

## Nurses' Experience In Providing Care To COVID-19 Patients In Tasikmalaya

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### Abstract

Nurses have challenges in caring for patients during Covid-19. This research contributed to identifying the experiences of nurses while caring for patients with Covid-19. This phenomenological qualitative research was done at Tasikmalaya in September–October 2021. The participants involved were the nurses who worked in a Covid-19 referral hospital. Among the participants involved, samples were selected purposively, obtaining 8 participants. Furthermore, data collection was carried out by in-depth interviews via Zoom meetings and observation. Data that have been collected were further analyzed using Creswell. As a result, four themes emerged, including the role of the nurse as a caregiver, procedures for handling COVID-19 patients, treatment provided for COVID-19 patients, and support from hospital management and families for the nurses. It was then summed up that the nurses are professional and fully responsible in providing nursing care while treating COVID-19 patients, although they are afraid and anxious of being contracted with COVID-19 patients. Conclusion This study provides an overview of the experiences of nurses when providing care to patients, motivation, among others, the obstacles experienced at work, support from those closest to them, and how participants adapt in providing care to patients with COVID-19 and then nurses are professional and fully responsible in providing nursing care while treating the Covid-19 patients. Nurses need support from other parties so that they can have strong motivation while providing nursing care.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, experience, nursing care

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### 1. Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has become a global issue since the number of people infected has increased continuously. The same occurs in Indonesia, where the number of positive cases and mortality of the disease also increases continuously, causing fear and anxiety to all Indonesian people, including the nurses who are the front guard of COVID-19 case handling. However, due to the lack of preparation, including the limited availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and the increasing number of patients infected with COVID-19, there are nurses who wear incomplete PPE. As the number of patients infected with COVID-19 treated in hospitals increases, health workers, especially the nurses who are accompanying the patients for 24 hours, must be more careful and cautious in handling them. In this case, nurses are at high risk of being infected with Covid-19. Moreover, *The International Council of Nurses* (ICN) claimed that 90,000 health workers have been infected with Covid-19 (The International Council of Nurses (ICN), 2020). Meanwhile, in the case of Indonesia in July 2021, there were 453 nurses dead due to Covid-19 ([Cindy Mutia Annur, 2021](#)). It further causes fear and reluctance for the nurses to contact and treat COVID-19 patients.

General Hospital of Tasikmalaya, a referral hospital in Tasikmalaya City for COVID-19 patients, was overwhelmed in handling the COVID-19 patients and had limited availability of PPE for the nurses. Such a phenomenon shows the high risk of nurses in carrying out their duties. In addition to the imbalance between the number of patients and the number of nurses, causing the nurses to be exhausted, the available Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), is not in accordance with the standard, so its protective potential is not maximum for the nurses while treating the Covid-19 patients.

The increasing number of Covid-positive cases causes an increasing number of patients that must be treated by the nurses in the hospital as well. In this case, the nurses must have a good immune system and wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in accordance with the standard in providing nursing care to COVID-19 patients so that the quality of life of nurses can improve, which includes the quality of physical health and mental health ([Suwarsi, S., & Elizabeth, M. 2023](#)).

A preliminary study has been done on Covid-19 nurses in the hospital. Based on the information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic during the

preliminary study, nurses experience changes in their jobs and lives and feel anxious and stressed when contacting COVID-19 patients. This is because COVID-19 patients are the sources of infection; family and community stigma, as well as the possibility of being shunned by the community. However, the nurses keep providing the best nursing care for the patients. In addition, wearing complete hazmat and PPE for a long time also makes the patients and nurses uncomfortable. This phenomenon shows that nurses who provide nursing care to Covid-19 patients have a high risk of being infected with the disease. In addition, when they infect the disease their family and close ones, will be shunned by society, and this further affects the physical and psychological aspects of the nurses. Previous research (Siregar et al., 2022) found that nurses who provided nursing care to COVID-19 patients experienced behavioral changes while carrying out their duties and expected that the patients they took care of would recover. Another study further added that nurses who provided nursing care to COVID-19 students also experienced anxiety and needed spiritual guidance support.

Therefore, this research was carried out aiming to know and understand the role of nurses in providing nursing care to students during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is further expected to be the reference of the next research and information of a follow-up in constructing the guidelines of nursing care standards during the pandemic.

## 2. Method

This research was carried out using a descriptive qualitative method through a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is a qualitative methodology that allows the researcher to implement and apply his subjectivity and interpersonal abilities in the exploratory research process (Alase, 2017). According to (Creswell W John, 2018) qualitative research is defined as research interested in analyzing and describing experiences of individual phenomena in the daily world. In this case, current research was carried out at Tasikmalaya and the informants' houses in September 2021. Meanwhile, the research population involved are the nurses at General Hospital in Tasikmalaya. Among them, samples

were selected from the nurses assigned to specifically treat the COVID-19 patients in the COVID-19 isolation room of General Hospital in Tasikmalaya. Furthermore, sampling was carried out purposively, obtaining 8 informants. This research has been approved by the research ethics commission, Poltekkes Kemenkes Tasikmalaya. Furthermore, the research instruments used include a semi-structured interview guide, writing equipment, recorder, and Zoom meeting room. Data collection techniques applied include *in-depth interviews* and *field notes*. Furthermore, the interview results obtained were analyzed using Creswell (Creswell W John, 2018)

## 3. Results and Discussion

The nurses' experiences in providing nursing care to COVID-19 patients in this research consist of four themes: 1) nurses' role as patients' nursing care provider; 2) COVID-19 patients handling procedure; 3) COVID-19 patients' treatment; and 4) relatives, family, and workplace supports. Table 1 shows that all informants are at a diploma level of education. Analysis results of qualitative data on nurses' experiences in providing nursing care to COVID-19 patients are discussed below. In this case, four themes have been obtained:

- a. Nurses' role as the nursing care provider to Covid-19 patients. As a nurse who carried out professional duty at the hospital, informants provided nursing care in accordance with their duty as follow:

*"I definitely conducted a review up to evaluation, such as assisting the patients in eating their meal to meet their basic needs. Ehmm, I also motivated the patients so that they would not drop and feel anxious"(I1) "Ehmm.. we need to determine the patients' triage in IGD according to the patients' condition" (I5) "Well, it is the same as the nursing care we provide to other patients, but for the covid-19 patients, it is more likely to be a total care. However, the patients below twelve years old can also be assisted by the family" (I3)*

*"...Alhamdulillah I can adapt well and not feeling anxious while providing nursing care to patients starting from the review until the evaluation..." (I8).*

**Table 1.** Data on Respondents' Characteristics

No. Informant	Age (Year)	Gender	Education Level	Length of Working Period at the hospital
I1	36	Male	Diploma	12 Years
I2	35	Male	Diploma	12 Years
I3	30	Male	Diploma	7 Years
I4	35	Female	Diploma	12 Years
I5	39	Male	Diploma	15 Years
I6	30	Female	Diploma	8 Years
I7	29	Male	Diploma	6 Years
I8	31	Female	Diploma	7 Years

- b. Covid-19 patients handling procedure. Nurses carried out patients handling procedure in accordance with the procedure operational standard that has been set as follow:

*"We wore complete PPE, starting from the goggles, head cup, KN95 mask and surgical mask, face shield, apron, and boots. We wore them all while carrying out our duty in Covid-19 room. The room for the patients is also separated and has no AC."(15)*

*"After the triage for the patients is determined, we bring the covid-19 patients to special room, eehm....the nurses in IGD, including me, wear PPE level 3 since we have a contact with the patients, including KN95 mask, face shield, goggles according to the SOP"(12)*

*"Wearing PPE according to the regulation. At first, we did not wear the PPE according to the standard, such as wearing the raincoat, mainly it is not according to the standard. However, Alhamdulillah, as time goes by the management and donator have prepared the PPE in accordance with the standard, so we could wear mask, head cup, KN95 mask and surgical mask, face shield, apron, and boots when we looked after the patients. Although it felt so hot wearing the PPE, it is a procedure that we must apply to take care of the Covid-19 patients. The room used was also provided so sudden at first. It was unprepared at all including the SOP (13)*

- c. Covid-19 patients' treatment. The treatment given to the Covid-19 patients by the nurses is all the same as follow:

*"If it is the common patients without any emergency, we would give them therapy, food, questions about their compliant, and others. The patients were treated the same, we did not differentiate them based on their ethnicity or religion. We took care of them well. If the patient is categorized as medium to emergency, we will check them at least one every half an hour. Although it was exhausting and worrying to give nursing care to covid-19 patients, we have chosen this profession so we must be sincere and carry out the duty as well as possible without differentiating each other"(11)*

*"The nursing care we gave to all patients is all the same. We did not see the religion or who they are, we would definitely give the same service. We would not differentiate them because when we met the patients, they needed immediate help. When the patients were crowded, it was exhausting and affected our mood to the patients, but we must hold it"(18)*

*"Covid-19 patients that we took care in the hospital received the same service. The most important thing is that we need to be careful when we interacted with them because we, as the nurses, must also keep ourselves healthy*

*although we had high risk of being infected with the disease. It was scary and worrying when we went to our shift at first. We felt it in every minute but when we approached the patients, we only remembered to keep our safety and lillahita'ala Insya Allah, all is safe. Although we felt exhausted and tired, when we remembered the patients and imagined that they were our family, we would gave them primary service"(13)*

*"It has became our duty and obligation as a nurse to treat the patients the same and fair without filtering them. The important things is, we must always pray and believe of Allah protection while taking care of the Covid-19 patients."(16)*

- d. Support from the closed ones such as our family and workplace. The support for of the closed one for the nurses on duty is as follow:

*"Alhamdulillah I received support from my wife who always prepared and cooked my food every day. I also received vitamin, dates juice, and all kinds of support. Alhamdulillah there was also no bullying like the news, all people gave me support instead"(11)*

*"Ehm...Alhamdulillah, my wife has the same profession as me, so we understood and supported each other. Concerning the nutrition and hygiene, we particularly reminded each other. At first, the hospital also did not give rice box before the covid-19, Alhamdulillah during the Covid-19, the hospital gave us rice box and vitamin"(12)*

*"Well, my family was worried at first, including my wife, my mother, and my mother in law, but I told hem that the patients needed me, so they understood and they eventually supported me. They reminded me to not forget to eat, take a bath using warm eater, and everything, so I would be safer at work. Alhamdulillah, the hospital management always improved the facilities and infrastructure as well as acted fast in providing the PPE, food, and supplement. When there were people exposed, special room was also provided."(12)*

*"The family support was in the forms of reminding me always of Allah, to be more careful, wearing PPE, taking a rest, and nutritious food. Meanwhile, the support from the hospital management was in the forms of nutritious food and drink, as well as vitamin..."(14)*

*"Support from the hospital management is in the forms of meeting the PPE needs for the nurses, while from the family and other nurses is pray"(16)*

Based on the research results, the discussion is explained as follows:

a. Role of nurses in providing nursing care to Covid-19 patients

The role of nurses in providing nursing care to COVID-19 patients started from the review to the evaluation. This shows that nurses at the hospital able to provide nursing care to the patients even during the pandemic condition. According to the interview results, all informants explained that they provided nursing care to the patients in accordance with the roles of the nurses as nursing care assistants provided by paying attention to their basic needs. According to the law Undang-Undang Kesehatan No. 38 of 2014, the role of a nurse is providing nursing care so that patients can meet their basic needs. The nurses were anxious in taking care the patients at first, but they were fully aware that they are the front guard in providing the best service and care for the patients' condition. This shows that nurses gave caring attitude in carrying out their duty by emphasizing their empathy. Empathy is a conscious behavior as well as mental and emotional action towards other people. ability to understand the personal experience of the patient without bonding with them, constitutes an important communication skill for a health professional, one that includes three dimensions: the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral. It has been proven that health professionals with high levels of empathy operate more efficiently as to the fulfillment of their role in eliciting therapeutic change ([Moudatsou et al., 2020](#)). Deep empathy feeling appears in the nurses because the patients taken care of in the room stayed without their families waiting as well as due to patients who passed away. The nurses felt incredibly happy when the patients infected with COVID-19 they took care of recovered. Intervention, the patients suffering from COVID-19 also applied a psychological approach because it is possible that the patients experience health disruption due to the feeling of being exiled and ostracized by their family and neighbors caused by the Covid-19 diagnosis ([Tallulembang et al., 2020](#)). Nurses established a greater therapeutic alliance with patients when they were able to adopt their patient's perspective and experience concern ([Poyato Moreno R Antonio, 2020](#)). Other qualitative research has shown that nurses need support from hospital management, policy makers and the government in order to carry out their maximall roles ([Firouzkouhi et al., 2022](#)).

b. Covid-19 patients handling procedure Procedure in taking care of Covid-19 patients tries to obey the regulation set by wearing the available Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as well as

hygiene from sufficient hand sanitation also help to reduce the infection spread. The use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is essential when working at the hospital. The use of PPE must be in accordance with the Standard Operational Procedure (SOP). In this case, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is used to protect oneself from virus infection, especially Covid-19. Health workers who take action in providing high-risk nursing care, such as surgery and other actions with high-risk of being infection, must wear PPE that has met good standard and quality ([Kemenkes RI, 2020](#)). Furthermore, the majority of participants considered patients as the source of infection so that they were alert during contacting the patients. There was also nurses who minimized their contact with the patients as another effort. Although this effort aims good, there is a contradictive condition when related to the nursing profession because the nurses are obliged to look after the patients optimally, including by washing their hand, carrying out social distance, wearing PPE, screening for visitation, and telemedicine ([Irene. P. S 2020](#)). Designing activities as well as the time needed for taking care the Covid-19 patients by taking turns in looking after them are expected to overcome this problem. This method is considered quite effective because optimal nursing care can be provided. Raw alertness is the foundation that must be applied in all health facilities in providing safe healthcare service for all patients and reduce further infection risk. Standard alertness include hand cleanliness and the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to avoid direct contact with blood, body fluid, secretion (including the respiratory secretion), and patients' wounded skin ([World Health Organization, 2020](#)). Most nurses have anxiety and prepare themselves for risky jobs and have unrealistic expectations. other than that mixed emotions, distancing the family and deliberately withholding information to reduce family fears, having an unpleasant experience with PPE, limiting social activities and feeling social stigma. It also ends with recommendations vouching for the need to improve the quality of life of professionals and their working conditions by taking care of the physical and mental health of nurses ([Nair et al., 2022](#)). Health worker has an additional obligation to give protection to the patients and their own selves ([Kemenkes RI, 2020](#)).

c. Nurses' treatment towards Covid-19 patients. Nurses provided nursing care to the patients without differentiating them based on either ethnicity or group. It was proven by the fact that the nurses keep giving good and friendly

treatment to the patients, although they felt exhausted and tired while on duty wearing hazmat. According to the theory of the nurses in carrying out their duty, they cannot differentiate the patients. Nursing care is an effort to help the individual, either they are sick or healthy, since they were born until they passed away, in the forms of knowledge, willingness, and abilities owned. The nurse had high concern and did not convey the intention to leave profession regardless of their job stress, perceived risk, ample support, and current protection Work (Sperling, 2021). Nurses are able to carry out their roles and functions properly, the roles and obligations of nurses as care givers in hospitals regardless of social status, race or culture (Keen et al., 2022). Even though nurses have a high risk of being infected, they still look after the patients well and with full responsibility. They also do not have the willingness to step away from their duty and keep being motivated to carry out their duty so all patients receive good service. Motivation in carrying out work duty significantly affects the performance, since it comes from oneself. Motivation sometimes occurs without any effect from the outside, called intrinsic motivation. Good work motivation can increase nurse job satisfaction, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Fikri et al., 2022). On the other hand, extrinsic motivation also supports every nurse to carry out their duty continuously in the form of support from the workplace. These supports can be in the form of rewards, including incentive money, additional meals, a certificate from PPNI for the nurses who provide nursing care to Covid-19 patients in isolation rooms, support from other people, sufficient PPE, sufficient nutrition and vitamin support as well as work schedule and holiday managed by the hospital. The combination of the two motivations makes the nurse carry out their duty well and full motivation to all patients from all groups. Besides that, strong clinical challenges, the blooming of professional values, and improved human and organizational communication were all part of nurse's ethical treatment for COVID-19 patients (Abbasinia et al., 2022). Nurses' experience in caring has a transcendental element, such that nurses progressed from the ordinary worries to transcendence in internal and social dimensions. The passage through these stages occurred. Over a short amount of time, and nurses were pleased with their achievement. Despite the tough circumstances, patient care was not unpleasant for them; rather, it made them feel like superhumans (Khanjarian & Sadat-Hoseini, 2021).

- d. Support from family and workplace.  
Social support from the family is a process that occurs throughout life. The characteristics and types of family social support are different in each life cycle stage. Nurses are at risk of experiencing excessive anxiety and if there is no support from those closest to them and with shift work schedules that interfere with normal sleep hours, then support is needed for the mental health of nurses (Liu et al., 2022). However, the presence of family social support in every lifecycle stage enable the function of family with various intelligence and sense so that it can improve health and adaptation ability. Support is an encouragement, motivation and advice to other people in a condition of making decision. Family is an individual group specially connected with marriage bond or blood, including the father, mother, and children. The support can be in the forms of help that is received by someone from other people in a social environment, including the closed ones, such as family, parents, and friends because psychological support is needed (El-Zoghby et al., 2020). The importance of family support for nurses of Covid-19 patients will also affect the performance of nurses, if nurses have good motivation and mental health then immunity will be maintained and avoid bad thoughts and be able to provide services and make the right decisions to patients (Kang et al., 2020). There is an urgent need to provide support to nurses during the pandemic, with a long-term strategy to increase their retention (Lavoie-Tremblay et al., 2022). Based on several definitions of family support above, then family support to nurses can be in the forms of attitude, action, and acceptance of the duty and responsibility of the nurses. In this case, the family supports that can be done including accepting the fact that after finishing work shift at the hospital, the nurses are not going home immediately, but transiting to certain place to reduce the infection risk and does not differentiate as well does not give any negative stigma to nurses who provided nursing care to Covid-19 patients. Another result obtained is high loyalty shown by the nurses in providing nursing care to the covid-19 patients although they are anxious of being infected as well as the nurses' obedience in wearing PPE according to the provisions of Ministry of Health of RI of 2020 (Kemenkes RI, 2020). In addition, support from the hospital management and family become the main support for the nurses while carrying out their duties at the hospital and after that for the sake of safety and comfort of the nurses who are on duty of taking care Covid-19 patients.

#### 4. Conclusions and suggestions

This study provides an overview of the experiences of nurses when providing care to patients, motivation, among others, the obstacles experienced at work, support from those closest to them, and how participants adapt in providing care to patients with Covid-19 and then nurses are professional and fully responsible in providing nursing care while treating the Covid-19 patients. Suggestion: nurses needs support from other parties so that they can have strong motivation while providing nursing care.

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