

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# A Qualitative Approach to Understanding the Need for Better Pay: Perspectives of Albayano Nurses Employed in Private Hospitals

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** Scholarly works have reported about the nurses' salary and its impact on job satisfaction, nurse turnover, retention, work condition, and provision of nursing care. However, studies are either focused on the nurses in government hospitals or nurses working outside the country. Thus, the study aims to explore and describe the lived experience of nurses employed in private hospitals in Albay province, the Philippines, and explicate the need for better pay.

**Design:** The study used a qualitative design, specifically a descriptive phenomenology approach.

**Methods:** Purposive sampling and in-depth interviews were conducted among seventeen (17) nurse informants. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed following the seven-stage process as described by Colaizzi (1978) for data coding and identifying themes. The same process of analysis performed among the responses or data gathered through electronic communication platforms.

**Findings:** Four themes and nine sub-themes were identified. The first theme is 'Over but under,' which includes three sub-themes: (1) Over-worked, underpaid working conditions, (2) Finding an additional source of income as a result of low-wages, (3) More nurses are produced, but less are staying in the country, (4) Required by law in the country but not permitted by low salary. The second theme is 'Same but different,' which includes three sub-themes: (1) The Nursing profession is akin to others, yet uncompensated, (2) Work demands are comparable to government hospitals. The third theme is 'Caring but uncared-for,' which includes two sub-themes: (1) Psychologically upsetting, (2) Stimulates nurses transition. The fourth theme is 'Selfless foresight,' which include only one sub-theme (1) Increasing the salary attracts nurses to stay in the country.

**Conclusions and recommendations:** The study results showed that nurses in private hospitals need better remuneration as they experience poor work conditions. Also, it described a low salary that impacts the nurses' workload, their physical and mental health, their socio-economic being, their ability to avail professional development, the retention or turnover, and the provision of nursing care. The study findings suggest data triangulation of the study in some other private hospitals outside the region and explore strategies for increasing nurses' retention and satisfaction. Nonetheless, these efforts will robust the empirical data about the need for better pay among nurses in the private sector.

**Keywords:** *Salary, Better Pay, Nurses in Private Hospitals, Retention, Turnover, Job Satisfaction*

## Introduction

The national nursing labor market in the Philippines is comprised of government wage-regulated sector and a market-based private sector, and this had shaped both the nature of the working condition and the compensation of registered nurses in the country. The co-existence of these two labor markets confirmed the significant difference between the means

of wages in the two sectors (Philippine Nurses Association/PNA, 2009). Also, the Labor Code of the Philippines has no specific provision of salary for healthcare workers employed in private institutions, but they may be under the prescribed wages for the non-agricultural sector that varies according to regions as issued by the National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC)

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under the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). Thus, the most favorable compensation packages were shown to be enjoyed by those employed in the government sector. Notably, salary remains a pressing problem for those employed in some private hospitals in the country. It affects the socioeconomic statuses of nurses, a vital factor in their decision to leave for employment in foreign countries or opting to work outside the nursing profession.

According to Lu et al. (2005), they found that salary is one of the sources of job satisfaction among nurses (as cited in Labrague et al., 2018). Some studies have also cited that one of the main reasons for nurses to leave the organization is the dissatisfaction with low monthly payments (Labrague et al., 2018). One of these is Dones et al. (2016) who reported that one of the reasons why nurses intend to remain or leave their nursing job is because of the monetary compensation in the Philippines. The provision of social, financial, and economic support has been found to positively impact the high retention rate among Filipino nurses in a foreign country (Hayne et al., 2009). On the other hand, Ortin (1990) reported that the aftermath of an insufficient budget for healthcare is low wages and poor benefit packages for employees (as cited in Perrin et al., 2007). Moreover, the situation is further complicated by economic instability, limited opportunities for professional and personal advancement, and lack of enforcement of labor laws and nursing standards (Perrin et al., 2007). These previous studies have revealed the impact of remuneration and benefits packages for nurses' job satisfaction and retention. However, only a few studies cited the contributing factors that may increase or decrease the retention rate of Filipino nurses in the country, especially those employed in private hospitals. No further exploration has been conducted about understanding the influence of salary in the context of practicing nursing in Philippine private hospitals.

Hence, this study aims to understand and amplify the need for better pay among nurses employed in private hospitals in the province of Albay, Philippines. The results of this study would help inform the proper authorities about the need to improve the socio-economic and working conditions of nurses in the country. Moreover, the findings would also hope to serve as empirical evidence to support the need to revisit the existing Philippine Nursing Law to reassess its relevance and responsiveness to the current demands of nursing practice in the country.

## Methodology

Phenomenology was used in this study. It is a research approach and a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live. Through this approach, the researcher can gain a profound understanding of the universal meaning of the event, situation, or experience from the first-person point of view (Holloway &

Galvin, 2016, p. 3). Hence, in this study, the phenomenological approach enabled the researcher to gain insights about the experiences of staff nurses employed in private hospitals and describe the need for better remuneration.

The complete data analysis followed the seven-stage process as described by Colaizzi (1978), as cited in Holloway and Galvin (2016, p. 234), which captured the essential relationships among the statements and presented an exhaustive description of the phenomenon. The researcher's philosophical perspective of inquiry and data analyses were anchored on the paradigm of critical social theory (CST), as described by Munhall (2012, pp. 97-98). The data analysis commenced with the audio-recorded interviews transcribed verbatim—repeated reading of the transcription done until understanding the informant's description of the phenomenon. Then, the researcher extracted the relevant statements relating to the descriptions of nurses' experiences and the need for better pay. Themes were generated by the analysis of the essential statements with relevant meanings. The extracted themes were organized accordingly with respective sub-themes, which presents a unifying element. Finally, the researcher consulted the participants for the validation of the results where new data integrated and arrived at an exhaustive description of the investigated topic. Member checking was considered by the researcher to ensure the credibility and conformability of the research data analyses and its findings.

In ensuring that the researcher is persuading his reader that the findings of the study are worth paying attention to and worth taking into account, trustworthiness was established (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The operational techniques supporting the rigor of this study included credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

The credibility of the study findings involves member checking. The researcher returned the description to the participants and asked them whether the interpretation is an accurate and fair representation of their lived experience (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011) in private hospitals. Then, any reactions to the data and findings and their response to the researcher's interpretation of the data were considered. These improved the exhaustive description of the phenomenon.

On the other hand, the researcher established the dependability of data and study results by considering some techniques such as audit trail, and code-recode strategy (Anney, 2015). The researcher kept the raw data, interview and observation notes, records collected from the field, and other pertinent documents necessary for the auditor to conduct the cross-checking of the inquiry process. Also, a code-recode strategy was performed by coding the same data twice, gave one to two weeks gestation period between each coding. The results from the two codings were compared, which found different results. With this, the

researcher performed multiple observations of the research process and continuous immersion with the research data.

Furthermore, the researcher recorded the activities throughout the study (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011, p. 49), and did reflexive journal or practice (Anney, 2015) to leave an audit trail. These two strategies established the confirmability of the inquiry process and results. Thus, the researcher recognized the shortcomings in the study's methods or research processes and its potential effects on the study's findings.

Lastly, to ensure that the findings of the study possessed its transferability, the researcher provided the sufficient thick description of the need for better remuneration among nurse informants to allow readers to have a proper understanding of it; thereby, enabling them to compare the instances of the phenomenon described in the research report with those that they have seen emerge in their situations (Shenton, 2004). Similarly, purposive sampling was another strategy adopted in establishing transferability. The researcher considered nurses employed in select private hospitals in the province of Albay, Philippines, as key informants for the study who are particularly knowledgeable of the issues under investigation. Therefore, being cognizant of the provisions of these four strategies ensured the establishment of rigor and trustworthiness of this research study and its findings.

### Ethical Considerations

The ethical soundness of the study was ensured by executing the confidentiality and anonymity of the data gathered and the informants, respectively. The researcher held the management of the data, and all electronic copies of the interview transcript were secured in the laptop protected by a password. Similarly, the anonymity of the informants was coded. No names or personal identifiers of participants reflected in the reports. Also, after completing the study, the data is kept following the standards described by the 2017 National Ethical Guidelines For Health and Health-Related Research.

### Settings and study participants

The study was conducted in selected private hospitals classified as Level II by the Department of Health (DOH) in the province of Albay, Philippines. The nurse informants were recruited using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) currently employed as a staff nurse or nurse supervisor; (2) in permanent employment status; (3) with at least six (6) months experience as nurse employee; (4) male or female; (5) working in a private hospital in Albay, Philippines.

17 informants participated in the study. 3 of whom are males, and 14 are females. The ages of the informants ranged from 21 to 30 years old. Their clinical experience varied from 8 months to 8

years. Their monthly salary ranged from Php. 9,000 to Php. 20,000 (180-400 USD).

### Data collection and Data analysis

The data was gathered through in-depth interviews with each informant from February to March 2018 and April 2020. Seven (7) of the informants were interviewed face-to-face with consideration to their convenient date, time, and place. The interviews lasted for about 45-70 minutes, which is audio-recorded with the consent of the informants. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. On the other hand, because of the limited time availability of the other ten informants for the face-to-face interview, they opted to respond through electronic communication platforms such as e-mail and messenger. With this, the researcher sent the interview question through these communication platforms. However, probing was also conducted for clarification of responses and descriptions. The responses sent through electronic communication platforms were printed and included in the analysis. The data gathering continued until data saturation is achieved.

The main question asked was, "Can you share your experiences as a nurse in a private hospital and why there is a need for better remuneration?" Initially, informants shared their work-related experiences as a nurse employed in a private hospital with probing questions from the researcher. This reflects an explicit feature of the descriptions and arrives at a level of a deeper understanding of the need for better pay.

### Findings

The lived experiences of the informants employed in private hospitals, and the need for better pay was formulated in four themes with nine sub-themes. The first theme is 'Over but under,' which includes three sub-themes: (1) Over-worked, underpaid working conditions, (2) Finding an additional source of income as a result of low-wages, (3) More nurses are produced, but less are staying in the country, (4) Required by law in the country but not permitted by low salary. The second theme is 'Same but different,' which includes three sub-themes: (1) The Nursing profession is akin to others, yet uncompensated, (2) Work demands are comparable to government hospitals. The third theme is 'Caring but uncared-for,' which includes two sub-themes: (1) Psychologically upsetting, (2) Stimulates nurses transition. The fourth theme is 'Selfless foresight,' which include only one sub-theme (1) Increasing the salary attracts nurses to stay in the country.

#### Theme 1: Over but under

##### *Over-worked, underpaid working conditions*

All informants described their experiences of exhaustive working conditions as a result of understaffing, heavy workload, and long

hours of work. They added that the experiences are further worsened by the demands asked by the patient or the patient's watcher or by some health workers like doctors. With this, the informants described that they are dealing with an overwhelming workload and situations but their efforts are underpaid. For instance, PN-HM said: "Overworked kami, kasi minsan dalawang duty lang kami with 35 patients, 12hrs. pa yan, kasama pa diyan yung post-operative, yung monitoring pa, minsan may kasama pang for NGT feeding." [We are overworked, because sometimes we only have two nurses on duty with 35 patients, for 12hrs. Well, that includes the post-operative, the monitoring, sometimes even the patient with NGT feeding].

Similarly, PN-M described the over-time work but the underpaid situation in a private hospital:

"Shortage of staffing is basically an issue, the nurse works extra hours in shifts and sometimes extends for an extra shift. It's good to hear if you extend an extra hour with overtime (pay), but it's a rare scenario. Mostly, ample amount of overtime but no overtime pay."

Furthermore, informant PN-R described that the workloads given to them by the hospital are not compensated by the salary they are receiving. They always experience waking-up in the morning, still exhausted. This informant said:

"Sa totoo lang, hindi katumbas ng sahod namin ang binibigay na pagod ng hospital sa trabaho namin. Not enough. Kung satisfied kami malamang madami pa kaming nurses dito and hindi kami gigising sa umaga na exhausted pa."

[The salary that we are receiving is not commensurate with our exhaustion in our hospital work. Not enough. If we were satisfied, we would have more nurses here and wouldn't wake up in the morning, exhausted].

Similarly, another informant expressed the imbalance between the exhausting work experiences and the compensation they are receiving, PN-H articulated: "Parang hindi equal yung sobrang pagod na na-experience namin (physically and emotionally) sa nare-receive namin na payment." [It doesn't seem that the extreme exhaustion that we experienced is equal to the salary that we are receiving.]. The informant elaborated that they are physically exhausted because of the number of patients attended, which outnumbered the nurses on duty.

#### *Finding an additional source of income as a result of low-wages*

Because of the low salary in the private hospital and the increasing demand to meet the ends of the family, PN-E opted to find another source of income. The informant described that the salary they received from the hospital is not enough to support the necessities of the family. Thus PN-E said: "Naghahanap kami

ng raket, nag-PDN (Private Duty Nurse) kami, kahit day-off nagta-trabaho at naghahanap ng extra na pwede pagkakitaan." [We look for another extra job, we do PDN (Private Duty Nurse), even day-off we are working and looking for extra income]. It was further elaborated in the statement given by PN-C which stated: "We are humans too, kailangan din ng financial support kasi may mga needs din kami." [We are humans, too; we need financial support because we also have essential needs to be met].

#### *More nurses are produced, but fewer are staying in the country*

Another informant contemplated about the root causes of heavy workload and understaffing in the country, which PN-H argued that an increase in salary is a potential remedy to the current difficult work conditions in private hospitals. PN-H confidently said:

"Dapat talaga i-propose nila ang salary increase para hindi nagsisialisang ang mga nurses. Kaya nakakapagod ang trabaho kasi understaff tayo kasi nag-aabroad ang mga nurses. Kukuha lang ng 2 years experience tapos maga-apply na sa ibang bansa dahil mataas ang salary doon. Pareho lang naman kasi ang pagod dito at doon pero atleast sa abroad compensated ang nurses. Madami tayong graduate nurses, madami tayong nakapasa (sa NLE) pero karamihaman naman sa kanila paalis papuntang abroad kaya tayo ang nagkukulang." [They must propose a salary increase so that nurses do not leave. The work is becoming exhausting because we are understaffed as nurses go to work abroad. They will get a 2-year experience, and then they apply overseas because of the high salary there. It was as tiring here and there, but the nurses abroad are compensated. We have a lot of graduate nurses, many of us have passed (the Nurses Licensure Examination/NLE) but most of them are leaving overseas that is why we are facing an inadequate number of nurses].

#### *Required by law in the country but not permitted by low salary*

All the informants expressed concern about the mandatory requirement for professionals in the country to secure the required units for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) before the renewal of the license. The CPD units are acquired through attendance to legitimate related training, seminars, symposia, conferences, etc. The informants found it helpful because it updates and enhances their knowledge, skills, and competencies in the nursing practice. However, at some point, they found it to be an additional burden because of the expensive registration fees. PN-H further elaborated:

"Ang mga CPD units hindi naman free. Magkano ang seminars or trainings? Mahal! Tapos magkano lang ang

sahod mo? Tapos kukuha kapa ng CPD units mo, so dapat yung sahod mo taasan naman.” [The CPD units are not free. How much is (the registration fee for) seminar or training? Expensive! On the other hand, how much is your salary? Then you will be getting CPD units, so your wages should also increase].

Similarly, PN-M perceived its advantage but argued that it requires an increase in salary to be able to attend such CPD activities:

“It gives the professional an opportunity to learn and update his/her current status in his career, but take note trainings and seminars were expensive... If salaries were not enough to support it will be an added burden.”

### Theme 2: Same but different

#### *Nursing jobs are akin to other professions yet uncompensated*

All informants explicated the need to increase the salary because they believe that their jobs as nurses are comparable to other professions. They described that the profession is maybe different, but the demands at work are almost the same. PN-J explains that: “Halos 24 hours tayo nag-attend sa kanila (patients). Parang pulis lang naman, kung hindi sila natutulog ang nurse ganun din dahil may binabantayan na pasyente.” [We have been attending those (patients) for almost 24 hours. It's just like the police officer, if they don't sleep, nurses too because we are attending patients]. Similarly, PN-KJ expressed that:

“Dapat naman talaga i-increase (ang sahod ng nurses). Yung ibang profession nga may increase. Kung iisipin life din ng iba ang naka-depende sa nurses. Eh ang pulis nga life ang binubuwis nila, eh kaming nurses life naman ang sini-save namin kaya dapat itaas naman (ang salary) para compensated.” [It should increase (the nurses' wages). Just like other professions are given an increase in salary. Come to think of it; the lives of others depend on nurses. If the police officer are risking their lives, nurses are saving others lives, so there should be an increase (salary) to be compensated].

#### *Work demands are comparable to Government hospitals*

The informants argued that the work demands and workloads, including the difficult work conditions experienced by nurses in the private hospitals, are perceived to be somewhat similar to those encountered by nurses employed in the government hospitals in the country. And yet, nurses in private hospitals are receiving low wages. With this, PN-J arguably states:

“Pareho lang naman kami ng employed sa government nagwo-work as a nurse. Ang pinagkaiba lang ang institution (public or private). Lahat ng napagdadaan

ng nurses sa public (hospitals) nai-encounter din namin.” [We're the same with the government employed working as a nurse. The only difference is the institution (public or private). Everything that the nurses go through in public (hospitals) we also encounter].

On the other hand, one informant thought that the permanently employed nurses in the government hospitals usually stays longer as a result of a well-compensated job. PN-JB said: “Mas madami ang tumatagal at tumatanda sa government hospitals dahil maganda ang pasahod sa kanila.” [More nurses are aging and lasting in government hospitals because of the good wages that they are receiving].

However, one informant expressed a bargaining attitude towards a competitive salary among nurses employed in private hospitals. PN-BL states:

“Kung hindi kaya iparehas at least hindi malayo ang difference (ng salary), kasi parehas lang naman ang workload nila (Government employed nurses) at sa amin, parehas ang nature ng work sa private at government (hospitals).” [If they could not give it the same (salary) at least, the difference is not too big, because their (Government employed nurses) workload is just the same with us, and the nature of work in private and government (hospitals) is the same].

### Theme 3: Caring but uncared-for

#### *Psychologically upsetting*

With the problematic experiences and uncompensated work in private hospitals, the nurses felt that their caring profession is not being cared for. PN-K expressed:

“Hindi na nga malaki ang sahod mo hindi ka pa kini-care (ng employer). Hindi na nga malaki ang sahod, hindi pa compensated, overworked ka na nga wala silang pakialam kung umalis kami.” [Given the fact that your salary is low, yet you are not cared-for (by the employer). Your pay is small and not compensated, but you are overworked, yet they did not bother if we choose to leave].

#### *Stimulates nurses transition*

All the informants shared their plans in the next few years if both the poor working conditions and the uncompensated work in private hospitals stay the same. PN-J states: “Kung hindi maitataas (ang salary) hindi mo mapipigilan ang kagustohan na maghanap ng greener pastures.” [If the salary does not increase, you can't stop the urge to look for greener Pasture]. Meanwhile, PN-H expressed the desire to change careers or to work abroad if the salary in private hospitals would not increase reasonably.

#### Theme 4: The selfless foresight

##### *Increasing the salary attracts nurses to stay in the country*

Some of the informants shared that a salary that is comparable to the wages in government hospitals would prevent most of the nurses from leaving the country to work abroad. PN-H states:

“Siguro pag nagparehas ang sahod (sa gobyerno) dadami ang nurse na mag-stay, mag-apply at mababawasan na ang pupuntang abroad. Kahit ang quality of care sa pasyente gaganda, mag-i-improve kasi madami na kasi ang mag-aalaga at mag-aasikaso sa kanya.” [Maybe, if the salary is the same as that in the government, more nurses will apply and choose to stay, and there will be a reduction in the number of those applying to work abroad. Also, the quality of care for patients will be excellent and improved because more (nurses) are taking care of and attending to him/her].

Also, PN-H argued that an increase in their salary would benefit both the patients and healthcare institutions. The informant states: “Kung mag-salary increase hindi lang nurses ang magbi-benefit, pati yung mga patients, may impact din sa hospital kung saan mapapaganda din ang services nila.” [If there will be the provision of salary increase, not only nurses will benefit but also the patients. And, there will also be an impact to the hospital where their services will become good].

#### Discussion

This section analyzes the experiences of nurses employed in private hospitals, and based on these experiences, accentuates why there is a need for better pay. The limitations of this study only include nurses employed in private hospitals as informants, but it does not include all the private hospitals in the province of Albay, Philippines. Thus, the study explored the context of nurses employed in some select private hospitals and explicated the need for a better remuneration in the present times. Further, the informants' experiences and their perspectives may not accurately represent all nurses' perceptions on the issue of pay. However, at the end of this section, substantive recommendations were made to generate essential pieces of evidence about the need to increase the salary of nurses employed in private hospitals and to explore solutions to address nurses' concerns that generally affects the country potentially.

The informants described that nurses' low salaries greatly influence their workload and work conditions in the hospital. It also created an impact on their physical and mental health. The informants expressed that they experienced an influx of patients but with outnumbered nurses on duty, which they explained is the result of a low salary. Most of the nurses resigned because of

the uncompensated, yet over-worked conditions in private hospitals. Some scholarly works reported that the overwhelming task in the hospital is arguable because we, as a country, is not utilizing its adequate number of nurses. Hospital beds are increasing, but some hospitals do not proportionately increase nurses. In fact, the standard ratio for the nurse's load of 1:10-15 by the Department of Health (DOH) is already violated (Balita, 2016). With this, Garcia and Daño (2019) found that an increase in workload for nurses caused exhaustion and stress.

Similarly, Gulavani and Shinde (2014) mentioned that some of the identified stressors among nurses include high workload and understaffing. While Konstantinos and Christina (2008) added that stress has a cost for individuals in terms of health, wellbeing, and job dissatisfaction, as well as for organizations in terms of absenteeism and turnover (as cited in Gulavani & Shinde, 2014). Cartledge (2001) cited that nurses who opted to leave their jobs were because of job stress as a contributing factor to turnover (as cited in Hart & Warren, 2015).

Furthermore, private sector hired nurses but paid them minimal salaries with limited privileges and benefits (Garcia & Daño, 2019), which led to them resigning and working abroad to adequately support the needs of their families (Trillanes, 2016). Similarly, Li et al. (2014) reported that generally, the most significant benefit that migration has on nurses is the improved financial situation for the nurse and his/her family. As a result, an increase in nurse turnover was reported in some private hospitals (Bisnar & Pegarro, 2018). With this, the informants described that a better remuneration among nurses would help minimize these unfavorable situations in private hospitals and the physical and mental exhaustion that they are experiencing.

Also, the informants described the importance of CPD activities and their impact on the enhancement of their professional practice in the country. The existing law mandates a significant number of units especially required for the professional's renewal of the license. However, the informants described that every CPD activity is sometimes unaffordable given their meager salary. Although CPD is a form of professional update and a professional obligation (Owoeye et al., 2019) as other scholars found, one of the barriers to attending CPD activities remains to be its affordability (Macaden et al., 2017). With this, the informants expressed that a competitive salary would enable them to attend CPD activities more comfortably.

On the other hand, the workloads carried by nurses from both the private and public hospitals are undeniably comparable. However, in terms of compensation, there exists a noticeable inequality. As cited in Garcia and Daño (2019), nurses employed in government hospitals, even those in temporary work or contractual services, are receiving a higher salary than those in private hospitals. The provision of entry-level salary grade of 15,

as stated in the Philippine Nursing Act of 2002 (R.A. 9173), is recently implemented for nurses in the government hospitals. And yet, some of the private hospitals in the country continue to offer nurses salary below the minimum wage (Balita, 2016), thus, the salary gap between the nurses employed in private and the government hospitals in the country is extensive.

Furthermore, the salary of nurses in the private hospitals is not commensurate with the compensation received by other professionals permanently employed in government sectors in the country (Republic Act 11466 or the Salary Standardization Law of 2019). The contention behind this comparison is due to the comparable workloads and exhaustive working conditions experienced by nurses employed in private hospitals. The existence of low wages offered in private hospitals depicts a lack of government policy that should uphold the socio-economic welfare of nurses employed in this sector.

With the informants' experience of low salary and heavy workload, they expressed that the caring profession in private hospitals seemed uncared-for. They described that the hospital administration is not recognizing the increased workload that they are enduring daily. Also, the informants' meager salary is not given attention, and the administration does not show concern about nurses' turnover in the hospital, which results in understaffing. In contrast, the study of Palmer (2014) found that nurses' turnover is treated as an issue by the nursing administration, which resulted in a stretch in the number of staff nurses. Similarly, the understaffing issue causes increased workloads among informants; as a result, they could not respond quickly to the patients' demands.

On the other hand, Gulavani and Shinde (2014) cited that nurses' job satisfaction is a crucial indicator of an excellent working environment and the institution's management. The nurses felt undervalued whenever the administration does not provide due recognition to nurses (Garcia & Daño, 2019). With this, the study found that the informants expressed their intention to leave the current employer and intend to work abroad for better remuneration, while others planned to change career. The results of the study shown have similar findings cited by other scholars, such as Labrague et al. (2020) who articulated that nurses in private hospitals were more likely to report the intention to leave the organization than those employed in government hospitals.

Moreover, they found that part of the familiar drivers of this intent to leave is the vast pay disparity. Further, Twibell et al. (2012) reported that the low salary is one of the known factors that weakens the employees' work commitments and motivation (as cited in Labrague et al., 2020). Nurses who experienced high levels of stress and job dissatisfaction decide to leave the organization (Labrague et al., 2020). Similarly, Newman et al.

(2002) reported that some of the sources of job dissatisfaction among nurses were staff shortages, poor pay, and unpaid overtime (as cited in Hart & Warren, 2015). On the other hand, the International Centre on Nurse Migration (2008) mentioned that the compensated salary is one of the 'pull' factors offered by wealthy countries. It attracts nurses to migrate or leave his/her own country (as cited in Li et al., 2014). Also, Shader et al. (2001) found that job stress, working overtime, and job satisfaction noted to be predictors of nurses' turnover intentions (as cited in Hart & Warren, 2015). While some of the 'push' factors that encourage nurses to leave their country are substandard conditions or circumstances (Ma et al., 2010). Furthermore, Dones et al. (2016) also reported that some of the top reasons for Filipino nurses intending to leave the job include low salary/insufficient compensation, opting to work abroad, better opportunities, and change the profession (faculty to a clinician, change of career). However, the reports only include 33% of 231 respondents who worked in the hospital and does not specify if employed in a private or government-owned hospital.

The informants expressed that the provision of competitive salaries for nurses would increase job satisfaction and retention and would resolve the understaffing issues in the hospitals. Mohite et al. (2014) reported that satisfied workers tend to be more productive, creative, and committed, which eventually contributes to higher quality patient care and patient satisfaction and shows an effort to care more about work quality and productivity. Similarly, the informants described that a well-compensated nursing job would enhance retention and attraction among nurses to stay in the profession, the institution, and the country. The proper workload for the nurse-to-patient ratio would be met, and the patient's needs and demands would be attended. Moreover, the informants underscored its favorable impact on the care provision and the institution's health care services. In the study of Hayes et al. (2012) they reported that the high nurse turnover rate impacted the hospital quality of care (as cited in Shang et al., 2014).

Similarly, Bisnar and Pegarro (2018) found that an increase or decrease in nurse turnover dramatically affects health care delivery in terms of safe and quality nursing care, health education, communication, teamwork, and collaboration, and records management. Furthermore, some of the factors influencing these include the nurse-patient ratio and the stressful work environment. Hence, the informants extrapolated that the nurses' turnover can be minimized if a competitive salary is provided. This will eventually pull them to stay in the organization, the profession, and serve the home country.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The study found that nurses employed in private hospitals need better remuneration as they experienced undesirable and

comparable working conditions. The study showed that a meager salary in the private hospitals impacts nurses' workload, physical and mental health, socioeconomic being, nurse turnover or retention, professional development, and the provision of nursing care. The nurses experienced overworking with physical and psychological effects due to an inadequate number of staff nurses. The stretched number of nurses in private hospitals was found to be caused by low salaries, which influenced the retention or turnover of nurses. Furthermore, the low wage affected the nurses' ability to avail expensive career development in the country, as well as their ability to meet their socio-economic needs. Conversely, nurses articulated the positive influence of nurses' better remuneration on the provision of care and the health care institution's delivery of services.

The study recommends further exploration and description of the nurses' experiences in other private hospitals outside the region. Further research studies that investigate understanding the need for better pay and illustrating its impact on the nurses' job satisfaction, retention or turnover, provision of nursing care, and patient outcomes are to be sought. Future research studies can also be conducted to identify potential strategies to increase retention and satisfaction among nurses in the country. Also, to explore nurses' positive attitudes towards nursing job retention and satisfaction would help other healthcare workers minimize their physical and mental exhaustion and burnout. Nevertheless, future research efforts would further yield empirical evidence to bring the voices of nurses employed in the private sector to the board room. The results would speak of the necessary policies that will uphold the welfare of all nurses employed in the private healthcare sector in the country.

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