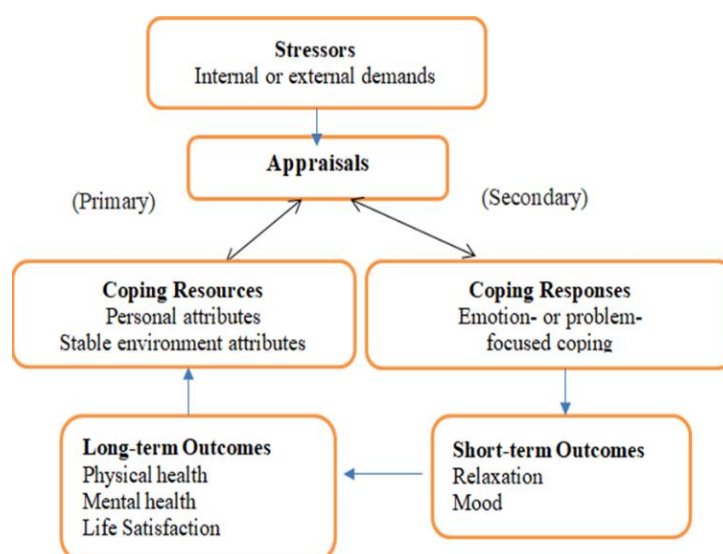
Therefore, we wanted to explore the topic of challenges and coping – strategies of overseas Filipino nurses because they have observed during the height of the pandemic, that despite the desperate need for more nurses on the frontline, a significant number of Filipino nurses still opt to work abroad to the point that the government already issued overseas employment ban on nurses. We were eager to know what are risks these nurses are willing to bear and how they cope with the challenges of working abroad.

We believe that the study can be relevant to the nursing practice in the Philippines in a way that can be suggestive in providing or initiating programs and services to better nursing employment both in the private and public. The study can also be significant in the academe, especially to nursing students, to help them determine whether they want to work abroad or just in the country if they already know what to expect working overseas hence, helping them to have informed choices in their career life.

The study's primary purpose was to describe the COVID – 19 – related challenges and coping strategies of overseas Filipino nurses working in Western and Middle Eastern Countries. Specifically, this study examined the challenges and coping strategies of overseas Filipino nurses and compared the similarities and differences in their experiences.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

**Figure 1** shows the theoretical framework. The study is anchored stress and coping theory. The theory explains that stress results from an imbalance between perceived external or internal demands and the perceived personal and social resources to deal with them. Two cognitive appraisal processes can be distinguished, according to the authors. The initial appraisal, defined as primary appraisal, involves analyzing whether an event is personally relevant. Events perceived as personally relevant can be appraised as either positive or stressful (the latter including possible harm, threat, or challenge). If individuals perceive events as stressful, they evaluate their resources to deal with the demands. This constitutes the process of secondary appraisal. Stress occurs when the demands are perceived as either exceeding or taxing the resources, and coping responses become activated. Cognitive and behavioral efforts to deal with situations appraised as stressful. Generally, cognitive appraisal and coping processes are influenced by personality factors, personal and social resources, characteristics of the situation, and other variables.



**Figure 1.** The theoretical framework.

### **3. METHODS**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This study used the descriptive-phenomenological method to determine the lived experiences of overseas Filipino nurses in Western and Middle Eastern countries amidst the pandemic. Descriptive phenomenology is concerned with revealing the “essence” or “essential structure” of any phenomenon under investigation – those features that make it what it is rather than something else. [Morrow and King \(2015\)](#), widely known for such a method, which can be seen as a form of distillation in which the analyst, step by step, sifts away everything that is not essential to an adequate description of the phenomenon.

#### **3.2. Setting of the Study**

The study was conducted in Western and Middle Eastern countries. The Western countries comprised the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Australia. Middle-eastern countries comprised Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. These countries are known to have a lot of overseas Filipino Nurses who work amidst the pandemic. We conducted the study at Notre Dame of Tacurong College to identify the lived experiences of the respondents.

#### **3.3. Respondents of the Study**

The respondents of this study were the selected five Overseas Filipino Nurses in Western countries and five Overseas Filipino Nurses in Middle–Eastern countries. The inclusion criteria included the following: (i) must be a Registered Nurse, male or female, (ii) must be currently working in the Western or Middle–Eastern countries for at least one year, and (iii) can speak English and Tagalog.

#### **3.4. Research Instrument**

We used a questionnaire which the adviser and the research panel validated. The researcher-made questions were used during the online one-on-one interview with the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of the research title, introduction, profile of the participants, grand tour question, and related questions. The grand tour question was, “Can you tell us the challenges of an overseas Filipino nurse working in a Western/Middle-Eastern country?”. The related questions had six parts: The first part is stressors, which have four questions with a subset of two probing questions each. The second part was coping resources, which have three questions with a subset of seven probing questions. The third part was coping responses, which have three questions with a subset of two probing questions each. The fourth part was long-term outcomes, with one question and a subset of two probing questions. Lastly, part five was short-term outcomes with one question and a subset of two probing questions. The in-depth interviews as a method of gathering data were done through Google Meet since the participants were overseas.

#### **3.5. Data Gathering Procedure**

Before starting the data-gathering process, we wrote a letter of request to the Dean of the College of Nursing. The letter sought approval to undertake the research. A letter of request duly noted by the Dean was also sent to each participant. When the letter of request was approved, an in-depth interview utilizing the researcher's questionnaire was conducted, and the interview was recorded using a voice recorder. The participants were informed that we

would keep all information private. The study's aim and goals were clearly stated, and we began evaluating the data after collecting it from the participants.

### 3.6. Data Analysis

Colaizzi's Thematic Analysis was used to analyze the data; this rigorous and robust qualitative procedure ensures the legitimacy and dependability of its conclusions. It enabled researchers to identify emerging themes and their interconnections. The Colaizzi approach for phenomenological data analysis is depicted in the steps below. To begin, read and reread each transcript to get a rough feel of the topic. Second, critical statements about the topic under investigation shall be collected from each transcript. These assertions must be written on a separate sheet with page and line numbers. Third, from these noteworthy utterances, meanings must be derived. Fourth, the formulated definitions shall be categorized and clustered into themes. Fifth, the study's findings should be incorporated into a comprehensive description of the phenomenon under investigation. Sixth, the phenomenon's essential structure should be described. Finally, study participants should be asked to validate the findings by comparing the researcher's descriptive results to their own experiences (Wirihana *et al.*, 2018).

Rigors of qualitative research were applied in analyzing data. The concept of trustworthiness by introducing the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to parallel the conventional quantitative assessment criteria of validity and reliability. Firstly, the credibility is based on the evidence provided by the participants. Second, transferability proves that the research study's findings might be applied to various locations, circumstances, times, and people. Third, dependability validates the conclusions of the research investigation as repeatable and consistent. Lastly, confirmability was the simplest to establish because it demonstrates how the research process works. These facts can assist readers in gaining a better understanding of how the data themes evolved.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The outcomes of research on the Lived Experiences of OFW Nurses in Western and Middle Eastern countries amidst the COVID-19 pandemic are presented in this chapter. The acquired data were analyzed using Colaizzi's method of data analysis, which is rigorous and robust, and thus a qualitative method that ensures the credibility and dependability of its conclusions. Moreover, it enables researchers to identify emerging themes and connections (Wirihana *et al.*, 2018).

The first approach was to take a comprehensive look at all of the data obtained and then concentrate on evaluating it. The statements were reviewed and read numerous times to comprehend the content of the experiences and become familiar with the thoughts expressed. Following that, we recognized all the remarks in the tales directly related to the issue under investigation and crucial assertions. We generated meanings for each significant statement after identifying the significant statements. As a result of the many assertions that conveyed identical meanings, themes were established.

The researcher was able to develop sixty-three (63) meanings from the significant sentences to answer the research's goal. The formulated meanings were categorized into four (4) emergent themes. The emergent themes gathered from the participants were: (1) Stressors, (2) Coping mechanisms, (3) Short- and Long-Term Effects, and (4) Responses.

#### 4.1. Temperature

Working during the pandemic is difficult; sometimes, others see it as a challenge, and some see it as one of the stressors. Lack of time management is one of the contributing factors to the stressors. The participant mentioned stressors; according to Participant 1, because of the Lack of time management, it is hard to work, especially if one has limited time. She stated, "As a nurse, typically ang mag e-stress sayo ang time management" (As a nurse, what typically stresses you is time management).

(Participant 1, Line 1)

Participant 2 also verbalized that, "Cramming or shortage of time ma-stress ka talaga and for me, very conscious of the time and I want everything to get done or finished on time" (What will stress you is cramming and shortage of time especially to me that I am very conscious with time and I want to get everything done on time).

(Participant 2, Lines 4-10)

The pandemic allows nurses to experience overwork, have full loads, and spend more time with patients, and yet they still receive insufficient salaries despite working overtime and having full loads. Working in such conditions is considered by the nurses as a stressor. Participant 6 claimed, "First and foremost, it is the workload in the sense that as a general nurse here in the Arab countries, if you are working as a general nurse, they expect you to do everything, and that you know everything. So, even if you are assigned to one department, it does not mean that you will only work in one department, but if there will be lack of staff in another department, they will pull you out. As a general nurse, you will know everything here; you will know about dental, you will know about the outpatient department, you will know about the dermatology department. So, those stress you a lot because as a nurse, you only expect to do your job as a nurse, but here you can be a receptionist as well, you will receive calls, and you will do some paper works. So, the workload is one of the things that stresses the nurses here."

(Participant 1, Lines 3-13)

Despite working rigorously during the surge of Covid-19, there are still stressors mentioned by some of the participants "I guess the hardest thing is having to do much work and being moved to a different environment. I think that is what the most stressful is. Having to work more than what you are supposed to do is the most challenging part."

(Participant 4, Lines 46-48)

Poor skill in the workplace hinders one from rendering quality services to patients, and for some, it can be a stressor. According to Participant 3, "Stressed out ka if poor skill makes that means ang kasama mo puro new nurses ikaw lang ang senior, kasi dito unlike sa atin once you got your registration you can do all tasks, maka catheter ka, maka IV ka, everything, here Hindi. Dapat competent ka for every task. Here bago ka maka start, even insertion of IV lines need to be competent certified, insulin infusions, everything. Female catheterization is fine but for male catheterization you need to be competent and signed off to be able to perform it." (You are stressed out if your fellow nurses are new and have poor skills, and you are the only senior nurse in your department. Unlike in our country, once you are registered, you are allowed to do all the procedures, such as; catheterization, IV therapy, and much more. Here it is not the usual case. You have to be competent to do all the tasks or procedures and be certified to do the procedures I mentioned).

(Participant 3, Lines 16-22)

Another stressor, according to Participant 4, is being transferred from another department to another unit; according to her, adjusting to the new facility is difficult to focus on. "Yung the fact na you will be transferred to another unit that you do not know. As a nurse, yes, I

want to take care of the patient, you want to save lives. But when you're really on the job, I hope I can't kill somebody. Kasi yung mind mo naka set sa isang department, then transferred to other department, wala kang training in that certain department that you are needed, so minsan ikaw nalang sa self mo kung ano ang gagawin mo, baka maka patay ako. Health care providing is very easy, as human being siguro, nakapag care ka ng patient. Since I am working in PACU specifically post operatively, I am working with general anesthesia, spinal, epidural, at mga ganun lang, but when you are going to other departments, different set-up yun, different medications, ang protocols nila. Sometimes, yun ang pinakamahirap, yung sudden changes and time management. (As a Nurse, I want to take care of the patient. Sometimes being transferred to another department that deals with other services, you are not used to is stressful. The only thing you can do is depend on yourself and hope that you will not harm any patient. For example, since I work in PACU, specifically postoperatively, I am working with general anesthesia, spinal and epidural. However, when I am to be transferred to another department having a different set-up, different medications, and protocols, sudden changes and time management like these are difficult to deal with). (Participant 1, Lines 3-13).

#### **4.2. Emergent Theme 2: Coping Mechanisms**

Coping mechanisms can help people cope with difficult situations while maintaining their emotional health, as the participants stated. Participant 6 expressed a sense of comfort from her coping mechanisms, "The good thing in our company is we have our serenity rooms, private rooms where we can use. Inside each room, there is music playing; there is an indoor plant, a very relaxing room. By that, we can step out or escape the chaos in our workplace or toxicity, even for just a few minutes. That is the good thing here. The company is giving us an award ceremony in our department to thank the employees. We also have some parties during holidays or lunch, dinner, or breakfast with all the staff in our department." (Participant 6, Lines 40-42)

Another coping mechanism is socializing with your family and friends; talking to your comfort people will eventually ease most of your problems. According to Participant 8, "I have friends at work. One of the things na dapat wag nating kalimutan na when we are stressed, we have our friends we have our colleagues that we can talk to sa office or anywhere, in the hospital like that. Ako kasi my outlet for destressing myself is to talk more and to talk with someone else so if you're asking me how I cope with the stressors I'm just talking to my friend I will express what I feel, and I will listen to what their advice is." (I have friends at work. One of the things we should never forget is when we are stressed, we have our friends and our colleagues that we can talk to in the office or anywhere, in the hospital like that. My outlet for destressing myself is talking more and talking with someone else, so if you ask me how I cope with the stressors, I am just talking to my friends. I will express what I feel, and I will listen to their advice.) (Participant 8, Lines 87-91)

To cope with the stresses, you must satisfy yourself with your desires. Participant 6 mentioned, "I think some physical activities are very beneficial because you need to stay healthy, so, of course, you need to have a healthy lifestyle also and then a good time, of course, with your family, and the best thing is getting enough good quality sleep for yourself."

#### **4.3. Emergent Theme 3: Short/Long-Term Effects of Coping**

Family, friends even co-worker plays a vital role in coping with stress. Family and friends serve as comfort zone during times of hardship. As mentioned by Participant 2, "Ako yung

coping strategies ko is yun nga nagpapalipas oras, Netflix, Kdramas, time with my daughter, time with my family. And siguro yung pinaka importante na strategy is ma-maintain mo yung emotionally supportive relationship with other people, yung may support system ka with your family, with your friends, yun yung pinaka importante” (Watching Netflix, Kdramas and spending quality time with my daughter and my family, for me, those are the most important ways for me to maintain an emotional relationship with others. Equally important for me is my family and my friends, who are supportive of me).

(Participant 2, Lines 92-97)

The participant also mentioned confidence, which can affect everything long-term. According to Participant 6, she stated that “The long-term effect of coping strategy is confidence, the confidence that you built within yourself. It will give you the determination to continue your everyday life here. It will give you a long-term impact. For my personal life, of course, I also consider being physically fit a long-term effect.”

(Participant 6, Lines 84-88)

Participant 5 agreed that self-satisfaction is an essential coping strategy when working in different hospital departments. Going to the gym and sleeping are some of the coping strategies which are essential to relax the mind and become productive. Participant 5 mentioned, "Number one is self-satisfaction. People have different ways of coping. I enjoy doing those things".

(Participant 5, Lines 89-90).

#### **4.4. Emergent Theme 4: Responses to Coping Mechanisms**

Feeling happy and contented are some of the responses you will get from coping with stress. Being surrounded by positive people and doing a healthy lifestyle helps the participants positively respond to coping mechanisms' short and long-term effects. Participant 1 stated, “Yes, depende sa tao but for me yes because after the workout I do yoga. So, I feel relaxed. Parang nabubura mo lahat yung stress sa mind mo, sa body mo. And then if I see my husband and he cook for me. OFW ako pero I don't cook. Thankfully mayroon akong husband na nagco-cook. Nakaka change ng mood agad-agad for me. Kaya nga sabi ko, keep yourself in a circle ng mga good people and of course a good partner, a good husband. It will keep you sane, it will keep you comfortable, it will give you contentment, and at least you will bring back to your work na pagdating mo sa work, oy gusto kong buhayin itong pasyente na to.” (Yes, it depends on the person. I do yoga after a workout. So, I will feel relaxed. It is like you erase all the stress in your mind and body. And then, if I see my husband and he cooks for me, it changes my mood immediately. That is why I say keep yourself in a circle of good people, a good partner, and a good husband. It will keep you sane, it will keep you comfortable, and it will give you contentment and inspiration to tend to the needs of the patients.)

(Participant 1, Lines 151-158)

Another response is a sense of comfort. You get comfortable already because you are used to doing things and looking forward to the next day's offer. Participant 6 said, “Of course, happiness that's the quick response you will have, the excitement just when you have a good day, you will feel excited to do the same thing good things the following day, the gratitude I think, and contentment.”

(Participant 6, Lines 91-93)

People get comfortable doing better with their job Participant 4 stated, "You tend to be better with your job, you tend to cope well with stressors more, it uplifts your mood at some



point, and you tend to be more productive, I guess. So more productive at work, just put it that way."

#### 4.5. Results from Cases

The emergent themes gathered from the participants were: (1) Stressors, (2) Coping mechanisms, (3) Short- and Long-Term Effects, and (4) Responses to coping mechanisms.

The participants claimed that working abroad can be taxing and stressful, especially during a pandemic. The stressors in emergent theme (1) are staffing issues, homesickness, time management, and household responsibilities. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare systems worldwide were still designing policies and protocols, which led to staffing issues due to healthcare workers getting infected by the virus hence isolation. The aforementioned is supported by the study of [Lasater et al. \(2021\)](#), which aimed to study chronic hospital understaffing in the United States, with which its data, coincidentally, were gathered during the height of the pandemic. The study concluded that in the weeks leading up to the first wave of COVID-19 cases, hospital nurses were burned out and working in understaffed conditions, putting the public's health in danger.

Another stressor posed by the participants is homesickness. Working on the other side of the world and with different time zones and cultures will make anyone miss home. According to [Pogoy and Cutamora \(2021\)](#), despite existing problems such as cultural differences, homesickness, and new challenges such as the pandemic, the OFW nurses could continue living and doing what was expected of them. The OFW nurses could adapt to the changes despite the inconvenience of wearing PPEs, lacking PPE, and being relocated from one hospital unit to another. The nurses have become accustomed to the routine, but the worry of contracting the illness remains.

Time management is also a stressor, according to the participants, primarily due to understaffing in the hospital. Some participants shared that they find it challenging to manage time because of the fast-paced lifestyle of the country they are in. Professionals have lower job satisfaction, and their health has suffered due to fast-paced work conditions. To fulfill their wants and demands, professionals must find a way to balance and manage the workload they are given. The study suggested that time management capacities are a valuable strategy for reducing stress.

The participants contended that household responsibilities like cleaning the flat, cooking, laundry, and doing personal errands stress them. Living alone cannot be easy since you must do everything alone. Considering that man by nature is social, living alone is a challenge. Overseas Filipino workers usually live alone in their rooms or apartments. With the workload they render in a day, they need rest when they get home.

In emergent theme (2), coping mechanisms help overseas Filipino nurses in Western in Middle Eastern countries deal with stress at work or home. According to the participants, a sense of comfort is present when the workplace is conducive to relaxing during break hours. The effectiveness of serene break areas for nurses through 5 scholarly articles. The result of the study presented that introducing a well-developed tranquil break place can reduce stress levels in nurses, according to all five research articles. Therefore, break rooms, serenity rooms, and quiet rooms lessen work-related stress and anxiety, which can affect their work quality.

Reaching out to family and friends is another coping mechanism for overseas Filipino nurses, especially during the pandemic. It is the sense of belongingness that, despite the distance, the participants seem to feel like they are still home. Additionally, they feel relieved knowing that their families in the Philippines are safe from the infection and well-provided.

Filipinos value strong family ties. Therefore, Filipinos' sense of well-being is linked to the well-being of their families (Zamora & Fernandez, 2016). Walsh (2020) discussed further that the function of the family in safeguarding its members against COVID-19 and its consequences is critical in developing their individual and collective resilience. Lastly, (Zamora & Fernandez, 2016) explained that during COVID-19-related lockdowns, Filipinos spend more time interacting with family members, which helps them cope with the problems posed by the pandemic.

Physical activities like running, gym, or yoga are also coping mechanisms for the participants. Abou Elmagd (2016) said that stress alleviation is one of the most recognized mental advantages of exercise. One can manage physical and emotional stress with regular exercise. Most nurses resort to physical fitness because it increases their self-esteem and self-image.

For emergent theme (3), participants mentioned the short or long-term effects of having a support system from family and friends, gaining self-confidence, and satisfaction. According to Heffer *et al.* (2017), self-esteemed people may be more confident in dealing with various pressures. Having self-confidence is a life skill, especially for migrant workers. Self-confidence and satisfaction are characteristics of resilience, and Filipinos are known for being resilient despite the hurdles in life.

For emergent theme (4), the responses to coping with stress, the participants mentioned that they get happiness, contentment, and a sense of comfort. Overseas Filipino nurses who have a balanced work-life, claimed to be more content and motivated at work, as well as financially secure and fulfilled in their professional development. Furthermore, their families and friends, who were very loving and supportive of them, were the primary sources of their happiness.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study imply that in dealing with difficult situations, almost all overseas Filipino nurses show their "Leg – On," a term derived from the Ilonggo term "Malig-on," which means strong. Living much more and working in another country is a challenge of work-related issues, time management, and other responsibilities. However, Filipino nurses see this challenge as an opportunity to overcome rather than be drowned in the realities of economic struggles in the Philippines.

The support of the workplace, family, and friends is essential for overseas Filipino nurses to cope with stress. The availability of workplace programs and initiatives helps nurses be more productive in their work. Also, for overseas Filipino nurses, family, and friends are like shoelaces. The tightness of the shoelaces determines the distance of one's journey. Therefore, family and friends' support greatly helps nurses overcome the stresses of working in another country.

In conclusion, overseas Filipino nurses are not just "modern-day heroes" but also "modern-day shepherds" who constantly look for greener pastures for their families in the Philippines. With family and friends as shoelaces that strengthen the difficult journey, overseas Filipino nurses put their "Leg – On" in facing the difficulties and realities of working in another country.

Based on the findings of the study, the following are highly recommended:

- (i) Government. To increase the salaries and benefits of nurses, especially in the private sector so that nurses will be encouraged to work in the country and will not be forced to leave their families. Moreover, to better the programs and initiatives of the nursing healthcare practice by promoting mandatory wellness and recreation for the nurses.

- (ii) Commission on Higher Education. To include in the nursing curriculum an elective program that educates nursing students about overseas nursing practice for a better understanding and informed choices.
- (iii) Nursing Students. To carefully evaluate and consider the advantages and disadvantages of working in another country. Moreover, carefully evaluate one's capacity and knowledge in working in another country with different cultures and traditions.
- (iv) Researchers and Future Researchers. For future researchers, formulate a more in-depth analysis of the effects of coping mechanisms on overseas Filipino nurses. If there is, to conduct the same study of lived experiences of overseas Filipino nurses but post-pandemic for significant comparison. Furthermore, to conduct a study that may go beyond the limitations of this study.

## 6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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