

# Fear of COVID-19 among Frontline Nurses in a National University Hospital in the Philippines: A Mixed Methods Study

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## BACKGROUND

Currently, nurses are at the forefront of caring for patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nurses themselves are exposed to serious risk and even death while providing care for these patients. Fear of COVID-19 can affect nurses' overall well-being, which in turn may affect their job performance and lead to a decline in the quality of patient care.

## STUDY PURPOSE

To determine the level of fear of COVID - 19, and to explore the experiences of COVID-19 related fear of frontline nurses in a national university hospital in the Philippines.

## METHODOLOGY

To achieve the study objectives, the study utilized a convergent mixed methodology approach. In the quantitative phase, a random sample of participants completed the Fear of COVID-19 scale (FCV-19S) in order to assess their level of fear of COVID-19. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the qualitative strand. Participants in the qualitative phase was selected using maximum variation sampling. Integration of data was done through a narrative contiguous approach.

## RESULTS

Quantitative data was obtained from 206 frontline registered nurses. The mean age of the participants was 35.5 years (SD =8.17). Overall, the composite score of the fear of COVID-19 scale was 21.76 (SD = 4.92), indicating an elevated level of fear. Having friends and relatives who tested positive predicted fear of COVID - 19 ( $\beta = -3.658$ ;  $p = 0.005$ ; CI: -6.213 to -1.104). Three major themes categories emerged from qualitative data analysis: (1) balancing feelings of fear and moral obligation, (2) challenges experienced while providing frontline work, and (3) resilience amidst challenges.

Item	Mean (SD)
FCV#1 <i>I am most afraid of Corona</i>	3.86 (0.85)
FCV#2 <i>It makes me uncomfortable when I think about Corona</i>	3.34 (1.03)
FCV#3 <i>My hands become clammy when I think about Corona</i>	2.38 (0.94)
FCV#4 <i>I am afraid of losing my life because of Corona</i>	4.22 (0.99)
FCV#5 <i>When I watch news and stories about Corona on social media, I become nervous or anxious</i>	3.29 (0.97)
FCV#6 <i>I cannot sleep because I'm worry about getting Corona</i>	2.30 (0.91)
FCV#7 <i>My heart races or palpates when I think about Corona</i>	2.35 (1.01)
<b>FCV-19S Total Score</b>	<b>21.76 (4.92)</b>

Table 1. Mean Scores Fear of COVID - 19 Scale

	Theme	Subtheme
<b>I. Balancing Fear and Moral Obligation</b>		Sense of Duty
		Sense of Community
		Treating and Caring for Patients
<b>II. Challenges experienced while providing frontline work</b>		Unclear guidelines and constantly changing protocols
		Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) use
		Fear of Transmission and Uncertainty
		Organizational Support
<b>III. Resilience Amidst Challenges</b>		Moral Distress
		Sources of Support
		Coping and Self - care
		Professional Responsibility and Identity

Table 2. Themes and Sub-themes

## CONCLUSIONS

This study was able to capture the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of frontline nurses. Understanding their experiences during this pandemic provides a perspective which serves as a starting point in ensuring safeguards are in place to protect their well - being. It is recommended that nursing administration divert their efforts on (1) the identification of the nurses' negative emotions, and encourage promotion of emotional expression, (2) provide timely and appropriate work - related support, and (3) foster nurse resilience.

