

Nurses' Attitudes towards the Nursing Profession during the Pre-pandemic and Pandemic Periods

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Abstract-The front lines of our healthcare system are staffed by nurses. The nursing profession requires a lot of physical and mental effort and Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the nurses' attitudes towards the nursing profession. This study investigated the nurses' attitudes towards nursing profession during pre-pandemic and pandemic periods in terms of professional factors, organizational factors, and social factors. Comparison of the differences between the nurses' attitudes towards the nursing profession during pre-pandemic and pandemic periods was also determined. The study used a descriptive, cross-sectional research design. The locale of the study was Cavite and Batangas provinces, Region IV-A, Philippines and three hundred sixty-three nurses were the study participants. A researcher-made questionnaire was the tool for data collection. Mean, Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis, and Wilcoxon tests were utilized for data analysis. The study revealed that nurses' attitudes towards the nursing profession vary significantly before and during pandemic periods. Professional attitudes are best exemplified by nurses before the pandemic, while organizational and social attitudes during the pandemic. Social and professional factors are indicators of nurses' attitudes towards the nursing profession. Male nurses working in government hospitals and well trained before the pandemic possess the most attitudes towards the nursing profession. Nobility, compassion, and competence continue to be the distinctive characteristics of the nursing profession. Also, public image still has considerable effect among nurses.

Keywords- Attitudes, COVID-19, nurses, nursing profession, pre-pandemic, pandemic.

I. INTRODUCTION

The front lines of our healthcare system are staffed by nurses. The first known documents that mention nursing as a profession were written approximately 300 AD. There was a great demand for nurses to provide medical care alongside doctors during this time because the Roman Empire made an effort to create a hospital in every town that was under its control. In 1860, the profession of nursing advanced even further with the establishment of the first nursing school in London. With continuous evolution of nursing roles, the profession has branched out into various specializations with further education in particular fields of nursing care (Smith, 2023).

In the Philippines, Act 2808 (the First True Nursing Law) was enacted in 1919. During this time, the Board of Examiners for Nursing was also established. In 1920, the first nursing board examination was given (Nurseslabs, 2020). Currently, nursing profession is guided and protected by Republic Act No. 9173, known as the "Philippine Nursing Act of 2002" (PRC, n.d.).

According to the International Council of Nurses (ICN) Code of Ethics for Nurses (2021), nurses prepare for and respond to emergencies, disasters, conflicts, epidemics, pandemics, social crises and conditions of scarce resources. The safety of those who receive care and services is a responsibility shared by individual nurses and the leaders of health systems and organizations. Similarly, the American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics, states that "the nurse creates an ethical environment and culture of civility and kindness treating colleagues, coworkers, employees, students and others with dignity and respect" (Kroning & Onwumelu, n.d.).

Nurses are often seen as compassionate helpers. Nursing is associated with images from the past, such as 'the lady with the lamp'. Therefore, in the public eye at least, the nursing identity seems a simple and straightforward construct, but nothing less is true. Nurses themselves reinforce stereotypes in order to fit into what is expected, even when they believe professional behavior encompasses other features. But nursing actually seems to be better off when viewed upon as a diverse, independent profession (van der Cingel & Brouwer, 2021). The general perception of nursing is actually inconsistent and diverse. Because they are invisible and don't participate in public discussion, nurses have

contributed to the creation of this image. The public perception of nurses, their work environment, their work values, their education, and traditional social and cultural norms all influence how they view themselves and their professional identities (ten Hoeve et al., 2013). The nursing profession requires a lot of physical and mental effort. It is linked to the occurrence of a variety of morally challenging professional and personal circumstances. Nurses frequently find themselves in circumstances where there is a noticeable conflict between their moral principles and the obligations or demands imposed on them by their profession. The worldview orientation of care professionals and their patients is evolving as a result of globalization, the political and economic climate, migration, and the occurrence of pandemics. The performance of the nursing profession depends on expertise which includes education, theoretical knowledge, and practical abilities; but the attitudes and opinions of the nurse are also crucial (Toumová et al., 2021). Ashktorab et al. (2015) stated that the most important determining factor in the professionalization of nursing is decision-making based on scientific knowledge. Because of the high ambiguity and role conflict in the nursing profession, attitude is the most important concept (Torabizadeh & Darari, 2019).

COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the nursing profession. Nurses immediately learn the skills necessary to care for patients with an illness that is poorly understood and whose treatments are constantly evolving. They must get used to a "new normal" in which visiting relatives of patients are not permitted, even when they are near death. In order to meet the demand, nurses have been pushed to quickly transfer to new patient care units with little training (Manning, n.d.). The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered the working conditions and experiences of nurses (Omer et al., 2023). The study of Galehdar et al. (2020) revealed that while caring for patients with COVID-19, nurses faced a number of difficulties, including a negative sense of inefficiency, stress, extreme physical exhaustion, a conflict between the delivery of care and pollution, and being confined in protective gear, all of which have the potential to lower the standard of patient care. Working in the frantic and frequently stressful healthcare atmosphere of today can put the fundamental code of ethics in jeopardy. In reality, having a negative or "bad" attitude while working in the healthcare industry is rather typical today. This "bad" attitude makes the workplace and everyone who works there even more stressful (Kroning & Onwumelu, n.d.). Examining the status of nurses working under these critical conditions, is of utmost importance (Fahardi et al., 2021).

In nursing, attitudes are really important. The way people feel about concerns and procedures in care and what they find important, good, relevant, and suitable are all influenced by attitudes (Price, 2015). The cultivation of a passion for the profession among nurses will boost their dedication to their work, improve the standard of care they provide, lower attrition, and eventually enhance the standing of the nursing profession in society and public health (Bolandian-Bafghi et al., 2022). Nursing professional attitudes are inclinations, feelings, and emotions that conform to their values and serve as the foundation for their behavior (Business Bliss Consultants FZE, 2018).

Recent studies have shown a considerable correlation between nurses' attitudes toward their patients and patient satisfaction (Tola, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant changes to the working circumstances of nurses. These changes have also had an impact on the notion of professional dedication to the nursing profession (Momeni & Khatooni, 2023). Although there are numerous literatures exist regarding the attitudes and competency of nurses towards patient care, there is a scarcity in literature about nurses' attitudes, specifically Filipino nurses, towards their own profession. Identifying and understanding nurses' attitudes on their profession may be crucial to delivering high-quality healthcare to patients. It might also offer additional knowledge to help nurses advance their professionalism in nursing.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study investigated the nurses' attitudes towards nursing profession during pre-pandemic and pandemic periods. The aim of the study was to meet the following research objectives:

1. To determine the attitudes of nurses towards the nursing profession during the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods in terms of (1) professional factors, (2) organizational factors, and (3) social factors.
2. To determine the attitudes of nurses towards the nursing profession when grouped according to their profile during pre-pandemic and pandemic periods.
3. To compare the differences between the nurses' attitudes towards the nursing profession during pre-pandemic and pandemic periods.

III. METHODS

The study used a descriptive cross-sectional research design. The local of the study was Cavite and Batangas provinces, Region IV-A, Philippines. The researchers considered the participants' place of work as private-owned and government-funded health care facilities offering primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of health care where they practiced nursing during the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods.

The participants of the study were nurses from the mentioned provinces and identified health care facilities. The sample size was calculated based on the approximate number of nurses in two provinces and the selection of participants was done using convenience sampling. The actual number of participants was three hundred sixty-three (363) nurses. The

researchers identified the participants of the study using the following inclusion criteria: (1) they are registered nurses occupying a nursing position in private-owned or government-funded health care facilities in the Cavite and Batangas provinces; and (2) they have provided direct and indirect nursing care during the pre-pandemic and the COVID-19 pandemic periods. Nurses providing direct care are those who provide direct health services (e.g., face-to-face, first-line supervision) to patients being treated or suspected of having physical (e.g., COVID-19) and mental illnesses. While those nurses providing indirect care are those who provide patient-specific service (e.g., telephone consultations, health conferences, team meetings, chart/report writing) when the patient is not present. The Nursing Interventions Classifications (NIC) described direct care intervention as a treatment performed through interaction with the patient(s), direct social actions, and counseling. Indirect care intervention is a treatment performed away from the patient, but on his or her behalf or on behalf of a group of patients, where these actions support the overall effectiveness of direct care interventions (Butcher et al., 2018). Originally, as planned, the participants would be selected from all provinces of Region IV-A, consisting of five provinces, but because of the low responses from the other three provinces, these areas were excluded from the study.

A researcher-made questionnaire was the tool for data collection. It is structured based on survey instruments developed by previous research to measure the attitudes of nurses towards the nursing profession. Also, the questionnaire included items from the findings of other empirical studies and relevant literature. The questionnaire was composed of three (3) parts, initially asking the participants about their profile in terms of age, sex, place of work, years of work experience as a nurse, type of health facility, and the pandemic preparedness and response training they attended during the pre-pandemic or pandemic periods. The second and third parts of the questionnaire included similar items on the attitudes of nurses towards the nursing profession during the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods. The attitudes were categorized into three critical factors that can greatly impact the nursing profession: professional, organizational, and social factors. The professional factors are the aims or qualities that characterize the nursing profession (e.g., practice with empathy, compassion, enthusiasm, etc.). On the other hand, organizational factors are the work-related support of the organization for the nurses' professional needs and contributions (e.g., rewards, recognition, promotions). Lastly, the social factors are the perceptions of the public about the nursing profession (e.g., views and significance of the profession to society). The participants of the study were asked to determine their attitudes toward these factors during both periods using a four-point Likert scale of 1-Very Untrue of Me (VUM), 2-Untrue of Me (UM), 3-True of Me (TM), and 4-Very True of Me (VTM).

To ensure high internal consistency of the questionnaire, content validation and a pilot study were conducted. To confirm validity, the questionnaire was submitted to three (3) experts: one chief nurse of a tertiary facility; a senior nurse directly supervising nurses during the pandemic periods; and a quality and safety manager implementing policies essential during the pandemic. They were asked to review if the items indicated in the questionnaire covered the key areas pertaining to the attitudes of nurses towards their profession. In regards to reliability, a test-retest method was applied to the questionnaire, and the results of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this questionnaire were: before the pandemic (*0.961, excellent*) and after the pandemic (*0.964, excellent*). This was performed by giving the questionnaire to a pilot sample of thirty (30) nurses who were comparable to those who met the inclusion criteria on two separate occasions, with an interval of two weeks before actual data collection.

Before proceeding with data collection, the researchers submitted the research to the Research Ethical Review Committee of Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas and obtained approval with a reference number of A1-2023-087 dated May 17, 2023. After approval from appropriate authorities, the questionnaire was made electronically available through a link and shared with the participants. The purpose of the study was stated and explicitly explained. A cover letter was presented to the participants to confirm their willingness to take part in the study. Data collection was conducted from May to August 2023. After collection, the data were tabulated, presented, and analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 28 software. The researchers assigned numbers to the responses of the participants to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participant's identity.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. Frequency and percentage distribution determined the profile variables, while mean was employed to measure the attitudes of nurses towards the nursing profession in terms of professional, organizational, and social factors. Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests were used to determine the attitudes of nurses towards the nursing profession when grouped according to their profiles during pre-pandemic and pandemic periods, and the Wilcoxon test was used to compare the differences between the nurses' attitudes towards the nursing profession during pre-pandemic and pandemic periods. The findings of the study were presented and analyzed to generate the conclusions and contributions of the study to the future of the nursing profession.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study included three hundred sixty-three ($N = 363$) nurses from government and private health care facilities in Cavite and Batangas provinces, Region IV-A, Philippines.

Table 1- Percentage Distribution of the Nurses' Profile

N = 363

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
21 – 25 years old	26	7.2
26 – 30 years old	38	10.5
31 – 35 years old	156	43.0
36 – 40 years old	66	18.2
41 – 45 years old	19	5.2
46 – 50 years old	20	5.5
51 – 55 years old	24	6.6
56 – 60 years old	6	1.7
61 years old and above	8	2.1
Sex		
Male	99	27.3
Female	264	72.7
Years of Work Experience as a Nurse		
below 1 year	27	7.4
1 – 5 years	76	20.9
6 – 10 years	118	32.5
11 – 15 years	81	22.3
16 - 20 years	21	5.8
21 – 25 years	17	4.7
26 – 30 years	11	3.0
31 – 35 years	6	1.7
36 – 40 years	6	1.7
41 years and above	0	0
Place of Work		
Cavite	99	27.3
Batangas	264	72.7
Type of Health Facility		
Government hospital	34	9.4
Private hospital	143	39.4
Government	109	30.0
Private	77	21.2
Training		
Before Covid-19 outbreak, did you participate in any pandemic preparedness and response training?		
Yes	219	60.3
No	144	39.7
During Covid-19 outbreak, did you participate in any pandemic preparedness and response training?		
Yes	284	78.2
No	79	21.8

Table 1 presents the percentage distribution of the nurses' profile in terms of age, sex, years of work experience as a nurse, place of work, type of health facility, and training before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The majority of the nurses are 31–35 years old (N = 156, 43%), female (N = 264, 72.7%), and worked for 6–10 years (N = 118, 32.5%) in private hospitals (N = 143, 39.4%) in Batangas province (N = 264, 72.7%). These nurses participated in pandemic preparedness and response training before (N = 219, 60.3%) and during the pandemic (N = 284, 78.2%).

Table 2- Nurses' Attitude Towards Nursing Profession During the Pre-pandemic and During Pandemic Period as to Professional Factors, Organizational, and Social Factors

	Pre-pandemic		During Pandemic	
	Mean	VI	Mean	VI
Professional Factors				
I think nursing is a profession that requires skills besides knowledge.	3.81	VTM	3.79**	VTM
I know nursing is a profession that requires reading and keeping up with technology.	3.74	VTM	3.75	VTM
I need to attend regular professional meetings.	3.50*	VTM	3.50*	VTM
I value my own decisions at work.	3.66	VTM	3.66	VTM
I think nursing requires more empathy than other professions.	3.59	VTM	3.67	VTM
I would practice nursing in any condition.	3.62	VTM	3.52	VTM
I notice nurses, among all health-care personnel, communicate the most with patients.	3.77	VTM	3.65	VTM
I believe nurses should be compassionate.	3.85**	VTM	3.76	VTM
I feel my dedication to this profession is most gratifying.	3.68	VTM	3.64	VTM
I am enthusiastic about this profession	3.64	VTM	3.60	VTM
Composite Mean	3.69	VTM	3.65	VTM
Organizational Factors				
I would stay in this profession regardless of the compensation.	3.36*	VTM	3.79**	VTM
I value the harmonious relationship between nurses and other practitioners in this profession.	3.71**	VTM	3.75	VTM
I know there are clear guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of nurses.	3.69	VTM	3.50*	VTM
I think among other professions, nursing has a greater retention in the workforce	3.46	TM	3.66	VTM
I view a clear career path and promotion in this profession.	3.42	TM	3.67	VTM
I need to strictly follow infection control policies in the practice of this profession.	3.68	VTM	3.52	VTM
I appreciate the clinical work of nurses, which reflects the true characteristics of this profession.	3.69	VTM	3.65	VTM
I believe corresponding continuing education is provided to nurses relevant to their job requirements.	3.66	VTM	3.76	VTM
I am grateful for the timely recognition of my good job performance.	3.56	VTM	3.64	VTM
I believe that nurses are competent in formulating regulations and policies.	3.62	VTM	3.60	VTM
Composite Mean	3.59	VTM	3.65	VTM
Social factors				
I view nursing as a noble profession that serves people.	3.79**	VTM	3.76**	VTM

I think the health of society depends on nurses.	3.30	TM	3.39	TM
I believe everyone can be a nurse.	3.04	TM	3.08	TM
I consider nursing as a female profession.	2.17*	UM	2.25*	UM
I would like my children to become nurses	2.63	TM	2.60	TM
I appreciate better job opportunities for nurses	3.34	TM	3.50	VTM
I feel nurses should have personal characteristics like good humor, insightfulness, devotion and charity.	3.62	VTM	3.70	VTM
I am thankful that nurses are viewed by the public as good persons.	3.60	VTM	3.64	VTM
I think nursing is a promising profession.	3.58	VTM	3.60	VTM
I feel the public appreciates the significance of my profession.	3.34	TM	3.63	VTM
Composite Mean	3.24	TM	3.31	TM

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Very True of Me (VTM); 2.50 – 3.49 = True of Me (TM); 1.50 – 2.49 = Untrue of Me (UM); 1.00 – 1.49 = Very Untrue of Me (VUM)

**Highest mean

*Lowest mean

Table 2 presents the nurses' attitude towards the nursing profession during pre-pandemic and pandemic periods as to professional, organizational, and social factors.

Before the pandemic, nurses believed that they should be compassionate (3.85, VTM). Being compassionate is a characteristic innate among nurses. Many authors have claimed that those who are called to and stay in the nursing profession are compassionate. Every nurse should possess this attitude when performing their roles to assist the well-off, sick, and dying patients. Sinaga et al. (2023) pointed out the potential benefits of self-compassion in helping people love themselves and prioritize self-care in the face of diversity. Mohamed Noor et al. (2023) also attested that compassionate care is a vital aspect of high-quality health services.

During the pandemic, nurses reported that nursing as a profession requires skills besides knowledge (3.79, VTM). It is expected that nurses may regard nursing as requiring skills besides knowledge, as this period brings more challenges. During the pandemic, the volume of patients increased, resources were scarce, and medical treatments and nursing interventions were not definite. As health care tries to understand the nature of COVID-19, nurses are left to rely on their own skills. Mohammadimehr (n. d.) affirmed that all nurses who work during an emergency like a pandemic need to have crucial knowledge and skills to support themselves and others and also provide patients with safe care. These knowledge and skills can likewise help nurses act more confidently. Further, Ivsiku (2023) highlighted that in the context of COVID, nurses had to acquire new skills, adapt to new healthcare protocols, and quickly learn to utilize new technologies. Similarly, Twist et al. (2023) emphasized that during the pandemic, health care services had to leverage their workforce skills to accelerate identification, treatment, and care. Moreover, Buheji and Ahmed (2020) stated that accumulated knowledge and the dynamic of the pandemic situation empower nurses to propose the best ways to be totally engaged in managing COVID-19 challenges.

In both pre- and pandemic periods, nurses agreed that they needed the least to attend regular professional meetings (3.50, VTM). The findings imply that during the pre- and pandemic periods, those tasks indirect to care, such as attending meetings, are accounted for last by nurses. Nurses see themselves as significant figures on the bedside and on the frontlines, where their skills and knowledge are highly needed. Studies proved these findings, as nurses who have worked at the forefront of the pandemic have significantly impacted patient health and outcomes. Nurses' clinical skills have been key to successful patient treatment, and the pandemic called on nurses to do more beyond their nursing skills (Important Nursing Skills in a Post COVID World, n.d.; Aslanyan et al., 2022; Sklar et al., 2021). In addition, Kanu et al. (2021) pointed out that health care workers directly involved in COVID-19 patient care were identified as predictors of positive attitudes.

Generally, in terms of professional factors, there was a difference between the attitudes of nurses towards the nursing profession before and during pandemic periods; a higher composite mean score was revealed by the results before the pandemic (3.69, VTM) compared to the attitudes of nurses during the pandemic (3.65, VTM). Numerous studies asserted that nurses experienced changes during the pandemic period (Momeni & Khatoooni, 2023; Sayilan & Kulakac, 2023; Uzunbacak et al., 2023; Joker et al., 2022; Duran et al., 2021). These changes emphasized the concept of nurses' professional commitment, their perception and image of the nursing profession, and their professional values. Caro-

Alonso et al. (2023) conferred that the first and second waves of the pandemic affected the nursing care model. On the one hand, treating disease symptoms was prioritized over treating individuals. In contrast, population health took precedence over the person-centered approach of humanized care. These changes in the care method were dominant during the pandemic. The nurses acknowledged that they were unable to give the patients the whole amount of time they would have liked. They believed that crucial components of care, like patient privacy and intimacy, individualization and humanization of care, and attention to emotional aspects of care, were being neglected. Because it went against the fundamentals of nursing care, the abrupt change in the paradigm of care create frustration on nurses. Similarly, Kaya et al. (2022) concluded that COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected nurses' professional commitment, professional satisfaction and quality of their professional life. However, at a different point, other studies stated that there is no specific period when nurses' attitudes towards the nursing profession change in terms of professional factors. To cite, Zakeri et al. (2022) revealed that compassion satisfaction among nurses did not change during the COVID-19 outbreak compared with before the COVID-19 outbreak. During the pandemic, it was feared that the provision of compassionate care to patients would be affected by the unfavorable situation. But the study by Mohamed Noor et al. (2023) found that health care workers successfully remained compassionate in their service.

In terms of organizational factors, before the pandemic, nurses valued the harmonious relationship between them and other practitioners (3.71, *VTM*). This finding infers that nurses acknowledge the expertise of every member of the care team in enhancing patient care. It also suggests that nurses' attitudes toward working collaboratively with colleagues are recognized as a major factor in effective care management. Most literature indicates a strong relationship between collaborative practice and positive attitudes (Dassah et al., 2023; Moussa et al., 2022; Aymen, et al., 2017). However, the pandemic caused a drastic change in the working conditions of nurses, affecting their relationships with colleagues and other health professionals. Although positive changes were identified, such as collective decision-making (Anjara et al., 2021) and the creation of mutual support (Diaz-Agea et al., 2022), barriers were clearly emphasized by most studies (Przylecki et al., 2023; Diaz-Agea et al., 2022; Anjara et al., 2021; Belarmino et al., 2020). Communication limitations due to the use of PPE, strictures of traditional hierarchy, and blame culture were among those specified.

In addition, a major difference in the item "staying in the profession regardless of compensation" was observed among nurses. This attitude was regarded as least prevalent before the pandemic (3.36, *VTM*) while highest during the pandemic (3.79, *VTM*). Obviously, before the pandemic, nurses could move from one job to another without concern. However, during the pandemic it is interesting to note that nurses are willing to stay in the profession regardless of the compensation. According to Nashwan et al. (2021), nurses' level of knowledge and work- environment risk category played a significant role in predicting nurses' willingness to work with COVID-19 patients. In the Philippines, Sadang (2020) conferred that nurses frequently perceive working during a pandemic crisis as a professional privilege, regardless of the circumstances. They consider this to be part of their oath and calling to their chosen vocation. France-Presse (2021) declared that some nurses even go to work without benefits and hazard pay, despite the heightened health risks and threats during the pandemic. Likewise, Ke et al. (2021) asserted that professional commitment and patriotism were two important reasons affecting frontline nurses' willingness to work during a pandemic. In contrast, Mendoza (2021) presented that about 40% of nurses in the Philippines private hospitals resigned since the pandemic began. Likewise, in Qatar, nurses have higher turnover intentions compared to before COVID-19 (Nashwan et al., 2021).

During the pandemic, nurses indicated the least that the profession has clear guidelines on their roles and responsibilities (3.50, *VTM*). This finding can be associated with the remodeling of the health system to adapt to pandemic situations, which created multiple roles or even confusing responsibilities among nurses. Organizations were forced to adjust to the pandemic situation. Limited resources and a lack of preparedness during the pandemic led to a tremendous change in health care institutions, affecting the attitudes of nurses as to their roles and responsibilities. Hemann et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of preparing nursing staff at health care organizations to adequately respond to the changes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Noorland et al. (2021) specified that the lack of a clear job description led to a lack of clarity about the kinds of tasks nurses were expected and allowed to perform during the pandemic. Gauli (2023) as well as Buheji and Buhaid (2020) affirmed that nurses working as frontliners during the pandemic wanted proper guidelines, enough resources, and effective communication channels to do their jobs.

Considering the social factors, in both pre- and pandemic periods, nurses showed similar attitudes towards the nursing profession. Firstly, nurses viewed nursing as a noble profession that serves people (3.79, *VTM*; 3.76, *VTM*), and lastly, nurses considered nursing a female profession (2.17, *VTM*; 2.25, *VTM*). The findings imply that, regardless of situations and differences in gender, nursing should be for the service of people. Nurses' selfless concern for others remains one of their most authentic characteristics. Sharma et al. (2022) opposed the use of gender stereotypes to describe nurses and posited that female and male nurses are equally valuable in health care and in the nursing profession. Also, the studies of Saidun and Akhmetova (2021), Oyedele et al. (2015), and Beck (2012), were consistent with the current findings that nurses viewed nursing as a noble profession and a well-regarded career. It is worth noting that in the recent study of Shahbal et al. (2022), nursing was commended as the backbone and the only field with strong characterization and a noble identity that must be transmitted to the communities and belief systems of the general population.

Overall, in terms of both organizational and social factors, the findings revealed that nurses had higher attitudes towards the nursing profession during the pandemic (3.65, *VTM*; 3.31, *TM*) than before the pandemic period (3.59, *VTM*; 3.24, *TM*). The findings show that in times of crisis, nurses feel that the nursing profession needs them the most. Further, it suggests that critical health situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic may increase the confidence of nurses toward their profession. These situations serve as motivation for nurses to perform their jobs well. Thus, nurses have strong attitudes toward how they see themselves as significant professionals in resolving global crises. Additionally, the unique characteristics and attributes of nurses contribute to this achievement. This was clearly pointed out in the previous discussion from the studies of Ke et al. (2021) and France-Pressé (2021). Further, Buheji and Buhaid (2020) proved that despite the limited resources and lack of psychological and mental health support, nurses can deliver the best critical care and manage contagious diseases during the pandemic. Moreover, Sayilan & Kulakac (2023) asserted that nurses, with their heavy workloads during the COVID-19 pandemic, exhibited good levels of professional perception and image.

Among the three factors, nurses considered social factors the least important to assess their attitudes towards the nursing profession. The findings propose that nurses have less concern for what the public may view of them. This finding is supported by Maliheh et al. (2020) and Elmorshedy et al. (2020) who stated that the public image of nurses was perceived relatively low by both citizens and nurses. In addition, public perception of nurses contributed on how nurses view themselves (ten Hoeve et al., 2014). Despite the commitment, the visibility of nurses, and the positive changes in public perception, several studies affirmed that society still perceived them as “doctors’ assistants (Uysal & Demirdag, 2022). Results of the study of Zamanzadeh et al. (2022) indicated that nursing stereotypes have an impact on the public's perception of the profession, which is a multifaceted, inclusive, paradoxical, dynamic, and complicated concept. Nurses were frustrated that in times of healthcare disasters, they still had to struggle for social, professional, and economic recognition (Walowska & Domaradzki, 2023).

Table 3- Difference of Responses on Nurses’ Attitude Towards Nursing Profession During the Pre-pandemic Period and Pandemic Period When Grouped According to Profile

	Pre-Pandemic			During Pandemic		
	χ^2	p- value	Interpretation	χ^2	p- value	Interpretation
Age						
Professional Factors	11.712	0.165	Not Significant	13.328	0.101	Not Significant
Organization Factors	8.977	0.344	Not Significant	9.917	0.271	Not Significant
Social Factors	8.529	0.384	Not Significant	6.294	0.614	Not Significant
Sex						
Professional Factors	10797.5	0.009	Significant	10709.5	0.006	Significant
Organization Factors	11866.5	0.167	Not Significant	11675.5	0.107	Not Significant
Social Factors	12690.5	0.671	Not Significant	12230	0.345	Not Significant
Years of Work Experience as a Nurse						
Professional Factors	8.103	0.423	Not Significant	5.729	0.678	Not Significant
Organization Factors	9.837	0.277	Not Significant	5.086	0.748	Not Significant
Social Factors	9.75	0.283	Not Significant	4.4	0.819	Not Significant
Place of Work						
Professional Factors	10002	0.000	Highly Significant	10189.5	0.001	Highly Significant
Organization Factors	10145	0.001	Highly Significant	10194.5	0.001	Highly Significant
Social Factors	8835	0.000	Highly Significant	9730	0.000	Highly Significant
Type of Health Facility						
Professional Factors	19.486	0.000	Highly Significant	10.045	0.018	Significant
Organization Factors	20.43	0.000	Highly Significant	14.787	0.002	Significant
Social Factors	37.494	0.000	Highly Significant	15.33	0.002	Significant

Training						
Before Covid-19 outbreak, did you participate in any pandemic preparedness and response training						
Professional Factors	12545	0.001	Highly Significant	13899	0.047	Significant
Organization Factors	12359.5	0.000	Highly Significant	12606	0.001	Highly Significant
Social Factors	12357	0.000	Highly Significant	13697	0.034	Significant
During Covid-19 outbreak, did you participate in any pandemic preparedness and response training						
Professional Factors	10606.5	0.447	Not Significant	10591	0.430	Not Significant
Organization Factors	10674.5	0.500	Not Significant	10503	0.372	Not Significant
Social Factors	9885.5	0.106	Not Significant	10583.5	0.441	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at p -value < 0.05

Table 3 shows the comparison of responses on the nurses' attitude towards the nursing profession during the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods when grouped according to profile.

In both periods, before and during the pandemic, it was observed that there was a significant difference in professional factors when grouped according to sex $\{(p = 0.009) (p=0.006)\}$; when grouped according to place of work $\{(p = 0.000; 0.001; 0.000); (p= 0.001; 0.001; 0.000)\}$ type of health facility $\{(p = 0.000; 0.000; 0.000); (p=0.018; 0.002; 0.002) \}$ and training before the pandemic $\{(p = 0.001; 0.000; 0.000); (p= 0.047; 0.001; 0.034)\}$.

Based on the findings, the nurses' responses vary statistically, and from the post hoc test conducted, it was found out that those who are male, from Batangas, government hospitals, and participated in any pandemic preparedness and response training before the pandemic have a greater assessment of the attitudes of nurses towards the nursing profession.

It can be inferred that being a male nurse belonging to the minority group in nursing, working in a more demanding patient environment in government hospitals, and being prepared for pandemic situations leads to a higher attitude towards the nursing profession.

Consistent with previous evidence, compared to female nurses, male nurses were more adaptable to COVID-19 since they could make rapid psychological and cognitive adjustments to improve vocational skills and career planning levels (Zhou et al., 2021). Also, a multitude of studies have presented the confident nature of male nurses in their practice and profession (Nerges et al., 2023; Saleh et al., 2020; Penprase et al., 2015; Muldoon & Reilly, 2003). To add more, male nurses have a positive attitude towards their profession (Murry et al., 2019), serve as advocates for the nursing profession (Blair, 2016), have a strong desire for personal growth and professional promotion (Murry et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2004), and foster caring behaviors to enhance relationships with their patients (Sundus & Younas, 2020; Penprase et al., 2014). Male nurses' roles are now highly accepted in the profession, removing gender biases towards care. However, Anaam and Alshali (2023) indicated that female respondents displayed good practices towards COVID-19 and reported better attitudes than their male counterparts.

Considering the place and the facility where nurses are working, the findings are similar to several studies. Like the study of Kanu et al. (2021), which presented positive attitudes of health care workers toward COVID-19 despite their health care facilities' lack of equipment and inadequate preparedness to respond to the pandemic, and the study of Adolfo et al. (2021), which concluded that nurses working in public hospitals have a more positive qualitative improvement attitude than those in private hospitals. To point out otherwise, Astvik and Anderson (2019), in their study of Filipino nurses' experiences of nursing in public care settings in the Philippines, exposed the challenges faced by nurses caused by a lack of resources and a restricted budget, which resulted in an increase in workload and the nurses' feeling of insufficiency in the profession. Pires et al. (2018) also found out that, compared to public hospitals, private hospitals demonstrated more characteristics favorable to nurses' professional practice.

Moreover, nurses who participated in pandemic preparedness and response training before the pandemic have higher attitudes towards the nursing profession. As attested by Mubarak Al Baalharith and Mary Pappiya (2021), nurses exhibited an adequate level of knowledge about COVID- 19 preparedness and response. They claimed that nurses' excellent preparedness would make a significant difference in in-patient care. Also, more studies affirmed that nurses' preparedness, training, and knowledge about COVID-19 resulted in positive attitudes (Huy et al., 2021; Tamang et al., 2020).

Conversely, the results showed that the nurses' attitudes towards the nursing profession before the pandemic and during the pandemic have no significant relationship when grouped according to age $\{(p = 0.165; 0.344; 0.384); (p=0.101; 0.271;0.614)\}$, organizational and social factors as to sex $(p = 0.167; 0.671); (p = 0.107; 0.345)$, years of work experience as a nurse $\{(p = 0.423; 0.277; 0.283); (p = 0.678; 0.748; 0.819)$, and training after the pandemic $\{(p = 0.447; 0.500; 0.106); (p = 0.430; 0.372; 0.441)\}$.

The findings suggest that age, work experience, and training after the pandemic are not significant factors in the attitudes of nurses towards the nursing profession. Such profile of nurses is least likely to result in any significant change in how nurses perceive the profession in any particular situation. Few studies revealed similar findings, such as those of Alshumrani et al. (2022) as to age and work experience. However, the majority of evidence proves a clear association between these demographic variables and nurses' professionalism. These studies claimed that older nurses were 1.19 times more likely to have favorable attitudes toward the nursing profession than the younger age group (Rekisso et al, 2022), and with an increase in the length of service as a nurse, attitude toward professionalization increased (Shohani & Zamanzadeh, 2017). On the other hand, very limited literature explored on the importance of response training during the pandemic. The world was caught off guard by the COVID-19 pandemic. The unprecedented event put the entire healthcare system's everyday functions under strain; yet, several measures were implemented throughout time to maintain smooth operations and the continuation of patient service delivery (Bollyky & Patrick, 2020; Alakeely et al., 2021).

Table 4- Difference Between Nurses' Attitudes Towards the Nursing Profession During Pre- Pandemic and Pandemic Periods

		Mean	Std. Deviation	W	p- value	Interpretation
Professional Factors	Before	3.69	0.443	2.059	0.040	Significant
	During	3.65	0.478			
Organizational Factors	Before	3.59	0.498	0.169	0.866	Not Significant
	During	3.65	0.515			
Social Factors	Before	3.24	0.521	4.547	0.000	Highly Significant
	During	3.31	0.514			

Legend: Significant at $p\text{-value} < 0.05$

Table 4 presents the comparison of responses to nurses' attitudes towards the nursing profession before and during the pandemic. It was observed that there was a significant difference in their assessments of professional ($p = 0.040$) and social factors ($p = 0.000$), as revealed by the computed p-values, which were less than the alpha level. On the other hand, the findings showed no significant difference in terms of organizational factors ($p = 0.866$).

This means that nurses have a better conceptualization of their attitudes towards the nursing profession when professional factors are considered, especially before the pandemic period. It is good to note that with this kind of attitude toward the nursing profession, health care can assure better service among nurses. Hintistan and Topcouglu (2017), and Huber (2015) proposed that high levels of professionalism can improve nurses' autonomy and empowerment, increase their recognition, facilitate organizational behaviors, and improve quality services.

On the other hand, in terms of social factors, the significant difference in the responses of nurses before and during the pandemic may be attributed to the findings from Table 2. Though social attitudes towards the nursing profession were regarded as least important compared to professional and organizational attitudes, nurses became highly visible during the pandemic period. Their crucial roles and competent skills in combating the pandemic increased their public image. As a key professional at the bedside, they feel more respected and valued, which leads to a better attitude towards the nursing profession. Hoeve, Jansen, & Roodbol (2013) affirmed that a challenging work environment increased nurses' visibility, and emerging diseases such as COVID-19 were effective in creating and strengthening the public image of nursing (Wibawa, 2021). In general, the role and practice of nurses in the COVID-19 pandemic have had a positive effect on elevating the public image of nursing (Fontanini et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). However, the findings also

suggest that, if unappreciated by the public despite their hard work and commitment to providing care, social factors can significantly decrease the attitudes of these nurses towards the nursing profession.

Conversely, as to the organizational factors, a not significant difference in the responses suggests that in any type of working settings and anytime or period, nurses' attitudes towards the nursing profession remain the same. Nurses are consistent in their commitment to provide the same level of quality care to patients. They will adapt, find, and create means to ensure care is provided despite work restrictions, disruptions, and the fear of pandemics. These findings clearly proved the discussions in Table 2 and were affirmed in numerous studies, such as France-Pressé (2021) and Ke et al. (2021).

V. CONCLUSIONS

Certain periods and situations predict nurses' attitudes towards the nursing profession. Nurses' attitudes towards the nursing profession vary significantly before and during pandemic periods. Professional attitudes are best exemplified by nurses before the pandemic, while organizational and social attitudes during the pandemic. Social and professional factors are indicators of nurses' attitudes towards the nursing profession. Male nurses working in government hospitals and well trained before the pandemic possess the most attitudes towards the nursing profession. Nobility, compassion, and competence continue to be the distinctive characteristics of the nursing profession. Also, public image still has considerable effect among nurses.

Since the study was conducted only in two provinces in a region in the Philippines and there were only a small number of nurse participants, further investigations need to be performed to fully understand the nurses' attitudes towards the nursing profession in times of pandemics. Stereotyping and professional image can be further explored, including racial and geographically differential views of the nursing profession. The preparedness of nurses for disasters, emergencies, and pandemics should be basic in any health care institution. Uplifting nursing standards in whatever circumstances is crucial to the profession and should be a collaborative effort between nursing education, practice, and regulatory organizations.

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