

Lived Experiences of Nursing Faculty in Navigating Work Strain, Coping Strategies, and Professional Growth in an Academic Setting

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of nursing faculty in navigating work strain, coping strategies, and professional growth within academic settings. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the research examined how nursing faculty manage the demands of balancing academic instruction, clinical responsibilities, administrative duties, and personal commitments. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, and in-depth interviews were conducted until data saturation was achieved. Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method, which organized significant statements into themes reflecting the participants' shared experiences. Findings revealed that nursing faculty continually struggle to balance their professional and personal responsibilities amid heavy workloads, institutional expectations, and limited organizational resources. Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated resilience through effective time management, adaptability, and reliance on support systems, including family, colleagues, administrators, and spiritual practices. Workload pressures and competing role demands contributed to work strain, while social support and personal coping strategies promoted resilience. The findings underscore the importance of strengthening institutional support through faculty development initiatives, mentorship programs, equitable workload distribution, and wellness interventions that foster resilience and career sustainability. Ultimately, the study highlights that nursing faculty continue to grow professionally despite persistent work-related challenges and emphasizes that supportive academic environments are essential in promoting faculty well-being, retention, instructional effectiveness, and the continued advancement of nursing education.

Keywords: nursing faculty, lived experiences, work strain, coping strategies, professional growth.

INTRODUCTION

Nursing education faces persistent challenges due to faculty shortages, rising student enrollment, and increasing workload demands, which contribute to stress, burnout, and faculty retention issues (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2023). Despite growing literature on faculty workload and burnout, limited qualitative research has explored the lived experiences of nursing faculty in the Philippine context. Therefore, this study explored the lived experiences of nursing faculty as they navigated work strain, coping strategies, and professional growth.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of nursing faculty in navigating work strain, coping strategies, and professional growth in an academic setting. The following grand question serves as the basis for this investigation:

How do nursing faculty describe their experiences in balancing professional and personal responsibilities?

Scope and Delimitations

This study explored the lived experiences of nursing faculty regarding work strain, coping strategies, and professional growth in a private nursing school in Tagum City using a qualitative phenomenological approach. The findings were limited to the experiences of the selected participants and were intended to provide insights for future faculty development initiatives.

Review of Related Literature

Existing literature indicates that nursing faculty experience increasing teaching, clinical, and administrative demands that contribute to stress, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction. Institutional support, mentoring, workload management, and faculty development enhance resilience and retention. Despite growing international evidence, limited qualitative studies have explored the lived experiences of nursing faculty in the Philippine context.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the nursing theories of Roy, Neuman, and Levine, which collectively explain how nursing faculty adapt to workplace stressors, utilize support systems, and maintain professional well-being. These theories provided the basis for understanding participants' experiences of work strain, coping strategies, and professional growth within academic settings.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

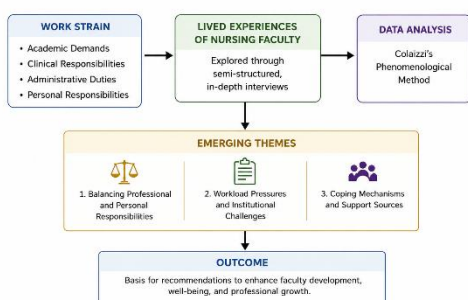


Figure 1 illustrates how work strain influenced the lived experiences of nursing faculty. Using Colaizzi's phenomenological analysis, three major themes emerged and served as the basis for faculty development recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

This study explored the lived experiences of nursing faculty in navigating work strain, coping strategies, and professional growth in a private nursing school in Tagum City, Philippines.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of nursing faculty through semi-structured interviews analyzed using Colaizzi's method.

Research Steps

Ethical approval was obtained before purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, transcribed verbatim, analyzed using Colaizzi's method, and validated through member checking.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

The study was conducted in a private nursing school in Tagum City, with the institution's identity withheld to maintain confidentiality. Purposive sampling was used to recruit nine (9) full-time clinical instructors who met the study's inclusion criteria and had firsthand experience relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews following informed consent. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and continued until data saturation was achieved.

Data Analysis Methods

Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method. Significant statements were extracted, meanings were formulated, and the statements were organized into thematic clusters that represented the participants' lived experiences. Member checking was conducted to validate the findings and ensure that they accurately reflected the participants' experiences.

Validation of Findings

Trustworthiness was ensured through member checking, an audit trail, and Colaizzi's systematic analysis of verbatim transcripts.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The study was limited to nursing faculty from a single private nursing school in Tagum City; therefore, the findings are specific to the selected participants and are not intended for statistical generalization. Ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice guided the study. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study, and all data were handled in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) and institutional ethical guidelines.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Phenomenological analysis using Colaizzi's method identified three themes: (1) Ongoing Struggle in Balancing Professional and Personal Responsibilities, (2) Workload Pressures and Institutional Challenges, and (3) Coping Mechanisms and Support Sources.

These themes reflect how nursing faculty navigate increasing professional demands while adapting to academic roles.

The first theme highlighted participants' difficulty balancing teaching, clinical supervision, administrative duties, and family responsibilities, resulting in role conflict and emotional strain. One participant shared, *"I have difficulty balancing my academic specialty... sometimes I forget which one I should prioritize"* (P001). These findings are consistent with work-family conflict reported among nursing educators (Candela & Bowles, 2021).

The second theme described workloads arising from teaching, clinical supervision, grading, documentation, and institutional expectations, which often led to physical and emotional exhaustion. One participant remarked, *"It was physically and mentally exhausting"* (P009). This supports previous literature linking workload demands with stress and burnout among nursing faculty (Gazza, 2022).

The third theme demonstrated participants' resilience through family, collegial, administrative, and spiritual support. Prayer and mentorship supported participants' adjustment to workplace demands, as reflected in one participant's statement, *"I constantly prayed"* (P003). These findings underscore the importance of supportive academic environments in facilitating faculty adjustment and resilience (León et al., 2023; Tummers & Bakker, 2021).

SUMMARY

Three themes emerged describing nursing faculty's experiences of balancing professional and personal responsibilities, managing workload pressures, and utilizing coping strategies. Overall, participants demonstrated resilience through family, collegial, administrative, and spiritual support, highlighting the importance of institutional initiatives that promote faculty well-being and professional growth.

CONCLUSIONS

Nursing faculty experience challenges in balancing academic, clinical, administrative, and family responsibilities. Heavy workload demands contributed to role conflict and emotional strain, while family, collegial, administrative, and spiritual support strengthened resilience and professional adjustment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1. Improvement of Work-Life Balance Strategies:** Institutions should implement programs that promote work-life balance and effective time management.
- 2. Enhancement of Workload Management and Institutional Systems:** Equitable workload distribution and improved communication should be strengthened to reduce faculty stress.
- 3. Strengthening Support Systems and Faculty Well-Being:** Mentorship, collaboration, and wellness initiatives should be enhanced to improve resilience.
- 4. Development of Comprehensive Faculty Development Programs:** Continuous professional development should be provided to strengthen teaching and clinical competencies.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools were used solely for language editing, grammar, sentence refinement, and manuscript organization. No AI tools were used in the study design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, or formulation of conclusions. All research activities, interpretations, and final decisions remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

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