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# The Correlation Between the COVID-19 Pandemic and Nursing Students' Academic and Professional Engagement and Performance.

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***The Correlation Between the COVID-19 Pandemic and Nursing Students' Academic and Professional Engagement and Performance.***

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in *Nursing*.

By  
*Jolie Komlan*

Under the mentorship of *Dr. Helen Taggart*

**ABSTRACT**

Even without the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, nursing schools are recognized as a stressful environment "that often exert a negative effect on the academic performances and psychological well-being of the students" (Gomathi et al., 2017). Exploring the changes this ongoing pandemic has on nursing students' views and perspectives, along with their perceived threats, failures, and successes brought on by this pandemic will provide good insight into further changes that need to be implemented to better prepare nursing students through their programs. To accomplish this, participants within the nursing program were surveyed via a 21-question survey on Qualtrics. A retrospective analysis was the methodology implemented in exploring this topic. Descriptive stats were used to describe samples, and answers to open-ended questions were grouped by themes. The analysis revealed that the participating nursing students were being affected by the pandemic: however, their driving forces for pursuing this profession keep them pushing ahead. The insight gained from this study could be beneficial to future nursing students in their programs if their programs make changes for better transparent communication and the addition of E-learning strategies like recording and posting lectures to in-person lectures.

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## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Acknowledgements .....   | 2  |
| Introduction .....   | 3  |
| Literature Review .....  | 3  |
| Methods .....  | 6  |
| Results .....  | 7  |
| Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants ..... | 8  |
| Table 2 Covid-Related Answers .....                                | 9  |
| Discussion .....   | 16 |
| Limitation .....   | 19 |
| Conclusion .....   | 19 |
| References .....   | 21 |
| Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval .....              | 23 |
| Appendix D: CITI Research Certifications .....                     | 24 |
| Appendix C: School of Nurse Approval .....                         | 25 |
| Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Message on Folio .....         | 26 |
| Appendix C: H Informed Consent .....                               | 27 |
| Appendix E: Survey Questions .....                                 | 38 |

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## **Introduction**

The COVID-19 pandemic was a sudden and unforeseen event that changed structures and orders around the globe. Even without a global pandemic, nursing schools are already recognized as one of the most stressful environments "that often exert a negative effect on the academic performances and psychological well-being of the students" (Gomathi et al., 2017). It is important to explore the changes this pandemic has on students' views and perspectives for institutions to better accommodate students. Furthermore, the crisis of the pandemic placed the nursing profession in a unique position, as nurses must risk their lives on the front line to care for patients. Exploring the perceived threats, failures, and successes brought on by this pandemic will provide good insight into further changes that need to be implemented to better prepare nursing students through their programs.

## **Literature Review**

This topic is broad and emerging as the pandemic continues. There are various works of literature attempting to explain parts of the topic. Some studies focused on the perceived success and failures of the need for E-learning during the pandemic (Oducado et al., 2021). Other studies focused more on the perspectives of nursing students in terms of their thoughts on continuing education in the nursing field and changing their major or their career goals (Santos, 2020). Furthermore, other researchers began analyzing undergraduate nursing students' mental health and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic (Horton, 2021). All these studies contributed greatly to our overall understanding of how the COVID-19 Pandemic is affecting nursing students. However, these various studies focus on different groups of nursing students in other countries that might have been experiencing the pandemic differently.

With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been several regulations in place for the sake of safety. Telemedicine was implemented into healthcare systems, and e-learning was implemented in parts of our education system (Bokolo, 2020). A study in the Philippines attempted to examine nursing students' attitudes toward e-learning. This study reported that the students "generally expressed negative and ambivalent attitudes towards e-learning" (Oducado et al., 2021). As nursing courses often require hands-on learning, the students understandably preferred "face-to-face teaching rather than online learning" (Oducado et al., 2021). The study stated that "80.18% of the students considered e-learning to be impersonal and to lack feelings" making it unfavorable among the students in the Philippines (Oducado et al., 2021).

On the contrary, there was a different conclusion in another study in Nepal (Thapa et al., 2021). This study also explored nursing students' attitudes toward e-learning amidst COVID-19, but they found that "overall, 58.9% had a favorable attitude regarding e-learning" (Thapa et al., 2021). In all, although the results of the study are clear and may be highly influential to the nursing programs of the students in the study, the same results alone cannot be used in decision-making for students in different countries, states, or even school systems. Due to a great difference in their beliefs and socioeconomic standings, a study of the same matter here might yield different conclusions.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Luis Miguel Dos Santos in 2020 aimed to understand the experiences, sense of belonging, and career decision-making process of nursing students to ensure effective human resource management and school enrolment plans in Japanese nursing programs. He also went on to implement questions that attempt to understand the effects that COVID-19 pandemic recommendations of social distancing and distance learning-based

teaching and learning experiences have on nursing students. This study concluded that most of the nursing student's advocated that the COVID-19 pandemic "strongly reinforced ... decision-making process and reinforced their experiences as pre-service nursing professionals and nursing students as Japanese citizens" (Dos Santos, 2020). The study revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic had in fact strengthened their willingness to continue their chosen major because they had "a mission to serve their country during the natural disaster" (Santos, 2020). For these students, their sense of belonging as Japanese might have been a huge factor in their decision to stay as nursing students during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In addition, as their original goals of becoming nurses were strongly tied to personal reasons such as "mission to help minorities", or "promoting rural and suburban public health performance and knowledge", these students will not budge from their original decisions because their original goals still stand and may have become even more important with the pandemic.

On the other hand, the same study conducted with South Korean students yielded completely different results. These students strongly cited that "financial and profit-making considerations" were the main deciding factor in choosing the nursing profession as their ideal career field (Dos Santos, 2020). As the pandemic hit, adding more risks to the profession, "almost all of the nursing students in the study had decided to quit the nursing profession after graduation from university" (Dos Santos, 2020). These students cited reasons such as "insignificant salary, unattractive benefits, and the nature of the nursing profession" all compared to the emerging dangers of the pandemic (Dos Santos, 2020).

As can be seen from these two studies, the differences in these two cultures and societies greatly influenced the students' response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Japan, most participants decided to stay in the nursing profession, citing their personal duties and responsibilities. While

in South Korea, most of the participants decided to leave the profession due to the newfound dangers of the profession compared to their original deciding factors of financial gains and status. Although the study relates to the same group of people (nursing students), it yielded different results. Knowing this, it is important to further explore what the results would look like for nursing students in American culture. Investigating the decision-making process and perceived threats, successes and failures brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic will yield valuable insights for nursing programs that could help them better prepare and accommodate nursing students.

## **Methods**

### **Ethics**

The researcher completed CITI training and met the competency requirements for the right to conduct this research ethically. The conduct of the research was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The approval was obtained on March 9, 2022, after the submission of an Exemption 2 Form. The form submitted included all intended plans to complete the study such as the collection of participants, along with collection, storage, and methods of analysis of the data collected. The IRB has also reviewed the purpose and necessity of this study. The researcher received a signed departmental leadership approval to survey the participants. In addition, a qualified professor has served as the mentor and overseer of the researcher and the research.

### **Design**

Participants will be asked to complete a survey which will take 10-15 minutes. This survey will be formed using a Qualtrics Survey Tool (QST). The survey will contain a series of questions (21 questions in total), to which the participant's answers will be analyzed to obtain



patterns in the data results. The survey will consist of questions of mixed designs including multiple choice questions and open-ended questions where the participants give their own answers. A retrospective analysis will be the methodology implemented in exploring this topic. Descriptive stats will be used to describe samples, and answers to open-ended questions will be grouped by themes. A mixed method of analysis will be utilized including both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The data collected and reported will be in a de-identified fashion. Therefore, the survey platform that will be used is Qualtrics to keep the anonymity of the participants.

### **Setting**

A generated link, along with a QR code was posted on the nursing students' folio page for students to have easy access to the survey. The notice was posted on Folio, and nursing students were encouraged to participate and complete the survey at their own convenience. As such the data was collected without any in-person interactions with participants.

### **Sample**

The study population is all nursing students at least 18 years of age attending Georgia Southern University. From the data collected, the participants ranged in age from 18 to 35 years and older. Students from all levels of the nursing program were encouraged to participate, including undergraduate, graduate, Accelerated BSN, and RN to BSN students.

### **Results**

(1) Of the nursing students in the waters college of health professions, 56 students participated in the study. However, 1 of these students indicated they did not consent to participate in the research and therefore was not allowed to move forward in answering the study questions. This means a total of 55 qualified participants answered the survey questions. The

participants were not required to give a response to all the questions; therefore, each question has a different number of participants answering the question.

(2) The first set of questions described the participants. Question 1 inquired about the participant's age, and 41 participants gave a response. Of these 41 participants, 19.51% of them were 18-20 years old, 26.83% were 20-22 years old, 4.88% were 22-24 years old, 31.71% were 25-35 years old, and 17.07% of the participants were older than 35 years old. For question 2 inquiring about the gender of the participants, 41 individuals also answered these questions. Of these 41 participants, 87.80% were female and 12.20% were male. With the question inquiring about the participants' program, 41 individuals answered this question. Of those participants, 67% were undergraduate students, 7.50% were graduate students, 10.00% were in the accelerated program, and 17.50% were in the RN to BSN program.

**Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants**

| Demographic     | Variable           | N: 41 | %     |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------|-------|
| Age             | 18-20              | 8     | 19.5% |
|                 | 20-22              | 11    | 26.8% |
|                 | 22-24              | 2     | 4.8%  |
|                 | 25-35              | 13    | 31.7% |
|                 | 35+                | 7     | 17.1% |
| Gender          | Male               | 5     | 12.2% |
|                 | Female             | 36    | 87.8% |
| Nursing Program | Accelerated BSN    | 4     | 10%   |
|                 | RN to BSN          | 7     | 17.5% |
|                 | Graduate           | 3     | 7.5%  |
|                 | Undergraduate (S1) | 12    | 30%   |
|                 | Undergraduate (S2) | 0     | 0%    |
|                 | Undergraduate (S3) | 8     | 20%   |
|                 | Undergraduate (S4) | 7     | 17%   |

(3) The following set of questions in the survey were COVID-19-related questions. The first of these questions asked, “how often do you seek updates from news sources about COVID-

19”, and 41 participants answered this question. Of the 41 participants who responded, 2.44 sought out updates more than once per day, 4.88% responded once per day, 12.20% responded 2-3 times per week, 12.20% responded once per week, 17.07% responded once or twice per month, and 51.22% (over half) responded that they do not actively seek updates about COVID-19. The next question asked whether the participants are worried about becoming infected with the COVID-19 virus, and 41 individuals responded. Of the 41 individuals who answered, 68.29% responded no, 17.07% answered maybe, and 14.63% answered yes. To the next question which asks, “how many people do you know that have been diagnosed with a COVID-19 infection”, there were again 41 responses. Of the participants that answered this question, 7.32% answered zero (0), another 7.32% answered 1-3 persons, 17.07% answered 3-5 persons, 9.76% answered 5-7, and 58.54% (more than half) answered greater than 7 persons. To the question inquiring about the participants’ vaccination status, 41 individuals responded. Of these 41 participants, 2.44% were vaccinated with the first dose only, 4.88% were not vaccinated and did not plan to receive the vaccine, and finally, 92.68% of the participants were fully vaccinated.

**Table 2 Covid-Related Answers**

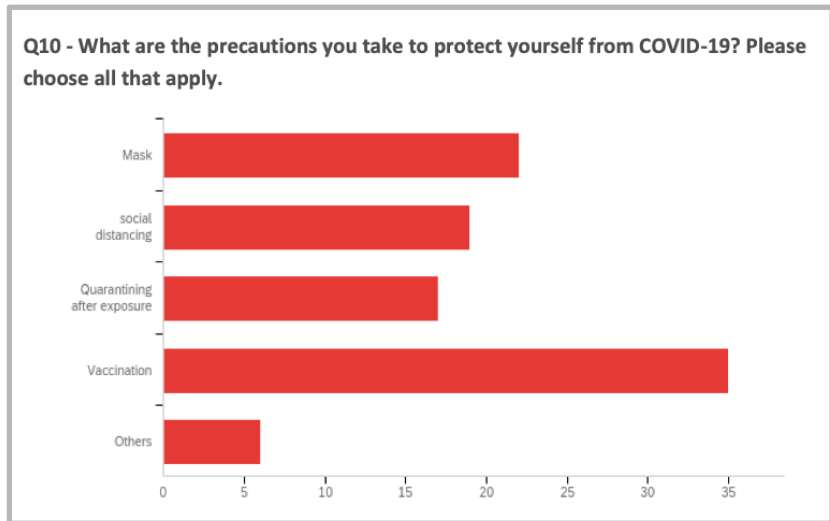
| Question   | Variable                       | N: 41 | %      |
|--|--------------------------------|-------|--------|
| How often do you seek updates from news sources about COVID-19?  | <b>More than once a day</b>    | 1     | 2.44%  |
|  | Once a day                     | 2     | 4.88%  |
|  | <b>2-3 times per week</b>      | 5     | 12.2%  |
|  | Once a week                    | 5     | 12.2%  |
|  | <b>Once or twice a month</b>   | 7     | 17%    |
|  | I do not actively seek updates | 21    | 51.22% |
| Are you worried about becoming infected with the COVID-19 virus? | Yes                            | 6     | 14.6%  |
|  | Maybe                          | 7     | 17%    |
|  | No                             | 28    | 68.29% |
| How many people do you know that have                            | 0                              | 3     | 7.3%   |
|  | 1-3 people                     | 3     | 7.3%   |

|   |  |    |        |
|---|--|----|--------|
| been diagnosed with a COVID-19 infection?   | 3-5 people                                 | 7  | 17%    |
|   | 5-7 people                                 | 4  | 9.8%   |
|   | >7 people                                  | 24 | 58.5%  |
| Have you received the covid-19 Vaccination? | No, I do not plan on receiving the vaccine | 2  | 4.88%  |
|   | No   | 0  | 0%     |
|   | Yes, the first dose                        | 1  | 2.44%  |
|   | Yes, fully vaccinated                      | 38 | 92.68% |
|   | I prefer not to answer                     | 0  | 0%     |

(4) The next question inquired about precautions the participants take to protect themselves from COVID-19. This was a select-all that applied questions with the option to add original answers in a text box in addition to the provided list that participants could select. To this answer, 22.22% of participants selected masks, 19.19% selected social distancing, 17.17% selected quarantine after

exposure, 35.35% of participants selected vaccination, and 6.06% selected others such as hand washing and immune support through vitamins. Following this question, participants were asked, “do you feel Georgia Southern University has taken

adequate precautions during the COVID-19 pandemic process?”. To that question, 41 participants answered the question and 56.10% of those participants answered yes, 14.63% answered maybe, and 29.27% answered no.



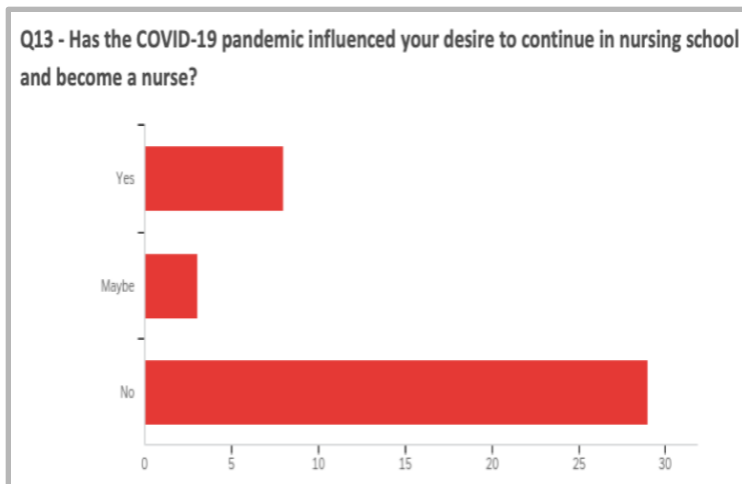
(5) With a few of the next questions in this study, the participants were asked to give their thoughts on the questions asked. All answers provided were solely from the participants, and their rich use of vocabulary subsequently provided interesting answers. One of these questions asked the participants to share their thoughts on the Covid-19 precautions Georgia Southern University (GSU) implemented. The answers were analyzed and categorized into two categories, answers with negative connotations and those with positive connotations. Of the 25 individuals who answered this question, 32% of the answers had positive connotations. These participants cited the absence of an outbreak on GSU's campuses, the efforts of the CARES team, along with the mandate of masks and social distancing. 56% of the participants voiced answers with negative connotations. They cited answers such as "covid has become the only illness Georgia Southern seems to see or accredit as being sick", "not requiring masks in classrooms", and "only 3 days of quarantine". An overwhelming number of the negative connotation answers cited the fact that COVID-19 seemed to be the only illness the school focused its accommodations on. 8% of the answers to this question revealed they had no thoughts since their programs were online and were not directly affected by the regulations implemented by the school.

(6) To the question "has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced your desire to continue in nursing school and become a nurse?", 40 participants who had answered had the option to choose yes, maybe, or no. 20% percent answered yes, 7.5 % answered maybe, and 72.5% answered no. However, in the followed-up question "please share your thoughts on how the pandemic has shaped your plans to continue your studies" the 18 participants gave colorful answers. Again, with this type of question where the participants gave their own answers, it was divided into positive and negative connotation answers. 22% of the answers had positive connotations, revealing that the pandemic served as another motivation for why they wanted to

continue their nursing journey. One participant stated that “I recognized that there is a need for nurses and that a lot of nurses are leaving the field and I want to continue to make a change”.

44% of the participants stated that the pandemic had no effect on their plans to continue their studies in nursing.

One participant simply wrote, “Covid never really changed my view, I have always wanted to be in the medical field”. 33% of the participants shared that the pandemic has made them



question their choice of the nursing profession. One participant passionately wrote

“I don't want to be a nurse anymore really. I'm going to complete at least my first year or two but I'm planning to at least leave bedside or maybe join a different career. I'm smart enough to have become anything and I chose to become a nurse to help people, but the COVID epidemic has exposed how little employers of nurses really value them. Seeing the hard-working nurses I work with during clinical be undervalued and burnt out sucked”

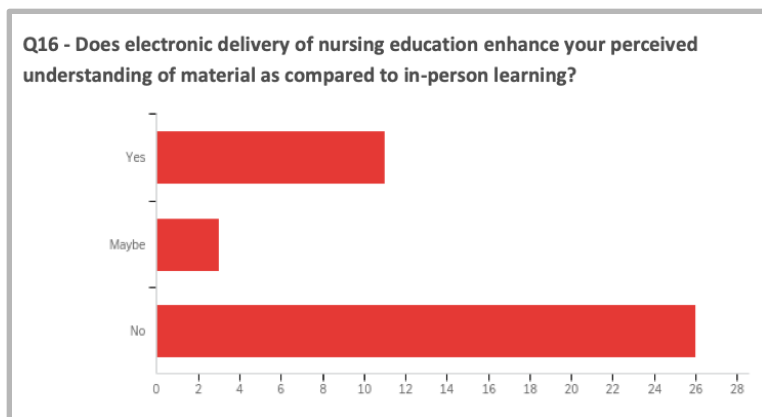
(7) Nursing school is not an easy journey to complete. As difficult as it may be at times, nursing students have different things to keep pushing through their programs. This next question asks, “what are the top three driving forces that keep you motivated during your journey through nursing school?” There was a total of 35 participants who answered this question. Of all the participants who answered, 100% of their answers can be grouped into two main categories: Financial freedom that a nursing career offers, and their responsibility to society. Financial

freedom is clear, but the answers included in the “responsibility to society” category included answers dealing with helping others, family members, and the need for more nurses. One participant puts “the money at the end, helping people, usable skill”. Another participant wrote “the desire to be successful, make a difference, and help others is really the only thing that keeps me motivated”. Another interesting, but similar response stated “money, Adderall, sleep”.

(8) As experienced by most if not all levels of our education system, many nursing programs turned to electronic learning for some time during the pandemic. The next question then asks, “does electronic delivery of nursing education enhance your perceived understanding of educational material as compared to in-person learning?” There were 40 participants who answered this question of whom 27.5% agreed that electronic delivery did enhance their learning as compared to in-person learning. However, more than half of the participants (65%) answered “no” to this question, while 7.5% reported maybe. It seems from the numbers that most nursing students overwhelmingly dislike electronic learning. When asked “please share the effect electronic delivery of educational material has on your learning” following the previous quantitative question, the picture was clearer about electronic learning. With this question, 28 participants wrote their thoughts. Much like the previous question, more than half (64%) of the participants agreed that electronic delivery affected their learning negatively, while 36% of them said otherwise. It is interesting to note the reasons for this statistic. Those who cited electronic delivery in a positive light pointed out “the convenience” of electronic delivery of material. One of the participants stated, “I guess it makes the material convenient to assess material over and over that way you can always review and learn”. Another participant wrote “Arrange to watch the material when it works for your schedule”, and another said, “I got more sleep, and we had recordings of the classes”. On the other hand, 64% of participants who cited electronic delivery

in a negative light had these to say: “cheating has become a huge problem”, toggling between multiple electronic sources is a bit confusing and can be frustrating at times”, “online makes the professor seems distant”, “I focus less and therefore perform lower than if I was in person”, and “it’s almost like we are teaching ourselves”.

(9) Moving toward the clinical setting specifically, the participants were asked if the thought of acquiring the COVID-19 virus had an impact on their desire to complete clinical rotations in a



healthcare facility. To this question, 41 participants gave their choices between yes, maybe, and no. 12.2% of the participants answered “yes”, 7.32% answered “maybe”, and 80.49% of the participants answered “no”. Next, the participants were asked, “please share your thoughts on how COVID-19 has impacted your participation in clinical rotations”. The 23 answers to this question were analyzed and categorized into two main groups, those who felt the pandemic did not impact their participation in clinical rotations, and those who felt it did impact them negatively. None of the participants reported the pandemic impacting their clinical rotations positively. 39% of the participants were in the group that reported that COVID-19 had no impact on their clinical rotations. Many simply wrote “It did not” or “no effect”, others explained by writing “everything has risks”, and “everyone is taking more precautions for the workers' safety”. On the other hand, 61% of the participants expressed that COVID-19 did impact their participation in clinical rotations and they made it clear that the impact was negative. One participant wrote, “it has made scheduling and participating very difficult”, and another wrote,



“clinical zoom was not cool”. In their responses, some keywords or phrases that stood out were “concern”, “unknown”, “risk”, “super-stressful”, and “very worried”.

(10) The next question in the survey echoed an earlier question that asked about COVID-19 precautions. This question though asks, “please describe how COVID-19 precautions, e.g., social distancing, community lockdown, potential isolation, have directly impacted your nursing education”. 23 participants gave an answer to this question. More than half of the participants (52%) that gave an answer had negative connotations to them. One participant reported, “I was unable to attend orientation, the zoom was not working, and I missed valuable info”, another explained the limitations at clinical sites that they felt like they were “being robbed of time”. Taking care of patients is a team effort and so teamwork is stressed in nursing schools. Nursing students are often put into group projects, and one participant noted how their learning was affected in group work with the increased absences from quarantining. Another participant wrote, “if instructors wear a mask, it is difficult to understand lectures”. The beginning of the pandemic was chaotic of course, and there were many uncertainties. However, as time passed and the world adjusted, so did the nursing program. This may be why some participants (48%) reported that the precautions didn’t really impact their nursing education. One participant simply wrote, “since I just started, the impacts have been minimal thankfully”.

(11) The last question in the survey asked, “in your opinion, what changes should be made to nursing education delivery to improve understanding and retention of material?”. 23 participants took their time to answer this question, and here are some recurring answers. One main answer that was pointed out several times was “thorough and transparent communication between the nursing department and students”. Another recurring answer was “I believe every lecture should be recorded and uploaded to folio for students to access whenever they need to”.

A third recurring answer is summarized by this answer, “more flexible due dates and less busy work to allow for more time to study and retain what is being taught.”

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into nursing students’ perceptions and feelings about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their experiences and learning opportunities in the nursing program, as well as perceived successes and failures. There have been numerous studies and documentation noting the high public opinion that the nursing profession holds (Donelan et al., 2008). However, it is also widely known that this profession is perceived as being underpaid and overworked. As such being the public opinion, it was thought that most nursing students pursue this profession not for monetary reasons alone, but with deep personal influential factors such as the growing numbers of much-needed nurses and the desire to help others. Therefore, much like the Japanese students in Luis Miguel Dos Santos's study, it was suspected that the Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will not be enough in influencing nursing students to change their perceptions about the nursing profession. Rather, it may serve as another reason why many will stay in the profession. As expected, **paragraph 6** of the results section validated the hypothesis. As noted, more than 70% of the participants reported that they were not influenced by the pandemic in not pursuing nursing school. In addition, **paragraph 7** reveals that the top three driving forces that keep the participants pushing through their programs were their responsibility to society such as helping people and the need for more nurses, along with financial freedom.

**Paragraph 2** and Table 1 of the results section indicate that the study provided a wide range of participants from different age groups and nursing programs. As reported in 2019, the nursing profession is still a female-dominated field with only about 12% of nurses in the U.S

being males. This explains the big gap between the ratio of male and female participants that is seen in the study.

**Paragraph 3** and Table 2 of the results section further help us to understand the feelings and behaviors the participants have towards the pandemic. As noted, almost all the participants, 92.68%, were fully vaccinated. This information may have contributed to the behavior of these participants not anxiously seeking COVID-19 updates from news outlets even though more than half of them knew more than 7 people that have contracted the virus. In addition, paragraph 9 of the results section reveals how 80% of the participants were not bothered by the thought of acquiring the COVID-19 virus or how it might impact their desire to complete clinical rotations in a healthcare facility. Further, most of them (68.29%) reported that they were not worried about becoming infected with the virus.

**Paragraph 4** of the results section further reveals that the participants had multiple methods of protecting themselves from contracting the virus, and most of them also feel that the school has taken adequate precautions during the pandemic. Being that these participants are from the school of nursing, their education may have influenced their feelings and behaviors towards the pandemic and all its influences. This can be further seen in the results section of **paragraph 5**, where 56% of the participants were critical of the precautions implemented by the school. Precautions such as shortened quarantine time and not requiring masks in the classrooms were expectedly not received well since these participants were learning the science behind these precautions in the classrooms.

Another issue that was brought on by the pandemic that could influence the participants' experiences and learning opportunities in the nursing program, as well as their perceived successes and failures was the electronic delivery of information. **Paragraph 8** presents that

about a quarter of the participants noted a positive influence of electronic delivery of information, and about two-thirds of the participants reported a negative influence on their learning opportunities. There was no need to speculate about the reasons behind these statistics, because the participants cited convenience as the reason for the positive light on E-learning, while the rest noted the frustrations that came with it such as cheating, having to toggle between multiple sources, and feeling like they were teaching themselves for the reasons for the negative connotations towards E-learning.

When it came to the question about the perceived success and failures in nursing school through the pandemic, **paragraphs 9 and 10** explain much. Due to the pandemic and all its limitations, one participant was unable to attend orientation, some felt like being robbed of time, and others cited the absence of a white coat ceremony, a memory that could have been. However, the awareness of their capabilities to keep pushing despite the frustrations these perceived failures brought is the biggest success for these participants.

One main goal of this study was not only to understand simply how nursing students were doing during a global pandemic but also to gain insight into further changes that need to be implemented to better prepare nursing students through their programs. **Paragraph 11** of the results section provides answers to that inquiry. The top three changes these participants suggest for better preparation for a nursing career are as followed: Thorough and transparent communication between the nursing department and students, the recording and posting of lectures for future review, and more flexible due dates with less busy work to allow time for the students to study and retain what is being taught. One understandable concern might be, what if students don't attend class when lectures are being recorded and posted for them? To that, this author reminds the readers that the goal is not to make as many people come to class but to help

as many learn the content. Most of the participants have already cited the distance and frustration that E-learning alone creates, therefore the students are likely to attend class anyways being that they are all adults capable of making decisions that will benefit them.

### **Limitations**

Although the study provides a great deal of information that should be considered to better prepare nursing students through their programs, it does have its limitations. One limitation of the study was the fact that there were not many participants. This limited sample size could be attributed to the lack of incentives provided for participants. Another reason may be that most nursing students are short of time, this can also be seen in the study where when asked to provide their answers to certain questions, significantly less number of participants gave an answer. One recommendation for this limitation would be to give an incentive for complete participation in the study or choose a more convenient time frame to open the study when there aren't too many tests or projects in the calendar that may deter students from participating.

Another considerable limitation of this study is the possibility of bias in the responses given. Although the anonymity of the test was stressed, some participants might have still felt uncomfortable and not answered truthfully to the questions. In addition, time constraints could have pushed some participants to not give full answers, and to not fully read or understand the questions before answering. One recommendation would be to have a function in the survey next time when the amount of time taken to answer the questions may be evaluated.

### **Conclusion**

With the COVID-19 pandemic, nursing students watch on as current nurses risk their lives on the front line to care for patients. Exploring the perceived threats, failures, and successes of nursing students that are brought on by this pandemic provides us good insight into further

changes that need to be implemented to better prepare nursing students through their programs. Yes, the pandemic is affecting how and how much learning is taking place in nursing programs. However, armed with the wish to help their families and their communities, along with the financial freedom promised by this profession, nursing students are pushing through their programs. They have also provided us with many recommended changes to better prepare those students following right behind them.

Replicating this study would be beneficial for more future knowledge of the ideas explored in this study. For better understanding, there needs to be more extensive recruitment of more participants for a larger sample size. There also needs to be a deeper analysis of how much time participants are using to complete the survey for more thought-out answers. Another recommendation would be to break apart the thesis and look at individual ideas more closely such as the effectiveness of E-learning in nursing programs, or the psychological effects of COVID-19 on nursing students. This pandemic is ongoing, and so are the questions explored in this study. As such, a longitudinal study may be beneficial in understanding the whole picture.

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RESEARCH INTEGRITY

**Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

Veazey Hall 3000  
 PO Box 8005 • STATESBORO, GA 30460  
 Phone: 912-478-5465  
 Fax: 912-478-0719  
[IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu](mailto:IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu)

**To:** Komlan, Jolie; Taggart, Helen

**From:** Eleanor Haynes, Director, Research Integrity

**Approval Date:** 3/9/2022

**Subject:** Institutional Review Board Exemption Determination - Limited Review

Your proposed research project numbered **H22302**, and titled **"The Correlation between the COVID-19 Pandemic and Nursing Students' Academic and Professional Engagement: A retrospective Analysis of Nursing Education Management of Nursing Students."** involves activities that do not require full approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) according to federal guidelines.

According to the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46, your research protocol is determined to be exempt from full review under the following exemption category(s):

**Exemption 2** Research involving only the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, if: Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human participants cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to them. Please visit our FAQ's for more information on anonymous survey platforms; Any disclosure of the human participant's responses outside the research could not reasonably place the participant at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the participant's financial standing, employ-ability or reputation; Survey or interview research does not involve children; The research project does not include any form of intervention.

Any alteration in the terms or conditions of your involvement may alter this approval. *Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that your research, as submitted, is exempt from IRB Review. No further action or IRB oversight is required, as long as the project remains the same. If you alter the project, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB and acquire a new determination of exemption. Because this project was determined to be exempt from further IRB oversight, this project does not require an expiration date.*



Completion Date 30-May-2021  
 Expiration Date 29-May-2024  
 Record ID 42698887

This is to certify that:

**Jolie Komlan**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

**Human Subjects-Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher**  
 (Curriculum Group)  
**Human Subjects-Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher**  
 (Course Learner Group)  
**1 - Basic Course**  
 (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**Georgia Southern University**

**CITI**  
 Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w56351dc9-2297-49b5-a480-3556708280b0-42698887](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w56351dc9-2297-49b5-a480-3556708280b0-42698887)



Completion Date 15-Feb-2022  
 Expiration Date 14-Feb-2025  
 Record ID 27900044

This is to certify that:

**Helen Taggart**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

**GCP – Social and Behavioral Research Best Practices for Clinical Research**  
 (Curriculum Group)  
**GCP – Social and Behavioral Research Best Practices for Clinical Research**  
 (Course Learner Group)  
**1 - Basic Course**  
 (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**Georgia Southern University**

**CITI**  
 Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w6cb50db1-c876-4c14-b749-bde56fce8e66-27900044](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w6cb50db1-c876-4c14-b749-bde56fce8e66-27900044)



February 17, 2022

Jolie Komlan, and Nursing major in the Honors College, has departmental leadership approval to survey nursing students for her project. Her survey link with instructions will be distributed via Folio.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Garno".

Melissa Garno  
Professor and Chair

SCHOOL OF NURSING  
WATERS COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS  
ARMSTRONG CAMPUS: 11935 Abercorn Street • Savannah, GA • Phone: 912-344-2575 • Fax: 912-344-3481  
STATESBORO CAMPUS: P.O. Box 8158 • Statesboro, GA • Phone: 912-478-5242 • Fax: 912-478-0536

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10/26/22, 12:21 PM

Georgia Southern University Mail - Jolie Komlan IRB Exempt 2 Form



Jolie Komlan &lt;jk17519@georgiasouthern.edu&gt;

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**Jolie Komlan IRB Exempt 2 Form**

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**Helen Taggart** <htaggart@georgiasouthern.edu>  
To: Jolie Komlan <jk17519@georgiasouthern.edu>

Tue, Mar 1, 2022 at 5:38 PM

Message for Folio

Notice to be posted in Folio for Undergraduate and Graduate Students:

Jolie Komlan, and Nursing major in the Honors College, is surveying nursing students' perceptions of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic academic and clinical activities. Dr. Melissa Garno Professor and Chair of the School of Nursing approved this project. See attached link to the Informed Consent and Survey that will take about 15 minutes to complete. If you have questions regarding the survey or project, contact Dr. Helen Taggart, Honors Student Advisor, [htaggart@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:htaggart@georgiasouthern.edu) or 912.344.2667

[Quoted text hidden]

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*Helen M. Taggart, PhD, RN*  
*Nursing Professor*  
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**COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS**

**SCHOOL OF NURSING**

**Informed Consent  
for**

**The Correlation between the COVID-19 Pandemic and Nursing Students' Academic and Professional Engagement: A Retrospective Analysis of Nursing Education Management of Nursing Students**

1. The principal investigator for the study is Jolie Komlan, a nursing student.
2. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this project is to gain insight into students' perceptions and feelings of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their experiences and learning opportunities in the nursing program, as well as perceived successes and failures.
3. Procedures to be followed: Participation in this research will include the completion of a survey which will take 10 to 15 minutes.
4. Discomforts and Risks: There are no inherent risks to you as a participant for the completion of this anonymous survey.
  - The survey will be completed via Qualtrics, a secure and anonymous survey platform. We are careful to ensure that the information you voluntarily provide to us is as secure as possible; however, you must be aware that transmissions over the internet cannot be guaranteed to be completely secure.
5. Benefits:
  - a. There are no specific benefits to you as a participant.
  - b. The benefits to future nursing students will be faculty informed of best practices regarding student engagement when delivering a course.
6. Duration/Time required from the participant: 10-15 minutes
7. Statement of Confidentiality Jolie Komlan and Dr. Helen Taggart will have access to the data generated by your responses. It will be collected and reported in a de-identified fashion, meaning your participation will be anonymous.
8. Future use of data: Data will be maintained in a password-protected file for three years.
9. Right to Ask Questions: Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher named above. The contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your

rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board at 912-478-5465 or [irb@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:irb@georgiasouthern.edu).

10. Compensation: There is no compensation being offered for participation in this study.
11. Voluntary Participation: As a Georgia Southern University student, you do not have to participate in this research; you may end your participation at any time by not completing/submitting the survey. If there are questions you prefer not to answer, you may leave them blank.
12. Penalty: There is no penalty for deciding not to participate in the study; You may decide at any time that you do not want to participate further and may withdraw without penalty or retribution.
13. You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Title of Project: The Correlation between the COVID-19 Pandemic and Nursing Students' Academic and Professional Engagement: A Retrospective Analysis of Nursing Education Management of Nursing Students

Principal Investigator: Jolie Komlan, [jk17519@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:jk17519@georgiasouthern.edu)

I, the undersigned, verify that the above-informed consent procedure has been followed.

Investigator Signature Date     Jolie Komlan     02/15/2022

Completing the survey indicates your agreement to participate in the research project described above. Please save a copy of this consent form for your records.

#### Survey Questions

- 1) Started with an informed consent. See attached document.
- 2) What is your age?
- 3) What is your gender?
- 4) What program are you in?
- 5) How often do you seek updates from news sources about COVID-19?
- 6) Are you worried about becoming infected with the COVID-19 virus?
- 7) How many people do you know that have been diagnosed with a COVID-19 infection?
- 8) Have you received the COVID-19 vaccination?
- 9) What are the precautions you take to protect yourself from COVID-19? Please choose all that apply.
- 10) Do you feel Georgia Southern University has taken adequate precautions during the COVID-19 pandemic process?
- 11) Please share your thoughts on the COVID-19 precautions implemented by Georgia Southern University.
- 12) Has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced your desire to continue in nursing school and become a nurse?
- 13) Please share your thoughts on how the pandemic has shaped your plans to continue your studies.
- 14) What are the top three driving forces that keep you motivated during your journey through nursing school?
- 15) Does electronic delivery of nursing education enhance your perceived understanding of material as compared to in-person learning?
- 16) Please share the effect electronic delivery of educational material has on your learning.
- 17) Has the thought of acquiring the COVID-19 virus had an impact on your desire to complete clinical rotations in a healthcare facility?
- 18) Please share your thoughts on how COVID-19 has impacted your participation in clinical rotations.
- 19) Please describe how COVID-19 precautions, e.g., social distancing, community lock down, potential personal isolation, have directly impacted your nursing education.
- 20) In your opinion, what changes should be made to nursing education delivery to improve understanding and retention of material?