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## **Into The Grey: The Lived Experience Of Clinical Instructors Turned Frontliners In The Now Normal**

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**Abstract.** Frontline health workers are the backbone of effective health systems – they are often based in the community and come from the community they serve, they play a critical role in providing a local context for proven health solutions, and they connect families and communities to the health system. Supartini (2022) resolute that nurses can create a more comfortable and comforting environment for the patients they serve especially in times of uncertainty. Undesirably, as the Philippines scuffled with the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Health is filling up the slots for much-needed healthcare workers in both the private and public sectors to help the country battle the COVID19 pandemic (Department of Health, 2020). Likewise, Tomacruz (2021) mentioned the government is also facing another battle that health workers groups warned mass resignations and protests could take place in hospitals across the country if the government does not fulfill its promise to improve support for the sector. Hence, American Nurses Association (2020) denounced nurses may struggle with the call and may choose not to respond. Consequently, nurses account for the biggest chunk of hires by profession. This study aimed at understanding and unveiling into the grey: the lived experiences of clinical instructors turned frontliners in the now normal. The researcher utilized the phenomenological research design to understand and explore the lived experiences of clinical instructors as frontliners in the now normal. The substantial outcomes of the study as to the lived experiences of clinical instructors turned frontliners in the now normal: ten (10) themes shared reality pertained to the lived experiences of clinical instructors turned frontliners in the now normal. It was disclosed that achieving professional goals, financial support and self-development, fulfilling job, shaping the lives of young people vs. providing hands on care for patients, intense physical and emotional pressure, work commitment and dedication, competitive pay was livened and appreciated by the clinical instructors who left the academe and served as frontliners in now normal. Moreover, coping mechanisms with demands and challenges of respondents involved prioritizing, time management, benefits, adaptability and self-care.

**Keywords.** Clinical Instructors, Frontliners, Now Normal

### **I. Introduction**

Frontline health workers are the backbone of effective health systems – they are often based in the community and come from the community they serve, they play a critical role in providing a local context for proven health solutions, and they connect families and communities to the health system. Supartini (2022) resolute that nurses can create a more

comfortable and comforting environment for the patients they serve especially in times of uncertainty.

Moreover, Philips & Catrambone as cited in Moselhy, & Attaia (2021) elucidated nurses as pointed out by are frontline in an environment where the entire world is grappling with the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Gain overwhelming recognition due to the nature of their work, Smith (2021), described a nurse is a caregiver for patients and helps to manage physical needs, prevent illness, and treat health conditions. Throughout the treatment process, the nurse follows the progress of the patient and acts accordingly with the patient's best interests in mind. The care provided by a nurse extends beyond the administration of medications and other therapies. Responsible for the holistic care of patients, which encompasses the psychosocial, developmental, cultural, and spiritual needs of the individual.

In the face of the essential role these frontline workers play, Dodson (2021) forecasted that there is an expected shortage of 18 million health workers. It's a gap that will urgently need to be filled to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in low- and middle-income countries by 2030. In the interim, Tanggol (2020) cited the WHO report State of the World's Nursing 2020 projects that, without action, there will be a shortfall of 4.6 million nurses worldwide by 2030. In the Philippines, the projected shortfall of nurses is expected to be 249,843 by 2030.

In line with the preceded observation, Lee et al. (2019) determined the shortage of nurses which can be associated by with the intention to leave the profession mediated the relationship between the milieu of respect and autonomy, quality of work-life, and nurses leaving the profession. Furthermore, Goodare (2019) in his study claimed that more than half of the nursing profession reiterated by feel they are underpaid and overworked. Lengthy hours, quality of work environments, lack of leadership, and the aging population and workforce, can all be seen as influential factors, which have the potential to leave this profession in a situation of calamity.

Paradoxically, Dooc (as cited in Kordes 2020) concluded that the Philippines on the other hand to is the top exporter of nurses to the US, Middle East, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Ireland. Subsequently (Chia & Tolentino as cited in Perante, Lunesto et al.,) determined the Philippines is the world's top source of nurses. The enthusiastic Filipino nurses are hailed for their dedication worldwide.

Undesirably, as the Philippines scuffled with the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Health is filling up the slots for much-needed healthcare workers in both the private and public sectors to help the country battle the COVID19 pandemic (Department of Health, 2020 as cited in Tria 2020). Likewise, Tomacruz (2021) mentioned the government is also facing another battle that health workers groups warned mass resignations and protests could take place in hospitals across the country if the government does not fulfill its promise to improve support for the sector. Hence, American Nurses Association (as cited in Choi, Jeffers & Logsdon 2020) denounced nurses may struggle with the call and may choose not to respond. Consequently, nurses account for the biggest chunk of hires by profession.

Qualified nurses who responded to calls to practice the profession entailed a greater adjustment especially with those engaged in a different industry. Ghayur and Churchill (as cited in John, 2019) posited that any new role comes with its own challenges as well as a period of adjustment. This is the same as those nurse educators that mentor the next generation of nurses, leading the way to the future of patient care. As described by Yeo et al. (2020) adapting to a new environment, new expectations and a different position can be overwhelming. Nonetheless, Sadang (2021) reminded that although challenging and risky, working as nurse front liners

during this crisis brought them honor, privilege, and self-satisfaction in their oath as professional nurses.

Despite of the above-mentioned advantages and challenges of nurses still there are numbered of Clinical Instructors decided to shift from academe to bedside care. With such, this prompted the researcher to study the lived experiences of clinical instructors turned front liners. This will also determine the motivation of the shift of practice from academe to bedside care and the personal challenges they have encountered.

### *1.1 Objective of the Study*

This study aimed at unfolding and understanding the lived experience of Clinical Instructors turned front liners in the now normal with a view described the lived experience as frontliners in the now normal and unveiled how do Clinical instructors as frontliners in now normal faced and coped with the challenges and demands of nursing care in the now normal.

## **II. Methods**

Given the research problem, this study concentrated on the experiences on transition, challenges, demands encountered by the Clinical Instructors turned frontliners in now normal in country and other country. The empirical design for research was psychological phenomenological. Phenomenological study seeks to describe what all individuals have in common as they confront the demands and problems of now normal environment. The overarching goal is to condense individual encounters with a phenomenon to a description of its core. Furthermore, the intent is to return to the apparent, which is summarized in the phrase "Back to the things themselves!" Creswell (2018). Specifically, this study unveiled the experiences of Clinical Instructors turned frontliners in now normal in country and other country.

The researcher selected participants through Purposeful Criterion Sampling because they were fully informed and understood the study research topic and core phenomenon since they were Clinical Instructors turned frontliners from the country and other country thus they provided the much-needed data for the investigation on hand.

The seven (7) clinical instructors were employed in respective university until they became frontliners in now normal. Each of them had experience in classroom management and specialization area in nursing practice. The researcher provided an Antigen test kit prior to face to face interview with local participants. Then those informants located abroad schedule online interview during off duty as to facilitate the interview without wearing their PPE which may hinder the audio and clarity of communication. Employing the purposeful criterion sampling strategy, above standards were set because of the intended participants location as well as the researcher. The time of availability of the participants, health condition was highly considered before the actual onsite and online interview.

The researcher secured a permission to record the video conversation using a separate mobile phone. An open-ended question was asked thru one-on-one interview in the comfort of the participants' time and schedule. The researcher requested the participant to have paper and pen to write other concerns not spoken based on the questions. Since the interview done in an online and onsite process, there were questions asked twice for clarity of the response. The benefits of the study were fully understood by the participants, and data confidentiality was properly respected and enforced.

The researcher watched the video conference with the participants after synthesizing the overall essence of the phenomena under study to verify the verbatim accounts

they shared throughout the interview. The researcher completed it as the final stage after the participants explained and corrected their responses, obtaining the authenticity of the essence and so establishing its credibility.

### **III. Results and Discussion**

The bracketing component of this paper was also discoursed where in the researcher narrated what encouraged her in pursuing the study.

Lived experience of clinical instructors turned frontliners in the now normal could suggest a positive connotation and negative feedback. Some participants disclosed that the turning point of leaving the academe gave them a breakthrough in exploring more their capabilities thru self-development, financial provisions, career advancement thru enhance skills in bedside care, a rewarding job that some expressed satisfaction, identified them as epitome of nursing profession by molding the learners competence, inspired young learners to pursue and advance education, manage their time by prioritizing what must be attended, monitor the mental health of the recipients of care, institution supports their transition by giving competitive pay and benefits, balance their life and protect themselves as to prevent the outbreak and contaminations.

On the contrary, the benefit of being a clinical instructor outweighs what experiences in bedside care which disclosed that teaching is a passion, clinical teaching is an accountability for both nursing students and patients, classroom management prepares a routine pattern in contrast with emergency and bedside care where in the now normal, the spikes of pandemic brought emotional turmoil which brought intense physical and mental pressure, the participants must protect themselves by wearing personal protective requirements, arrange to transport to work and home to prevent cross contamination and protected with vaccination. Above the experiences the clinical instructors in frontline now normal demonstrated work commitment and dedication by showing altruistic behavior.

This is to ensure that the themes that developed are real and authentic, which is critical in fulfilling the study's purpose of gaining an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of Clinical Instructors turned frontliners in the now normal.

The horizontalization of this study which includes phrases and excerpted quotes from the participants' verbatim comments in the researcher's interview with them. The researcher interpreted the participants' responses in order to answer the study's two central questions. As a result, the researcher generated seventy (70) noteworthy assertions.

| <b>Table 1</b><br><b>Significant Statement of Clinical Instructors Turned Frontliners in the Now Normal</b>   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Intellectual and self-growth</li> <li>2. Engaged to direct patient care</li> <li>3. Career choice</li> <li>4. Fulfillment of ultimate desire</li> <li>5. First one to abroad in the family</li> <li>6. Enhance bedside skills</li> <li>7. Improve financial status</li> <li>8. Mentoring the students</li> <li>9. Rewarding profession</li> </ol> |

10. Work is fulfilling and enjoyable with students
11. Schedule are given ahead of time
12. Influencing the attitude of the students
13. Enjoyable time with young learners
14. Passion for teaching
15. Sharing knowledge
16. Teaching at bedside
17. Accountable in bedside care
18. Similar responsibility both student and patient
19. Instructing the students in direct patient care
20. Mentoring
21. Long-term care
22. Simultaneous care for both learners and patient
23. Community quarantine
24. Hybrid work
25. Mental health
26. Full of uncertainty
27. No one is prepared
28. Comorbidity
29. Lack of PPE
30. Continue to learn new things
31. Model for the program
32. Passion to serve
33. Fulfilling my oath
34. Need to work continually
35. Serving the needy
36. Proud if being a nurse
37. Reward for being diligent
38. Annual increment
39. Work performance
40. Working in Local Government
41. Work hard
42. Support of labor union
43. Delighted feeling
44. Attend who needs most
45. Strict observance of time
46. Que of patient
47. Always be available
48. Triage
49. Staff placement
50. Immediate attention
51. No preparation
52. Privileges
53. Hospital and education benefit
54. OCA or One Covid-19 allowance
55. Government directives on community quarantine
56. Salary standardization

57. Hazard pay
58. Communication in new setting
59. Resourceful
60. Serve the people regardless of culture age and preference
61. Use of layman's term
62. Adjustment to new responsibility
63. Adaptation with and to new nurses
64. No seniority
65. Eat on time and keep hydrated
66. Follow the protocols
67. Protect self
68. Strict health protocol in the PPE wearing, no to symptomatic client
69. handwashing, social distancing, face masks
70. Immunization

After making sense of the significant statements in relation to the research problem, that was, Into the Grey: The Lived Experience of Clinical Instructors Turned Frontliners in the Now Normal, the researcher categorized the statements through theme clustering in which provides the two groups of responses based on the textural and structural questions of the study. From the critical analysis of seventy (70) significant statements, the researcher excerpted then classified ten (10) theme clusters derived from participant statements and associated thoughts.

| <b>Table 2</b> |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>10</b>      | <b>Clusters Categorized into Textural and Structural Themes</b>  |
|                | <p><b>Textural Themes</b></p> <p><b>Theme 1: Achieving Career Goals, Financial, Support, Self- Development</b></p> <p>In relation to this theme, the participant disclosed that they would have more career options available to them once they left academia, that they would be better at handling patients, that they would face intellectual challenges, and that they would be more engaged and motivated in their lives and careers than they had ever been as Clinical Instructors. According to the participants' comments, it is proven that moving from academia to the frontlines is motivated by factors including financial support, self-development, and achieving career choice. It can be gathered from the responses that the participant appeared to thoroughly comprehend the motive and reasons for switching from academia to frontline.</p> <p><b>Theme 2: Fulfilling Job</b></p> <p>The participants shared that the best thing about clinical instructor is that they do love teaching in spite of all the difficulties and obstacles they face on a daily basis. This proves that teaching is one of the best jobs for making one happy with fulfillment. It is a rewarding job that needs a lot of passion and commitment.</p> <p><b>Theme 3 Shaping the Lives of Young People Vs. Providing Hands-On Care for Patients.</b></p> <p>The difference of work management as a clinical instructor and a front liner was narrated by the participants. Clinical instructor has a significant role in the education and development of nursing students while Frontline nurse perform many direct patient care</p> |

tasks, including administering medications, assessment of patient's vitals, tube feeding and monitoring.

#### **Theme 4 Intense Physical and Emotional Pressure**

Participants in this theme shared their experiences in the now-normal situations that have frontline workers under extreme strain, endangering their physical, mental, and social well-being. Frontline workers felt some of the worst effects of the now normal. Due to the extremely high demand for their services, frontline healthcare practitioners were already experiencing significant strain at the start of the new standard. During the public health catastrophe, they were toxic with duties and responsibilities. Previously, they had worked on a specific work schedule, but the pandemic caused the authorities to modify the timetable regularly due to the heavy burden of infected patients.

#### **Theme 5 Work Commitment and dedication**

Participants in this theme revealed what, in the current normal, led them to choose to remain on the front lines. They also said that the opportunities are limitless, the financial rewards are tremendous, and continuous learning is commonplace. Also, they took an oath to be faithful to their work and to uphold it no matter what. When are evaluated for work dedication and commitment, health frontliners in the now normal stayed with through good times and encounters and get through any challenges that may emerge.

#### **Theme 6 Competitive Pay**

What surfaced in this theme is that participants are more likely to stay motivated and go above and beyond to accomplish their goals if they believe they are being paid properly. The sense of fulfillment that comes from providing knowledge and services, as well as the leadership of the government and various unions that helped them as they met the demands of the period in providing high service standards.

#### **Theme 7 Urgent and Important: Prioritizing and Time Management.**

This theme stressed that in the daily lives of the frontliners, knowing what is urgent and what is significant is absolutely essential. Frontliners can better manage and prioritize their personal responsibilities, internal administrative activities, and patient care. It is a difficult career, but front liners who learn time management skills can maintain balance even when faced with time constraints.

#### **Theme 8: Governance Matters More Than Ever**

The participants in this theme shared how the current administration supported them as they made the move from the academic world to the front liners. They claim that the government rewards them for staying by the patient's bedside with a number of privileges that they can apply to their needs and the needs of their family.

#### **Theme 9 Big Leap of Adjustment on the Individual**

This theme emphasizes the adjustment in the environment where they are now. For the front liners adjusting to people around them, giving them ideal service and communicating with people is important because being able to handle change with ease frees up the time you might have normally spent being stressed out when a new challenge presented

itself. Being adaptable is also important because it showcases their ability to be resourceful, determination, analytical skills and more.

### **Theme 10 Keeping Self-Care or Extra Measures**

It reinforces the notion that front liner felt the need to take additional precautions to protect themselves, something they would never do under normal conditions. These actions were taken on the basis of the nurse's own intuition rather than suggestions made by any regulatory body or infection control policies. Front line workers wear additional PPE on top of their masks, gowns, and gloves to combat their fear of contamination. They also observe social distance and protect themselves at all times. Also, they require vaccination, regular meals, and water intake.

**Textural Description.** As presented the lived experience of clinical instructors turned front liners in the now normal, highlighted (6) meaningful themes of their shared reality. Theme 1 disclosed that after they left academia, they would have more professional possibilities accessible to them, be better at dealing with patients, encounter intellectual challenges, and be more interested and motivated in their lives and professions than they had ever been as CI. Theme 2, uncovered that despite all the challenges and obstacles they encounter the participants agreed that the best thing about being a clinical instructor is that they genuinely like teaching. This demonstrates why teaching is one of the finest careers for achieving happiness and contentment. It's a fulfilling career that requires a lot of passion and dedication. Theme 3 highlighted the difference between work management as a clinical instructor and a front liner. Theme 4 pointed out their experiences in the now-normal situations that have frontline workers under extreme strain, Theme 5 participants revealed what, in the current normal, led them to choose to remain on the front lines. Lastly, Theme 6 accentuated the fact that a competitive salary is the ultimate reward for the work done and plays a vital part in job selection.

**Structural Description.** As to how the participants cope with the demands and challenges of being Clinical Instructor turned Front liners gave rise to four (4) meaningful themes. Theme 7 highlighted the difficulty the participants experienced prioritizing and dividing their time fairly in order to fulfill the roles of the front liners. Theme 8 explained how they received support from the present administration as they transitioned from the academic realm to the front lines. In Theme 9, the participants gave us a glimpse into a change to a work process, procedure, or environment that allows a person to: perform to the best of their ability. work productively. work in a safe environment and most importantly adjust. Finally, theme 10 gave prominence to the need to take additional precautions to protect themselves in the workplace.

**Essence.** The shared account of the participating clinical instructors who transitioned to front-line positions reflects a fruitful and illuminating experience in addressing and resolving the demands and difficulties of the new work as well as an opportunity to increase their accomplishments, reach, and impact and possibly have an impact on various workplace and organizational aspects. They emphasized that when working in academia, they found fulfillment and inspirational work, but that they now needed to hunt for new employment owing to the circumstances surrounding them. They also mentioned that switching to a different line of work is a strategy for assisting them in forging a career path. Although in order to effectively pursue a new job, they must confront these anxieties and take risks in order to benefit from a work transfer that teaches them new skills and broadens their expertise. They focus on their role as

enthusiasm and devotion in achieving goals despite the difficulties and hurdles they may face, which can also be seen as positive attributes.

**Verification.** In this step, the researcher plays back the participants' video interviews to make sure that the transcriptions are accurate and present the essence of their lived experiences if they accurately and honestly reflect their shared reality. This ensures that the participants themselves have verified the reliability and credibility of the studied phenomenon's core elements.

#### **IV. Conclusion and Recommendation**

The significant findings of the study were as follows that after listening to interview and writing the verbatim, it was emphasized six (6) meaningful themes of their shared reality. Theme 1, the participants disclosed in this theme that after they left academia, they would have more professional possibilities accessible to them, be better at dealing with patients, encounter intellectual challenges, and be more interested and motivated in their lives and professions than they had ever been as CI. Theme 2 uncovered that despite all the challenges and obstacles they encounter the participants agreed that the best thing about being a clinical instructor is that they genuinely like teaching. This demonstrates why teaching is one of the finest careers for achieving happiness and contentment. It's a fulfilling career that requires a lot of passion and dedication. Theme 3 highlighted the difference between work management as a clinical instructor and a front liner. Theme 4 pointed out their experiences in the now-normal situations that have frontline workers under extreme strain. Theme 5 participants revealed what, in the current normal, led them to choose to remain on the front lines. Lastly, Theme 6 accentuated the fact that a competitive salary is the ultimate reward for the work done and plays a vital part in job selection.

There were four (4) insightful themes were created. Theme 7 highlighted the difficulty the participants experienced prioritizing and dividing their time fairly in order to fulfill the roles of the front liners. Theme 8, explained how they received support from the present administration as they transitioned from the academic realm to the front lines. Theme 9, the participants gave us a glimpse into a change to a work process, procedure, or environment that allows a person to: perform to the best of their ability. work productively. work in a safe environment and most importantly adjust. Finally, theme 10 gave prominence to the need to take additional precautions to protect themselves in the workplace.

Analyzing the textural and structural narratives of the participants, the following conclusions were drawn that the lived experience of clinical instructors turned front liners in the now normal strongly concluded that achieving career goals, financial support and self-development, fulfilling job, shaping the lives of young people vs. providing hands-on care for patients, intense physical and emotional pressure, work commitment and dedication, competitive pay is livened and appreciated by the clinical instructors who left the academe and served as front liners in now normal. Moreover, the participants' coping mechanisms with the demands and challenges of being clinical instructor turned Front liners involved urgent and important thus prioritizing and time management, governance matters more than ever, big leap of adjustment on the individual and keeping self-care.

The researcher offered the following recommendations for possible actions: The Clinical Instructors while on academe pursue another step for professional development. There are numerous fields in Nursing suitable to own's interest. Bedside nursing though appealing in terms of compensation and benefits have limitations to nurses as they age due to the nature of

work in performing bedside care which range of care from differs from the less serious to dreaded infectious clinical cases.

The academic administrators should involve by sponsoring national and international conference. The clinical instructors principally implement the program objective. Engaging them in policy making makes them feel the recognition of their commitment in fulfilling the mission and vision of the University. Furthermore, a clear salary scheme for those who pursued further study, educational and hospital benefits of clinical instructors and their family. The satisfaction of employee enables them to stay and serve with loyalty.

The lower house to create bill to address the salary standardization of both clinical instructors in government and private institution. Since the task is the same in classroom management, follow up students in various hospital, community and lying-in, ambulatory clinic and other special areas.

The boards of national organization of Nursing should create a league specific to Clinical Instructors. Nursing academe is a field of nursing composed of educators with specializations. There is no known nurse organization specific to clinical instructors. May this study enlighten the significance of Clinical Instructors in academia and future organization establish for their welfare.

The national professional organization whom the core of policy for direction organized, to work in collaboration for and create a framework of a clear work jurisdiction of Clinical Instructors working in both in government and public institution. Nurse professors are licensed nurses who manage class and engaged time with nursing student in hospital duty. The license of clinical instructors is at stake when the learners convey nursing action during invasive and non-invasive procedures. Likewise, a mandate that will protect the rights on migrating and returning academias who prefer to teach in the School of Nursing.

To the Nursing Director of the institution where the Clinical Instructors served as a frontliners in now normal. Since they are seasoned nurses with specialization and mastery in the field of nursing, it does not guarantee that there is no need for refresher program on how to use new equipment in the ward. With the high-end state of the art medical equipment, robotic nursing care, use of technology in patient's care, these clinical instructors suggest to require equipping in facing the care modalities in now normal.

In the health care institution such as hospital, community and ambulatory clinic, they should provide facility such as in-house dormitories for the nurses to stay whenever they need to monitor health whenever caught with symptoms of infection, recreational unit such as gym to sustain their healthy stamina, internet connection so as during isolation they can get in touch with the love ones which helps them to regain strength and boost emotional support.

Lastly, future researchers are encouraged to conduct another inquiry about the phenomenon covering different locale of investigation and different set of participants in order to explore further the studied phenomenon. Conversely, future researchers are also urged to conduct a similar study covering multiple locales and relatively greater number of participants.

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