

Vanguards of Duty: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Healthcare Frontliners During Pandemic Surge

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Abstract:-

➤ *Background*

This paper provides a clear understanding of the lived experiences of Healthcare Frontliners during Pandemic Surge.

➤ *Method*

This study utilized qualitative phenomenological research to understand the lived experiences of Healthcare Frontliners during the pandemic surge. The data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with twenty-five (25) questions to discover common themes.

➤ *Findings*

Findings show three key themes. Firstly, is *Routine Abnormality*, where sudden change occurred to frontliners' routines, resulting in *Lack of Sleep*, and *Change of Lifestyle*, causing health risks which impact their performance during work hours. The second theme is *Social Responsibility*, where frontliners are expected to follow new protocols as *Safety Precautions*, and to perform their job well as healthcare workers for *Fulfilling Duties*. The last theme is *Motivational Security*, as frontliners experience immense stress, they turn to religious and social support as *Coping Mechanisms*, as well as spending time on hobbies and leisure through *Recreation*.

➤ *Conclusion*

Healthcare frontliners underwent significant change in their usual lifestyles and had to quickly adapt and use coping mechanisms to help them fulfill their responsibilities while experiencing routine abnormalities.

➤ *Recommendation*

The researchers recommend that the well-being of healthcare professionals be emphasized to ensure a well-functioning healthcare service for the community.

Keywords:- Challenges, COVID-19, Well-being, Phenomenology, Adaptation, Mental Health.

I. INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic has been warned by scientists for decades, arguing that a SARS-like virus poses deadly risk factors and has the chance to emerge. Unfortunately, preventive actions were taken once the

coronavirus emerged in late 2019, which allowed the virus to spread on a pandemic scale (Morens et al., 2020). In January 2020, a scientist from China discovered a new pneumonia-like illness found in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. This illness can transmit from human to human, and following two days, China had Wuhan under a strict lockdown (Katella, 2021). As the new illness continued to spread through traveling passengers from Wuhan, more research was conducted, and the illness was identified as COVID-19. According to Kontis et al. (2020), in 21 industrialized countries, the estimated mortality effect from mid-February to May 2020 is 206,000. These sudden deaths and casualties caused by the covid-19 pandemic needed quick action from healthcare facilities and personnel that will be able to face the virus head-on, thus resulting in the presence of frontliners.

Once countries started lockdown, there became a need to identify essential workers who keep societal structures stable. Among the essential workers are the frontliners or frontline workers. Blau et al. (2021) claim that frontliners are workers who worked in person during the early COVID-19 pandemic surge during March or April of 2020. Healthcare workers must adapt swiftly to the sudden and massive increase in demand for healthcare services. In line with the paper of Nawaz et al. (2020), the roles and responsibilities of healthcare frontliners during the pandemic include disseminating public awareness relating to disease prevention, providing care for patients infected with covid-19, along with vaccinating the public, all while juggling the responsibility of protecting their self from contracting the virus. The constant struggle to adapt to new pandemic protocols and work conditions will affect the healthcare frontliners' daily lives, which are different from the experiences of other workers during the pandemic. Based on a qualitative study by Koontalay et al. (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic affected all aspects of life, especially healthcare frontliners. Due to inadequate resources, the constant stress of work, and fear of the risks of being infected, healthcare frontliners experience emotional distress, which is a very unpleasant emotional response brought on by another's actions and for which compensation may be sought, and issues with their physical and psychological health.

Various effects of the pandemic on healthcare frontliners have been studied in all aspects. Aside from the adverse holistic effects on healthcare frontliners, Sumner and Kinsella (2021) also studied the overall well-being of healthcare frontliners, showing that those with resilient

coping mechanisms also possess corresponding positive welfare, including higher resilience, well-being, and lower burnout. Salas-Vallina et al. (2020) investigated the shared leadership among medical staff and the high levels of trust that play a fundamental role in developing their healthcare performance. Healthcare frontliners who have strong, meaningful social relationships are also happier and have a lower risk of burnout (Heath et al., 2020).

This paper conforms to the idea that the pandemic has dramatically altered the lived experiences of healthcare frontliners due to the pandemic's unprecedented nature and the new workload that came with it. Subsequently, this paper aims to investigate the lived experiences of healthcare frontliners and understand the common themes of different aspects of their lives that have been affected by the pandemic. This study explores the lived experiences of healthcare frontliners in personal, social, and professional aspects that allow future incoming healthcare workers to prepare for working in similar conditions. This paper also gives voices to those healthcare professionals, enabling them to share their experiences and letting medical and healthcare facilities know which aspects of the healthcare workers' well-being need to be addressed and improved. In agreement with Billings et al. (2021), researchers urgently need more high-quality qualitative research to better understand the preferences, needs, and experiences of healthcare workers to prevent distress in workers further.

Now that people are reminded of the importance of healthcare workers in present-day society and how fundamental they are in creating stable and healthy conditions for people to live their lives to the fullest. The essence of the Lebenswelt of healthcare frontliners during the Covid-19 surge serves to understand the greatest struggles they went through for future generations of healthcare workers to know how to navigate their lives in pandemic conditions or to find better solutions on how to cope with the harsh situation the pandemic induces. The

study will also emphasize the needs of healthcare workers during the pandemic. It will benefit healthcare facilities or companies to create better plans to alleviate the stress of healthcare frontliners.

II. METHOD

➤ *Research Design*

This study utilized the qualitative phenomenological research method to understand the lived experiences of Healthcare Workers in terms of working experiences and struggles during the COVID-19 pandemic. A Qualitative research approach was used to collect and analyze non-numerical data to derive meaning from it as it would better understand social life by studying specific groups or locations (Crossman, 2020). The researchers also applied the inductive way of reasoning in order to form themes and subthemes from the collected data. Sauce and Matzel (2017) stated that inductive reasoning encompasses most cases where a general principle is derived or categories are formed based on specific observations.

The method of gathering the necessary data was done through organized online interviews. The researchers interviewed ten participants who were carefully selected based on the needed criteria. The researchers focused on understanding and analyzing the transcribed words of the healthcare workers that helped formulate the themes and subthemes the researchers found at the end of the research writing process.

➤ *Research Locus and Sample*

This research study was conducted at Philippine School Doha (PSD) in Bldg. 01, St. 1008 Zone 56 Messaimeer Area Al Messiah, Doha, Qatar. This study involved the participation of selected healthcare workers in Qatar. The participants were selected after obtaining their compliance and the necessary authorities in the research locale.



Fig 1 Map of Qatar



Fig 2 Location of Philippine School Doha (PSD)

The following criteria were used to select the participants: (1) a healthcare worker with at least five years of working experience in Qatar, (2) a healthcare worker who had direct contact with Covid-19 patients during 2019-2021, and (3) a healthcare worker that is currently working during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers restricted the minimum years of working experience as a healthcare worker in Qatar to at least five years to qualify for this research study. In order to gather valid and accurate data, the participants should have direct contact with patients from 2019-2021 and are currently working during the COVID-19 pandemic.

➤ *Data Collection and Ethical Consideration*

The data collection process started with a list of interview questions based on the central and specific questions. The list of questions made up the questionnaire that the participants acknowledged during the interview. The questionnaire was also validated by selected teachers with relevant professional backgrounds relating to the study. Following the validation, consent forms were emailed to the chosen participants as an invitation for them to participate in the study. The time and place for the interviews were scheduled according to the availability of the participants. The interviews took place through the use of Zoom Conference.

The robotfoto and interview guide were used in the interview to help the participants express their lived experiences with the researchers. Orientation was also given to the participants to provide them with a run-through regarding the interview process. As for the interview recordings, which the participants consented to, the researchers used the Zoom recording feature. These recordings were deemed necessary to transcribe the participants' shared experiences. Along with the transcription of the oral responses, data interpretation and analysis were made thoroughly as part of the qualitative research process. The confidentiality of the participants is observed; therefore, their names are not manifested; instead,

they are referred to as P1, P2, P3, and so on in this research study.

➤ *Data Analysis*

After gathering information and data, the analysis and thematizing were conducted. The researchers were able to transcribe the participants' answers systematically as the interviews were done through Zoom Conference, which includes video and voice recording. The emic-to-etic transcriptions were done after the interviews. The researchers then proceeded to the cool analysis wherein the responses were modified to understand further and summarize the participants' answers. The warm analysis, where categorizing and grouping responses and making the themes, was then formed and done. (1) Routine Abnormality: (1.1) Lack of Sleep (1.2) Change of Lifestyle; (2) Social Responsibility: (2.1) Fulfilling Duties (2.2) Safety Precautions; (3) Motivational Security: (3.1) Coping Mechanisms (3.2) Recreation. Formulating these themes and subthemes helped the researchers to construct the dendrogram based on the warm analysis. A thought unit was then created, leading to the simulacrum's formation. The simulacrum was formed based on the researchers' analysis of the lived experiences of Healthcare frontliners during the surge of the pandemic in Qatar.

III. RESULTS

This phenomenological study describes the lived experiences of healthcare frontliners in the State of Qatar relative to the central question: "What describes the experiences of healthcare frontliners during the COVID-19 pandemic surge?" Furthermore, this study focused on the specific question: "What are the challenges faced by healthcare frontliners during the surge of the COVID-19 pandemic?". The nature of healthcare frontliners during the pandemic contains particular challenges. *Routine Abnormality*, *Social Responsibility*, and *Motivational Security* were the main themes that emerged from the participant's responses.

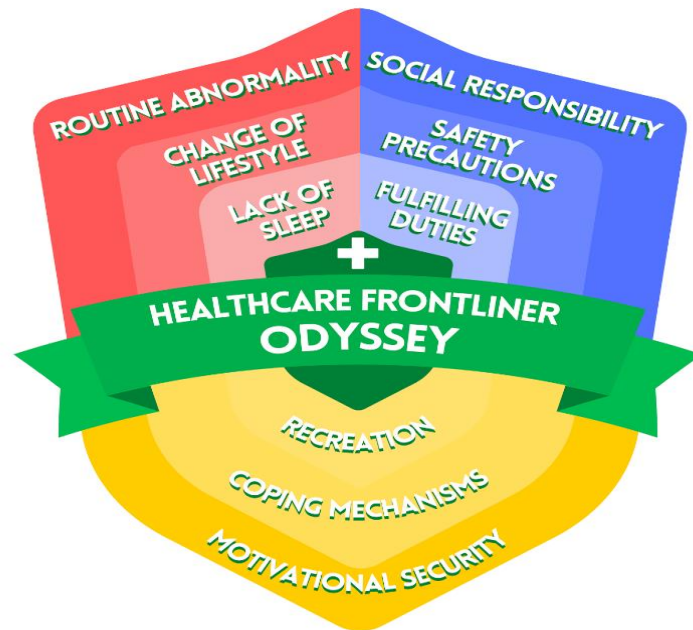


Fig 3 Simulacrum

➤ *The Healthcare Frontliner Odyssey*

The researchers created a simulacrum that serves as a visual interpretation of the results for easier understanding. The shape of the simulacrum resembles a shield, relating to the title, sharing the likeness of healthcare frontliners to vanguards, which are leaders. The healthcare frontliners serve as a shield that protects the health of not only oneself but others. The first outer ring is the study's three main themes, each having a different color.

The red portion holds the **Routine Abnormality**, characterized by the disruption of the normal routines of healthcare frontliners due to the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, as well as the increase of work hours. Its sub-themes are *Lack of Sleep* and *Change of Lifestyle*. The blue color includes the main theme of **Social Responsibility**, described as the fulfillment of frontliner's duties knowing the great risk that comes with it. Despite the struggles, their obligation to serve the public overcame their fears and challenges while facing the pandemic. Following the main theme is *Fulfilling Duties* and *Safety Precautions*. Lastly, the yellow outer ring symbolizes the **Motivational Security**, which portrays how healthcare frontliners were able to surpass the hardships with the help of coping mechanisms and recreational activities such as praying, doing hobbies, keeping in contact with loved ones, and setting a positive mindset. The corresponding sub-themes are *Coping Mechanisms* and *Recreation*.

➤ *Routine Abnormality*

The unprecedented nature of the pandemic caused a great deal of change to the normal routines of healthcare frontliners. It disrupted the normal lifestyle and sleeping patterns of frontliners due to the increase in work hours and the restrictions during the pandemic. Routine abnormality categorizes the experiences of healthcare frontliners that made them change their usual daily routines.

➤ *Lack of Sleep*

Due to the sudden changes, the healthcare frontliners' sleeping habits were greatly affected. The rise of demanding working patterns brought stress in having heavy workloads, countless responsibilities, and major risks. As a result, the sleeping hours of healthcare frontliners drastically decreased, affecting their health and personal leisure time. Some participants mentioned:

"I really had those days where my immunity and resistance dropped because of the lack of sleep. It was mentally draining but since the number of COVID cases was huge we had to push ourselves to do our duties." P6

"Yes because before I can complete an 8-hour sleep but because of the pandemic, I was always on call specially because I work in the emergency department so we need to be always on standby. Due to this, I didn't have much time to sleep even in my leisure time which affects our sleeping patterns." P7

"My sleeping pattern was totally disturbed since not only was I preoccupied with the workload but I was also answering calls from work since I was on call. To me, the sleep I had reflected how active my body is the next day which means that if I did not get enough sleep, my body would not work as effectively as it would if I had a good sleep." P5

➤ *Change of Lifestyle*

There was a major disruption of the normal routines of healthcare frontliners when the pandemic started. The significant increase of work hours and restrictions gave rise to chaotic, demanding working patterns, and lessened socialization, recreational and resting time. In turn, this caused irregular habits that dramatically worsened the well-being of healthcare frontliners, as some participants mentioned:

“As a nurse, we are a vital part of the healthcare community, therefore our duty hours increased due to the sudden rise of cases. We are required to spend additional hours at the hospital which feels like we’re living in there since we work almost 24 hours a day in order to comply to the demand of hours needed in the hospital.” P1

“I couldn’t get enough time to have my breaks because sometimes you will not have the intention to eat or drink. You will forget because you have to do rapid activities in a short period of time.” P5

“We used to have time for the family, hangout, go to the park, and watch movies. At work, I used to spend time with my co-workers, like celebrating birthdays and having parties. But the pandemic came and it was all gone. You have to work hard and you are tired each day. You will come to a point where you will feel depressed.” P2

Due to the unforeseen circumstance of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is inevitable that sudden changes will occur particularly in the healthcare frontliners’ routines in both workstyle and lifestyles. It drastically affected their sleeping patterns and overall lifestyle. It is for this reason that they experienced certain health risks such as mental and physical drains which impacted their performance during work hours. They also were faced with restrictions and limitations in socialization, quality time with loved ones, and personal leisure time. Although the healthcare frontliners were experiencing life-threatening circumstances, they still proved their commitment and dedication to fulfilling their responsibilities in order to serve the community.

➤ *Social Responsibility*

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted all aspects of people and all around the world’s personal wellness. However, these frontline workers endured the damages that the pandemic caused them and focused on achieving their goal of ensuring the safety of their patients. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, heavy work duties and tasks are very common among healthcare professionals. It is for this reason that the participants were able to quickly adapt to their overwhelming work during the pandemic surge and were able to effectively fulfill their duties as frontliners.

➤ *Fulfilling Duties*

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, sudden changes, higher risks, and new responsibilities were the factors that the healthcare frontliners faced. These duties come with certain experiences that affect not only their work performance but also their mental health. However, despite the abrupt changes they had to face during the surge of the pandemic, they ensured that their work productivity was maximized. Prioritization was a factor wherein the healthcare frontliners chose the patients’ needs more than their personal lives. The participants expressed that:

“With the nature of our work, I would say that we got to adjust quickly to the new normal which helped me in being dedicated and productive in my job. Although I was

scared because of all the risks of the virus, I can say that I have been satisfied with my work ethic ever since the pandemic started.” P1

“During the height of the pandemic, our skills and abilities were used to the maximum level. It was sad that a lot of people at the time were suffering the effects of COVID, but because of this we were very productive and I am satisfied with it.” P3

“I was very productive and satisfied with my work ethic even if it was tiring, it was promising and it felt rewarding. My productivity was consistent and I was as hard-working as before the pandemic..” P10

➤ *Safety Precautions*

Even before the pandemic surge, personal protective equipment is required for healthcare workers to wear during duty hours. However, despite wearing protective clothing, these workers maintained their distance from their peers and family to ensure their safety since they encounter potential patients who may be infected with the COVID-19 virus daily. This was one of the common reasons why socialization was limited to the participants, as they expressed:

“My mom is hypertensive and I have a three-year-old son making them very vulnerable to COVID-19. When I reach home, they stay in their room. When I leave for COVID deployment, that’s the only time when they come out of their room.” P6

“I also made sure to distance myself from my family a lot of times to not risk their health. I seldom socialized to avoid exposing other people to the virus.” P10

They also organized and followed different strategic social distancing methods and safety precautions at home. They ensured to coordinate well with their families and housemates to do their setup at home effectively. One of the participants answered that:

“When I get home, I don’t mingle right away like I usually do. I go to the bathroom first to change my uniform and sanitize all the things I brought from the hospital. I was very careful because I was always exposed to the virus and I can transmit the virus.” P1

As a consequence of the line of work of these frontliners, it is expected that they become more lenient in following safety measures especially during the surge of the pandemic as a sign of their social responsibility. It is also for this reason that even when they are at home, they still see to it that they fulfill their duties not only as healthcare workers but also as responsible citizens in order to protect those who surround them. For these frontliners, prioritizing the wellness of the majority is their responsibility even if it drains their energy and strength. This proves that they have the undying dedication in serving the public even with the great risk that comes with it.

➤ *Motivational Security*

The outbreak of COVID-19 has led to a high demand for healthcare workers, testing their resiliency and putting them under pressure. Their duties come with great responsibility, however, combatting this disease is not easy as it comes with unprecedented threats. Being the first line of defense during the pandemic, they are exposed to great risk to their mental and physical well-being. Ignoring these risks can lead to major consequences upon healthcare workers. The third central theme discusses the appropriate strategies the healthcare frontliners used to fulfill duties and overcome the distresses brought about by the pandemic.

➤ *Coping Mechanisms*

Since healthcare workers were heavily demanded at the time of the pandemic, they experienced increased work hours, resulting in a risk to their overall well-being. As a result, they adapt to these situations by finding coping methods to help manage stressful situations. The healthcare frontliners held on to their religious beliefs, emphasizing that these practices gave them reassurance in facing the pandemic. A participant mentioned that:

“I coped with my distress through continuous prayers and strengthening my faith. This is very important as it reassures me that my relatives back home are safe and doing well.” P1

Social support from friends, colleagues, and family also played an integral role in coping with the challenges brought about by the pandemic. They expressed that their job gave them a sense of duty to serve their professional obligations and help mitigate the crisis. Some participants expressed that:

“I was able to overcome the challenges with the motivation I got from home, specifically from my family. Just seeing them happy helps me get rid of tiredness. A simple hug from my children and a glance of my family are my sources of power.” P1

“I believe that teamwork is key in overcoming the challenges we face as hospital workers because it is not a one-man show. Everybody needs to coordinate and plan accordingly since we have one common goal which is to fulfill our patients’ needs.” P9

➤ *Recreation*

Having time for leisure is a great way to clear the mind when exhaustion dwells. Consequently, these healthcare workers try their best to do activities that are entertaining or relaxing for them whenever they find time. It was evident that this was a big luxury that helped them get through the tough times during the surge of the COVID-19 pandemic as one of the participants stated that:

“Some of my relaxation is browsing through Facebook, watching TV, sometimes playing the PSP. For physical activities I do lifting and exercises. I also cook to cope.” P8

However, due to the increased work hours and strict health precautions, some had less spare time to do recreational activities, especially those who lived with their families. Most of their spare time is spent accomplishing household activities and chores, as they stated:

“I had no more leisure time. The remaining days I have, I spend on groceries for the refrigerator.” P2

“How can you go out? All the malls were closed. What I do is run, or sleep after my duty. During my time at the office, I also sleep. I don’t really have leisure time. Even during off days, you spend your time sleeping so that you can get energy for the following day.” P6

The sudden COVID-19 outbreak has led to feelings of uncertainty and anxiousness among the healthcare frontliners as they are combatting a new disease. Being assigned as a front liner has exposed them to an immense and stressful environment putting their overall well-being to a great risk. In this regard, the healthcare frontliners resorted to religious practices and social support as a coping mechanism. Although their personal time was limited due to the demand in healthcare workers, recreation and leisure time was valued and seen as an important factor in maintaining their resiliency.

IV. DISCUSSION

During the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, healthcare workers who have personal exposure to patients known as 'frontliners' have endured unprecedented stress, compromising their mental well-being and putting them under tremendous pressure. Healthcare institutions are essential during a pandemic because they protect frontliners through initiatives to monitor infections, personal safety protocols, and antiviral medications. Ensuring their mental and psychosocial well-being is as significant as ensuring their physical health (World Health Organization, 2006). Moreover, the safety, health, and emotional well-being of frontliners are crucial not only for guaranteeing continuous and consistent patient care but also for the control of outbreaks. According to Kader (2021), these healthcare workers are constantly exposed to the risk of illness; therefore, worrying about spreading infections to their families and coworkers may put additional strain on them.

Analyzing the factors that cause stress and strain among healthcare workers, the primary purpose of this study is to determine and impart the lived experiences of frontliners during the surge of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to highlight the personal struggles, workplace challenges, the social duty and the motivators of frontliners.

➤ *Routine Abnormality*

According to Hoedl et al. (2021), most healthcare workers employed during the COVID-19 pandemic worked more than 40 hours per week. The increased work hours of healthcare frontliners led to experiencing way more

responsibilities that possess high risks compared to their standard duties before the pandemic. This resulted in experiencing drastic effects on their lives in attempts to handle the additional workload given to them. The need to increase the working hours of the healthcare frontliners was significantly necessary. Since the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak, COVID-19 has been considered the most conflicting atypical pneumonia outbreak (Munawar & Choudhry, 2021).

Due to the unexpected occurrence of the pandemic, people all over the world were drastically affected, on the other hand, the healthcare frontliners experienced major changes not only in their working environment but also in their lifestyles. They were globally demanded and had appended work hours, which resulted in additional tasks and less time for personal leisure. According to Babaei et al. (2022), Healthcare workers were challenged to adapt to an unfamiliar and stressful working environment from newly formulated policy decisions due to the rapid change in health centers brought upon by the pandemic crisis.

According to Kim in 2017, Taking breaks throughout the working day is vital to support well-being and productivity. Due to the increase in work hours daily and shifts of 6-7 days a week, there is not enough time for healthcare workers to recover from stress. They have less time to restore energy and mental sources. The frontliners are very susceptible to fatigue, and are unable to compartmentalize their energy to perform other routine activities. The increase in working hours affected the balance between personal and work duties, negatively impacting the healthcare workers' roles, responsibilities, and family life (Ayar, Karaman, & Karaman, 2021). This further fortifies the idea that healthcare frontliners lose the time and are unable to balance their professional and personal lives.

The sudden demand for healthcare workers resulted in major workstyles changes, which changed their lives. Healthcare workers experienced a sudden increase in their working hours, which became the leading cause of uncomfortable experiences in their physical and mental states (Cheong et al., 2022). According to Meyers in 2014, emotional distress caused by work overload can disrupt their concentration and productivity to provide services to the community adequately.

The increased number of working hours per week was associated with most healthcare workers experiencing moderate stress levels (Hoedl et al., 2021). Burnout was also evident in 48.6% of nurses, whereas severe emotional tiredness was present in 37.2%, severe depersonalization was present in 36.8%, and low personal accomplishment was found in 46.9% of nurses. 45% of nurses experienced psychological anguish while providing care to COVID-19 patients (Andlib, 2022).

As healthcare frontliners experience their burdensome roles, they would have less time for personal agendas with friends and loved ones as a result of strict restrictions brought upon by the pandemic. Healthcare frontliners must

utilize and find different ways to reach out to their loved ones to stay connected either directly or through mediated communication. Keeping in touch with their loved ones would help them conquer the struggles of separation and homesickness. Due to the restrictions placed during the pandemic, going out in public places and to interact socially was prohibited. This would lead to the feeling of isolation and loneliness. According to Zhang et al. (2020), loneliness was highly recognized as a major stressor among healthcare frontliners.

The increase of work hours also disturbed the normal sleeping habits of healthcare frontliners. Most frontliners work in 12-hour shifts, which only leave another 12 hours within their day. These 12 hours are consumed by travel, doing errands, maintaining hygiene, as well as having leisure time. This leaves less time for sleep and rest. According to Alimoradi et al. (2021), sleep problems were found to be associated with high levels of psychological distress during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a significant change since getting quality hours of sleep will result in an excellent performance at work with no hindrances. According to Stanojevic et al. (2016), being sleep deprived impairs the performance of tasks requiring intensive and prolonged attention, increasing errors in patient care. On the other hand, quickly adapting and adjusting to the new normal became a challenge that healthcare workers had to face and eventually embraced. It is their utmost duty to accept and quickly adjust to their new working environment while effectively performing their service with an emphasis on quality. Despite these major changes in lifestyle, along with inadequate sleep and rest, healthcare frontliners still feel an obligation to perform their duties.

➤ *Social Responsibility*

The dangerous nature of a healthcare worker includes certain risks, especially exposure to COVID-19 patients. Healthcare workers were exposed to a high-demand setting for long hours resulting in extraordinary levels of psychological stress, living in constant fear of disease exposure (World Health Organization, 2020). Balancing the risk of the participant's health to the needs of patients was followed up by implementing the proper protocols, such as wearing PPE and applying social distancing to avoid any possibility of getting infected by the virus.

In addition, as workers in the healthcare industry, it is imperative to gather valid information about the virus. The majority of healthcare workers gathered their information through social media and the news, but the most valid information given to them was provided by their corporate. According to Lutz in 2020, having valid and sufficient evidence is necessary for the successful continued prevention and treatment of infections.

Being a healthcare worker during the COVID-19 pandemic, experiencing the unexpected is inevitable. Quickly adapting and adjusting to the new normal became a challenge that healthcare workers had to face and eventually embraced. It is their utmost duty to accept and quickly

adjust to their new working environment while effectively performing their service with an emphasis on quality. Healthcare workers were exposed to a high-demand setting for long hours resulting in extraordinary levels of psychological stress, living in constant fear of disease exposure (World Health Organization, 2020). Balancing the risk of the participant's health to the needs of patients was followed up by following the proper protocols, such as wearing PPE and applying social distancing to avoid any possibility of getting infected by the virus. Even if the number one priority was always to render care and service to the patients, the participants ensured their health was not at risk. Developing the practice of caring for oneself is critically essential to combat mental distresses and manage the pandemic's uncertainty (Lewis et al., 2022).

Productivity during the pandemic was efficient for most healthcare workers since it is in their nature to adapt and adjust to the situation quickly. However, some participants expressed that their productivity was affected due to constant burnout and stress. The healthcare workers' skills and abilities were extensively utilized at the maximum level during the height of the pandemic as there was more than enough workload for them to be occupied with, thus leaving them very productive and satisfied in terms of job accomplishment. They were also pleased with their work ethics since most healthcare workers could render quality care to their patients in need. Most healthcare workers expressed that they needed to prioritize their patients since they spend more time in their work environment, but also not entirely forget and have allotted time for family and loved ones. Health systems heavily prioritized patients with COVID-19 to respond to the unprecedented demand for hospital care (D'Aeth et al., 2021).

However, despite the setbacks of distance, these healthcare workers took safety precautions as a manner to alleviate the challenges of isolation when they prioritized the health of those who surrounded them. Billings et al. (2021) stated that frontliners were less concerned when it came to their immediate health but were greatly concerned about other people's health. They were also preoccupied and concerned that they might be the ones to transmit the illness to their families. To these professionals, looking out for their safety and health was also their primary concern since they encounter COVID-19 patients daily. Personal healthcare strategies were tried by these frontliners, such as eating healthy meals, exercising regularly, and getting enough sleep for them to build resistance to the virus. In this way, they reduced the level of getting and transmitting the virus to other people. (Lewis et al., 2022). Similarly, Koontalay et al. (2021) explained that when frontliners neglect their safety and health, they also pose a significant threat to other people's health. Indeed, frontliners are exceptionally looked up to, mainly because they hold the ability to combat stressors and build resilience in order to care for others. (Sumner & Kinsella, 2021)

Aside from being concerned for others' safety, the implementation of strict restrictions in workplaces was also a factor that limited them in terms of socialization. Hospitals discouraged face-to-face interactions in and out of the working facility to reduce the chances of disease transmission between the staff and the people they encounter daily, whether it be a patient, a loved one, or a coworker. (Koh et al., 2012). In a study conducted by Nazzal et al. in 2022, they found that frontline workers were forced to apply extra precautions and preventive measures to protect themselves and others against the COVID-19 virus.

The healthcare frontliners were driven to help each other to alleviate the pandemic and exerted their utmost efforts to feel the relief of seeing their patients recover while earning a salary to provide for their families. This adjustment developed the goal-orientedness characteristic of the frontliners. The interviews revealed that some participants shared a common goal: to overcome the pandemic. It was reported that the healthcare workers saw their profession as a contribution to the greater good, and seeing the outcomes of treating their patients motivated them to continue serving (Romate & Rajkumar, 2022). Furthermore, a sense of professional duty increased their motivation to work during the pandemic (Billings, Ching, Gkofa, Greene, & Bloomfield, 2021). One of the healthcare frontliners stated that at that time, it was not about the income anymore; instead, it was about helping each other to overcome the pandemic.

Being given the pressure to fulfill your duties as a frontliner while managing conflicts at home comes with great responsibility. Although the pandemic has hindered quality time between the healthcare frontliners and their loved ones, they were supportive in providing for the needs of their family. Among the needs of their loved ones, finance was the most prioritized. The healthcare frontliners were worried about the safety and security of their families; thus, financial needs were conveyed as necessary since, in most cases, they were the only ones earning money (Romate & Rajkumar, 2022). Aside from that, the healthcare workers supported their families emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

➤ *Motivational Security*

The demand of healthcare workers during the pandemic has increased the working hours, thus healthcare workers are prone to experiencing a detrimental state to their physical and mental well-being. Given these circumstances, coping mechanisms are used to manage the individual's stress levels. As defined by Algorani and Gupta (2021), coping mechanisms utilize cognitive and behavioral strategies to control both internal and external stressors. Interventions are needed to maintain their resiliency and to manage their overall safety. Developing the practice of caring for oneself is critically essential to combat mental distresses and manage the pandemic's uncertainty (Lewis et al., 2022). Each healthcare frontliner perceived stress differently. As a result, different coping mechanisms were manifested.

The healthcare frontliners emphasized religious practices as a gateway to cope during these challenging times. Religious beliefs are said to give meaning to difficult situations and provide the individual with a sense of purpose (Koenig, 2012). Specifically, the healthcare frontliners were keen on praying and strengthening their faith as coping strategies. Religious practices as a coping mechanism provided the healthcare workers with inner strength, maintained a positive attitude, and gave them the strength to face the crisis (Labrague, 2021).

A side from religious beliefs, social support was also mentioned as a coping mechanism for the healthcare frontliners. According to Razu et al. (2021), support from family members and colleagues was an effective coping mechanism for healthcare workers because a supportive environment positively affects their mental wellness. The COVID-19 outbreak has shown the importance of maintaining healthcare workers' mental health to sustain work effectiveness and productivity; hence, extensive social support from friends, family, and coworkers are highly encouraged (Hou et al., 2020). One participant stated that working in healthcare is not a "one-man show" but involves coordination and collaboration with your members. Teamwork, social support, and good management gives healthcare workers a sense of reassurance (Che Yusof, Norhayati, & Azman, 2022).

Due to the limitations of socializing with people outside of the house, the most accessible way of face-to-face social interactions was with family. Close connections with family members provide significant support and increased feelings of belongingness, security, and self-worth to an individual (Qingying, 2022). The healthcare frontliners valued family during these challenging times. A coping mechanism that is as simple as having proper communication with their families was efficient in relieving stress.

Being a healthcare frontliner during the pandemic puts one in a pressuring situation. As the first line of defense, they are placed in a vulnerable position. Nonetheless, the participants proved their resiliency. They expressed that their job encouraged them to overcome the crisis. The dedication the healthcare workers put into their work resulted in gratitude. This provided a sense of meaning and purpose to their professions which equipped them with resiliency during the pandemic (Curtin, Richards, & Fortune, 2022). They held onto their pride as a healthcare frontliner by being compassionate in their work and catering to their patients. Seeing the fruits of their labor helped them overcome the pandemic.

V. CONCLUSION

Healthcare Frontliners working in Qatar during the COVID-19 pandemic have experienced a change in lifestyle, well-being, and working productivity. These adjustments were the impact of several factors, such as work overload, increased work hours, and lessened social interaction as a safety precaution. Adapting to such

challenges caused daily burnout for the healthcare frontliners and significantly impacted their physical and psychological health. Despite these challenges, their social responsibility and duty to serve the public gave them the will and strength to keep serving as healthcare frontliners; and in turn, they had to look for alternatives and coping mechanisms to combat the drastic changes and struggles they faced during the surge of the pandemic.

In order to reduce the feeling of homesickness, it is recommended that healthcare workers do not lose contact with their loved ones. Balancing work life and personal time must be given attention because this will help build one's ability to do one's work responsibilities effectively. A study by Mamata Dahad and Parag Arun Narkhede (2014) discovered that when work and personal life are not balanced, it leads to stress reflecting a worker's work practices. In turn, this negatively affects the productivity and quality performance of the employee. Along with this, it is also advisable for the frontliners to find time for self-care to help ease the stress they get from work.

Furthermore, the researchers recommend that healthcare workers that neglect their safety and health would do no good. It is crucial that these professionals also know how to care for themselves, just like how they look out for other people's health. It is suggested that recreational activities and proper sleeping patterns greatly help in the rest and recovery of frontliners. Moreover, healthcare workers must build resilience against burnout, anxiety, and depression (Baskin & Bartlett, 2021). It is essential to acknowledge the working environment of healthcare workers. Considering they were the most demanded workers during the pandemic outbreak, they experienced pressure in fulfilling their duties while only knowing little about the virus. As a result, they were faced with increased working hours, leading to irregular sleeping habits, isolation from family and friends, decreased personal leisure time, and mental and physical fatigue. Facing these challenges had a significant toll on the healthcare workers, and if interventions are not implemented, this could negatively affect the frontliners in the long run. As first responders and medical care professionals during the pandemic, well-being and self-care are critical components of continuing well-functioning healthcare services for the community. Healthcare professionals should also seek to improve self-management to regulate their emotional distress and self-awareness to enhance well-being. Finally, based on the simulacrum of the study, the interrelation of the following themes, specifically, work responsibilities, personal effects, motivational support, and social relations, were the challenges that healthcare workers encountered during the surge of the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors are all correlated as the healthcare professionals experienced similar situations adjusting to the new normal and conditions. Despite struggles, healthcare workers accepted the situation and mustered all their strength and resilience to comply with their duties and responsibilities as frontliners. With the help of coping mechanisms such as praying, keeping in touch with loved ones, doing hobbies, and setting

a positive mindset, they could surpass the hardships they faced as they took on the challenges of frontliners.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH



Kent Lemuel D. Salonga is from Minalin, Pampanga. He was born on February 23, 2005. Currently, he is a Senior High School STEM student. He has joined multiple contests in and out of school such as sports Intramurals, art contests, and singing contests. He has been part of student clubs such as the Supreme Student Government, PSD Chorale, and the Rondalla club. He is a consistent academic awardee, being a bronze and silver medalist throughout his years in high school. He has always believed in having “mind over matter”. A strong mindset can lead someone to success, however, it may be achieved. At present, he aspires to become a renowned environmental biologist, reflecting his care for the environment, its well-being, and its future.



Mary Angela D. Carandang is from Lipa City, Batangas. She was born on August 18, 2004. She is currently a STEM Senior High School Student who aspires to become a family doctor. Some of her achievements include being a consistent awardee, an active choir member, and an active student government officer. She participates in several competitions like singing contests, pageants, and band contests. She was also able to internationally publish her study during her 10th grade, along with her two other members, called “The Perceived Effects of Using Nonverbal Language to the Online Communication of the Junior High School Students”. She believes that people must set their hearts ablaze with whatever passion they desire to create a strong foundation for success.



Julia Marie G. Del Rosario is from Las Piñas City, Metro Manila. She was born on October 11, 2004, in the Philippines and raised in Doha Qatar most of her childhood. Currently, she is a STEM Strand based Senior High School Student who aspires to become a general physician or a dentist. Her achievements include being part of the Performing arts clubs, being a continuously elected class president, being an active member of the school choir, and having won the best vocalist award for their previous Battle of the Bands school competition. She is also a consistent academic awardee from grade school to high school. She believes in Audrey Hepburn's words "Beauty is being the best possible version of yourself, inside and out." She knows that beauty is not purely external but it also applies to one's heart and mind.



James Theodore M. Rebutazo is from Cabaluay, Zamboanga. He was born on December 13, 2004. He is currently a grade 11 STEM student who aspires to become an EMS worker. He has participated in multiple activities that require skill and passion such as playing in the Intramurals, joining the guitar club, and performing in musical competitions. He was a consistent top 10 achiever all throughout JHS and achieved academic awards for the first and second semester of SHS in grade 11. He believes that not everything you desire comes immediately, it always takes a long time, you just have to keep on moving forward and accepting every outcome until you reach your deepest desires in life.



Johanna Eadrea P. Ucang is from Tagbilaran City, Bohol. She was born on September 15, 2005. She is currently a Grade 11 student under the STEM strand at Philippine School Doha. She aspires to be a psychologist in the future. Throughout her high school years, she has been a constant achiever. She was a bronze awardee for S.Y. 2020-2021 and was qualified as a Laureola bronze awardee for the first and second semester of S.Y. 2021-2022 in grade 11. She believes in the saying, "Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them, that only creates sorrow. Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like." as said by Lao Tzu.



Tryke Evangelista is from Batangas City, Batangas He was born on November 20, 2003, in the Philippines and raised in Doha Qatar most of his childhood. He is currently a Grade 12 STEM Student who aspires to become a cardiologist or a pediatrician. He has participated in academic awards and multiple activities in Philippine International School-Qatar that includes his skill and passion such as being a member of the varsity of basketball in PISQ S.Y. 2017-2019 and joining the badminton club and a member of the Aspiring Engineering Student Association in University of Batangas S.Y. 2021-2022. He was consistently an honorable mention all throughout Grade 8 to Grade 10. He believes that doing the right thing always will give something back that can be appreciated without having expectations.