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## SATISFACTION WITH LIFE SCALE AMONG FILIPINO NURSES ABROAD AMIDST COVID-19 CRISIS

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### ABSTRACT

This study assessed the satisfaction with life scale among nurses abroad during COVID-19 crisis. A descriptive-correlational design was used with 48 nurses recruited through chain-referral sampling method. The largest percentage of nurses (56%) was in the age range of 31-35 years. Female nurses dominated in the study (86.3%) and married (54.2%). BSN degree was the highest education (85.4%) and worked (45.8%) for 7-9 years. Majority (64.6%) worked in the government sector and more than half (56.3%) were not able to spend their vacation since the pandemic started. A large extent (n=21, 44%) of nurses were generally satisfied amidst COVID-19 crisis. The age profile (FET=21.51, p=.005), marital status (FET=9.957, p=.013) and vacation (FET=17.729, p=.001) were statistically associated to nurses' satisfaction with life. The study concluded that nurses who worked abroad in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis expresses satisfaction with their life. Further research is warranted to obtain generalizability of findings.

### KEYWORDS

Satisfaction with life scale, Filipino nurses abroad and COVID-19 crisis.

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### INTRODUCTION

The declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic by the World Health Organization<sup>1</sup> (WHO) brought changes in every individual's life. Nurses and other members of the healthcare team were more greatly affected since the outbreak of the coronavirus disease. As care providers, nurses have expressed their fears, anxieties and overall experiences in life while dealing with their patients during the COVID-19 crisis. Satisfaction with life is one of the important elements to consider to face difficulties

and any unexpected events that may occur at any time. Nurses are expected to demonstrate their practice according to professional standards. However, nurses experienced constraints due to COVID-19 crisis. Their engagement with their patients became limited and the uncertainties of this disease influenced their general satisfaction with life. Several articles published online greatly focuses on nurses' various aspect of life during the pandemic. A study done by Makowicz *et al*<sup>2</sup> on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on job satisfaction among professionally active nurses in five European countries showed a significant decrease in job satisfaction due to the need to perform it during the pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. An investigation in Turkey led by Gumussoy and Kiratli<sup>3</sup> concerning burnout status, occupational satisfaction, and intention to leave the profession of nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic period revealed that nurses showed a high level of exhaustion and intention to leave work and a low level of occupational satisfaction. The study recommended that professional satisfaction is important to prevent nurses from experiencing burnout and to keep them in their professions and workplaces. Moreover, Elhanafy and El Hessewi<sup>4</sup> concluded in their study that the enhanced fear of the COVID-19 pandemic among nurses increases their work dissatisfaction, in addition, to increase in their organizational and professional turnover intentions. The situation of COVID-19 pandemic increases nurses' job demands and nursing hours. Research on the work stress and job satisfaction of nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>5</sup> emphasized that work stress experienced influenced the level of job satisfaction. Work stress caused by work fatigue will affect nurses' psychological aspects and job satisfaction. Additionally, research on the life satisfaction of nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland<sup>6</sup> concluded that the majority of the respondents surveyed had a low or medium level of life satisfaction caused by work overloads during the pandemic. Nurses are exposed to stressful conditions related to protecting human health. Constant difficult and stressful situations and total fatigue experienced by nursing professionals can be

the cause of a lack of motivation, occupational burnout, listlessness, and mental and physical disease.

The factors influencing nurse's dissatisfaction were excessive workload that affects quality and nurses who are satisfied with their work generally provide higher-quality, more cost-effective care<sup>7</sup>. Job satisfaction indicates the extent of feelings towards their jobs and organizational behavior can do things to improve it. It is necessary because a person's attitude, feelings, and beliefs may affect his or her behavior towards the organization<sup>8</sup>.

An article on the effect of nurses' grit on nursing job performance and its effect of job satisfaction and organizational commitment found that job satisfaction and organizational commitment can be achieved when nurse's grit are improved<sup>9</sup>. In the Philippines, a study showed that job satisfaction is associated to the amount of time nurses spend to their assigned tasks<sup>10</sup>. Ribeiro *et al*<sup>11</sup> noted that nurses' practice environments are affected by the COVID-19 crisis. In Portugal<sup>12</sup>, research on the association of life satisfaction between depression, anxiety, stress, and burnout during COVID-19 pandemic revealed that life satisfaction is influenced by the level of stress, burnout, and depression. A cross-sectional study on nurses' pandemic-driven posttraumatic growth and satisfaction with life suggested that the pandemic affected nurses' growth and satisfaction with life negatively<sup>13</sup>.

The researcher intends to expand knowledge about satisfaction among nurses facing difficulties and uncertainties in the current situation of the pandemic. The conduct of this study primarily focused on Filipino nurses' abroad investigating their satisfaction with life scale during this COVID-19 crisis.

### **Objectives**

To determine the satisfaction with life scale among Filipino nurses abroad amidst the COVID-19 crisis and their associations to the sociodemographic variables included in the study.

### **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The study utilized a descriptive-correlational approach with forty-eight (48) total nurses abroad

enrolled in the study. This quantitative study was conducted using a survey on the demographic characteristics in terms of age, gender, marital status, highest education level, work experience, work sector, and the number of times of vacation at the start of the pandemic (vacation spent in the Philippines). The survey data also focused on the satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) by Diener *et al*<sup>14</sup> consisting of five (5) items designed to measure global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction. Participants indicate how much they strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1) for each item. The benchmark for scoring the total scores for the SWLS was 31-35 (extremely satisfied), 26-30 (satisfied), 21-25 (slightly satisfied), 20 (neutral), 15-19 (slightly dissatisfied), 10-14 (dissatisfied), and 5-9 (extremely dissatisfied).

The data was collected through a chain-referral non-sampling method using a google form questionnaire. Data were collected from December 2021 to June 2022. The study was addressed to Filipino nurses abroad regardless of age and working experience.

Ethical principles were observed before the respondents can proceed with answering the form. At the beginning of the survey, informed consent was obtained from the respondents. Voluntary participation, the confidentiality of information, and anonymity for individual responses were emphasized before the commencement of their full participation. Data collected were coded, tallied, and analyzed using SPSS 25. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation were employed for analyzing the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents including the distribution of responses for each item, and the total scores for each respondent. Fisher exact test (FET), a nonparametric test, was used to determine the association of the profiles of the respondents to their satisfaction with the life scale (SWLS). The correlations are statistically significant with  $p \leq 0.05$  level.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The final sample of the study includes 31 nurses from Ireland, 5 each responded from KSA and the United Kingdom, 2 nurses from USA and Canada

and 1 from Australia, Italy, and Germany. Table No.1 presents the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents. In terms of age, a greater number (n=27, 56.3%) of nurses were from 31-35 years, followed by 36-40 years (n=10, 20.8%). The study was dominated by female nurses (n=40, 83.3%) and married (n=26, 54.2%). BSN degree was the highest education level obtained by the respondents (n=41, 85.4%). Nearly half (n=22, 45.8%) claimed 7-9 years of work experience and greater responses (n=31, 64.6%) were respondents from the government sector. With regards to the number of times of vacation to their country, more than half (n=27, 56.3%) were not able to visit their country, few (n=17, 35.4%) of the respondents reported once and only 4 (8.33%) had a vacation for two times during the pandemic period.

Table No.2 shows the frequency distribution of nurses' responses for each item on the satisfaction with life scale. The data discloses that most (n=19, 39.58%) ( $M=5.04 \pm 1.05$ ) of the respondents slightly agree that life is close to their ideal and would change almost nothing (n=12, 25%) ( $4.79 \pm 1.36$ ). Nurses agree of having an excellent life (n=31, 64.58%) ( $5.45 \pm .87$ ), that they are satisfied with life (n=24, 50%) ( $5.66 \pm .72$ ), and getting the important things (n=20, 41.66%) ( $5.52 \pm .96$ ).

Table No.3 reveals the satisfaction with the life scale (SWLS) in a pie chart graphical presentation. Overall, the data shows that a greater number (n= 21, 44%) of the respondents are satisfied with life amidst covid-19 crisis. The data also discloses that 16(33%) of them are slightly satisfied, 7(15%) were extremely satisfied, and 4(7%) were slightly dissatisfied.

Table 4 identifies the association between sociodemographic characteristics and satisfaction with the life scale among the respondents. The profile on age (FET=21.511,  $p=.005$ ), marital status (FET=9.957,  $p=.013$ ), and the number of times of vacation (FET=17.729,  $p=.001$ ) are statistically associated with satisfaction with life scale. The variable on gender (FET=4.167,  $p=.202$ ), a highest education level (FET=12.201,  $p=.010$ ), work experience (FET=12.799,  $p=.093$ ) and work sector (FET=4.183,  $p=.228$ ) is not significant to the satisfaction with life scale among nurses.

## **Discussion**

The current study showed that, among Filipino nurses abroad, the respondents predominated young adults, females and married. The highest education level was so far a BSN degree. Obtaining a degree in a master's and doctorate program is not a requirement for a nurse who wishes to work in a hospital setting. However, nurses with high education levels could be an advantage to improve the standards of quality care. Most nurses in specialty practice, managers, administrators, and educators now are required to have a master's or doctoral degree. Most MSN programs are designed to prepare advanced nurse practitioners and clinical specialists in various specialty areas<sup>7</sup>. Additionally, nurses abroad had a worked experience for 4-7 years, and the majority were connected to the government hospital. Since the pandemic started, a multitude of respondents claimed that they have not spent their vacation yet in their country. Responses were based on December 2021-June 2022 when data was collected. Nurses find it uncomfortable with traveling to another country due to the COVID-19 related policy, being married, and with the number of children.

The data on the frequency of responses for the satisfaction with life scale generally indicates that despite life uncertainties caused by the COVID-19 crisis, Filipino nurses abroad agree they have an excellent life. Satisfaction with life was felt and so far, they were able to embrace important things they need. Moreover, the total scores for SWLS revealed that the responses were generally satisfactory. The findings of this study supported other existing research on the satisfaction of nurses during this pandemic. In Poland<sup>6</sup>, the study concluded that the majority of the respondents had a low or medium level of life satisfaction caused by overloads. Whereas, in the Philippines, a study showed that job satisfaction is associated to the amount of time nurses spend to their assigned tasks<sup>10</sup>. On the contrary, the findings of this current study negate some other findings related to the life satisfaction of nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Portugal<sup>12</sup>, research on the association of life satisfaction between depression, anxiety, stress, and

burnout during COVID-19 pandemic revealed that life satisfaction is influenced by the level of stress, burnout, and depression. A cross-sectional study on nurses' pandemic-driven posttraumatic growth and satisfaction with life suggested that the pandemic affected nurses' growth and satisfaction with life negatively<sup>13</sup>.

The findings of the study disclosed that the profile on age is associated with the satisfaction of life scale among the respondents. To support the result of this study, a published article on life satisfaction across the lifespan<sup>15</sup>, the findings from two nationally representative panel studies show that life satisfaction does not decline over much of adulthood. Second, there is a steep decline in life satisfaction among those older than 70, and the British data findings revealed that there is a large increase in satisfaction from the 40s to the early 70s. The authors considered that age differences in well-being can be quite large and deserve increased empirical and theoretical attention. In addition, Bartram<sup>16</sup> conducted published research on age and life satisfaction, getting control variables under control to believe that there is a 'U-shaped' relationship, with life satisfaction falling towards middle age and subsequently rising. A key finding is that there is at best a negligible post-middle-age rise in life satisfaction.

The findings of the study also revealed a statistical relationship between marital status and satisfaction with life scales among Filipino nurses abroad. A noteworthy finding<sup>17</sup> on the associations of gender and life satisfaction resulted that gender variations were found to be significant. Women have higher levels of life satisfaction compared to men. On the other hand, research on life satisfaction based on gender yielded that there is no life satisfaction difference between males and females<sup>18</sup>.

Finally, the variable on the number of times of vacation is statistically significant to the satisfaction with life scale among the respondents. The COVID-19 crisis changed the course of life for all people. Research on the effect of travel expenditure on life satisfaction for middle-aged and older adults in Korea: moderating effect of COVID-19 pandemic exhibited that the utility of travel expenditure

decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>19</sup>. The present result indicated that life satisfaction is influenced by spending time with loved ones by taking a vacation. In 2021, an internet article<sup>20</sup> shows that frequent travel can make for a happier life. The results showed that frequent travel had a positive effect on life satisfaction. The study authors noted that the number of trips taken over a year only explained a small percentage of higher life satisfaction, though.

They added that life satisfaction from travel had more to do with the “frequency of satisfied travel” rather than how often someone took vacations. Another study on vacations over the years found that more frequent vacationers experienced higher life satisfaction and lower negative affect, while the average participant also experienced slightly higher life satisfaction and positive affect following a year with higher vacation frequency<sup>21</sup>.

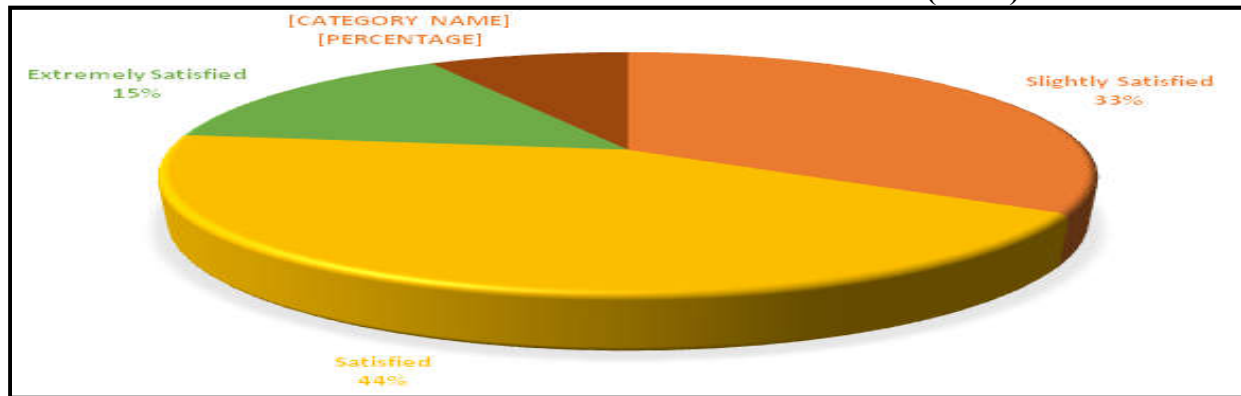
**Table No.1: Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents**

S.No	Profiles	Frequency, n=48	Percentage	Mean±SD
<b>Age (in years)</b>				
1	20-25	3	6.3%	3.22±.95
2	26-30	3	6.3%	
3	31-35	27	56.3%	
4	36-40	10	20.8%	
5	41-45	5	10.4%	
6	46-50	0	0	
7	<50	0	0	
<b>Gender</b>				
8	Female	40	83.3%	1.16±.37
9	Male	8	16.7%	
<b>Marital Status</b>				
10	Single	22	45.8%	1.54±.50
11	Married	26	54.2%	
12	Divorced	0	0	
13	Widowed	0	0	
<b>Highest Qualification Level</b>				
14	BSN	41	85.4%	1.20±.54
15	Masteral	4	8.3%	
16	Doctoral	3	6.3%	
<b>Work Experience (in years)</b>				
17	1-3	3	6.3%	3.02±.86
18	4-6	8	16.7%	
19	7-9	22	45.8%	
20	>10	15	31.3%	
<b>Work Sector</b>				
21	Private	17	35.4%	1.64±.48
22	Government	31	64.6%	
<b>No. of Times of vacation (At the start of the pandemic)</b>				
23	Not At All	27	56.3	.85±1.63
24	Once	17	35.4	
25	Two times	4	8.33	

**Table No.2: Frequency of responses to the satisfaction with life scale (N=48)**

S. No	Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean±SD
1	In most ways my life is close to my ideal	0	1 (2.08%)	3 (6.25%)	8 (16.66%)	19 (39.58%)	15 (31.25%)	2 (4.16%)	5.04±1.05
2	The conditions of my life are excellent	0	0	0	11 (22.91%)	5 (10.41%)	31 (64.58%)	1 (2.08%)	5.45±.87
3	I am satisfied with my life	0	0	0	2 (4.16%)	17 (35.41%)	24 (50%)	5 (10.41%)	5.66±.72
4	So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life	0	0	3 (6.25%)	1 (2.08%)	18 (37.5%)	20 (41.66%)	6 (12.5%)	5.52±.96
5	If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing	0	3 (6.25%)	4 (8.33%)	14 (29.16%)	12 (25%)	9 (18.75%)	6 (12.5%)	4.79±1.36

**Table No.3: Satisfaction with life scale total scores (N=48)**



**Table No.4: Association of variables to nurses' satisfaction with life scale (n=48)**

S.No	Profiles	FET value	p-value
1	Age	21.511	.005*
2	Gender	4.167	.202
3	Marital Status	9.957	.013*
4	Highest qualification level	12.201	.010
5	Work Experience	12.799	.093
6	Work Sector	4.183	.228
7	Number of times of vacation	17.729	.001*

\*By fisher's exact test

### CONCLUSION

The study concluded that there are certain domains that influence the satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) among Filipino nurses abroad such as their age and marital status. In particular, vacation frequency affects satisfaction in life. Over-all, the study inferred that the respondents in this study are generally satisfied with their life despite of COVID-19 crisis. Future research should include a larger sample size among nurses across the world to allow more meaningful results and generalizability of findings.

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### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.

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