

Hybrid Learning Under Pressure: Academic Outcomes and Life Balance of Working Filipino Nurse-Parents Pursuing Graduate Degrees

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of working Filipino nurse-parents enrolled in hybrid graduate nursing programs, examining how they navigate academic responsibilities alongside professional nursing and parenting roles. Grounded in a constructivist paradigm and informed by Goode's Role Strain and Conflict Theory, the Work-Life Balance perspective, and Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, the research employed a qualitative phenomenological approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with eight licensed Filipino nurse-parents residing in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, who were selected through purposive sampling. The findings revealed that hybrid learning serves as both an enabler and a burden, providing flexibility and accessibility through recorded lectures and asynchronous materials while simultaneously imposing cognitive strain, emotional fatigue, and divided attention. Participants experienced fragmented and unpredictable schedules, persistent physical and emotional exhaustion, child-centered prioritization leading to guilt and emotional conflict, and reliance on support systems from family, workplace, and academic institutions. Despite these challenges, participants reported personal and professional development, including strengthened resilience, discipline, self-awareness, and time-management skills. The study concludes that more responsive, family-centered, and compassionate approaches to graduate education are needed to recognize and support the complex circumstances of working nurse-parents. The study aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education) by promoting inclusive and equitable graduate education for working adult learners, and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) by addressing the wellbeing of healthcare professionals. The sustainability impact lies in institutional and policy recommendations for nursing education and healthcare administration to create supportive learning environments, flexible workplace policies, and comprehensive support systems that enable nurse-parents to achieve academic success while maintaining their health, family relationships, and professional responsibilities.

Keywords: Academic Outcomes; Filipino Nurses; Graduate Studies; Hybrid Learning; Life Balance; Nurse Parents; Phenomenology; Support Systems; Work-Life Balance; Working Students

1. Introduction

Graduate education may help Filipino nurses advance their careers, obtain better employment opportunities, and support their families. However, pursuing graduate studies while working in healthcare and raising children requires continuous negotiation among professional, academic, and familial responsibilities. Hybrid learning combines face-to-face instruction with online platforms, allowing nurse-parents to adjust their study schedules around rotating shifts, hospital demands, childcare, and household obligations. Flexible learning structures

became more prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic as educational institutions adopted online and technology-enabled approaches to maintain educational continuity. From a constructivist perspective, learning is shaped by personal experiences, social contexts, and engagement with knowledge. Thus, graduate education cannot be separated from the homes, workplaces, families, and communities in which nurse-parents live. Although hybrid learning improves accessibility, it can blur the boundaries between work, school, and home. Managing these overlapping domains requires self-discipline, time management, adaptability, and emotional resilience. Instructional resources for graduate nursing students who perform professional and caregiving roles remain a concern. Reduced face-to-face interaction may also limit social connection, peer interaction, instructor engagement, and emotional support. Technological demands, unequal internet access, and reduced interpersonal interaction may contribute to stress, fatigue, and isolation.

Hybrid graduate education therefore presents both an opportunity and a burden. Its flexibility can enable nurse-parents to remain enrolled despite demanding work and family responsibilities, but it can also increase the need for self-regulation and impose additional cognitive and emotional demands. The experience depends on how participants negotiate competing responsibilities and, on the support, available from families, workplaces, peers, and academic institutions. In the Philippine context, limited research has examined the intersection of nursing practice, parenting, graduate education, and hybrid learning. Existing discussions often treat healthcare professionals, student-parents, working students, and hybrid education as separate concerns. Consequently, the adjustment experiences, difficulties, support needs, wellbeing, work-life balance, family relationships, professional identity, and aspirations of Filipino nurse-parents remain insufficiently understood. This study addresses these concerns by exploring the lived experiences of working Filipino nurse-parents enrolled in hybrid graduate nursing programs.

Related literature identifies hybrid learning as a flexible educational arrangement that combines online and face-to-face instruction. It may support working graduate students by improving access, self-directed learning, and continuity of education, particularly when students have irregular work schedules and family responsibilities (Lucañas, 2025; Leszczyński et al., 2018; Wagner et al., 2010). However, flexibility does not automatically result in meaningful academic engagement. Students may remain available for academic tasks despite personal and professional commitments, thereby experiencing divided attention, emotional exhaustion, and increased academic pressure (Heng & Shorey, 2023). Digital learning environments may foster learner autonomy and collaborative engagement (Leszczyński et al., 2018), but continuous online interaction may reduce opportunities for mentorship, peer relationships, and professional identity development (Lee et al., 2024). These concerns are particularly relevant in graduate nursing education, where reflective dialogue, professional interaction, and collaborative learning are important. Philippine studies further indicate that infrastructure, socioeconomic conditions, internet access, and institutional support influence students' hybrid learning experiences. Nurse-parents experience compounded pressure because they must manage professional, academic, and family roles simultaneously. Dual responsibilities may result in physical and mental stress among graduate healthcare students (Heng & Shorey, 2023). Filipino nurse-parents may also understand balance through culturally grounded expectations of caregiving, sacrifice, family responsibility, and emotional availability. Working mothers and other primary caregivers may experience emotional strain and role conflict when employment and educational demands compete with family duties.

The literature also shows that nursing work schedules, shift changes, overtime, urgent duties, and clinical responsibilities may interrupt study routines, rest, concentration, and motivation. Academic difficulties are therefore influenced not only by personal study habits but also by healthcare working conditions. Although resilience and intrinsic motivation may support persistence (Ryan & Deci, 2020), individual determination cannot compensate for inadequate institutional and social support. Institutional support is consistently identified as important to the success of employed graduate students. Supportive instructors, improved communication and feedback, flexible deadlines, mentoring, counseling, wellness programs, and adaptable academic policies may strengthen engagement and persistence (Lucañas, 2025). Family, peer, workplace, and organizational support are also associated with improved coping and emotional wellbeing among healthcare students (Heng & Shorey, 2023). These findings indicate the need for holistic and learner-centered approaches that recognize the complex circumstances of nurse-parents.

Globally, hybrid learning has expanded as an approach for maintaining educational access and continuity while accommodating students' professional and personal responsibilities. International literature commonly associates hybrid education with flexibility, technological integration, learner autonomy, and convenience. However, it also identifies concerns involving academic availability, divided attention, reduced social interaction, emotional exhaustion, and the need for strong institutional support. In the Philippines, hybrid learning is shaped by technological infrastructure, internet reliability, socioeconomic conditions, institutional practices, and cultural expectations. Unlike contexts in which hybrid learning is primarily associated with convenience and innovation, Philippine research emphasizes the effects of limited resources and inconsistent support on students' coping and engagement. Filipino nurse-parents also navigate cultural expectations related to caregiving, family obligation, sacrifice, and parental presence. Consequently, life balance involves not only allocating time among roles but also fulfilling relational and emotional responsibilities within the family. At the local level, the study focuses on licensed Filipino nurse-parents living in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, who are employed in healthcare settings and enrolled in graduate nursing programs delivered through hybrid learning. Their experiences provide context-specific

insight into how work schedules, parenting duties, academic requirements, technology, institutional practices, and family support interact in everyday life.

The study is grounded in a constructivist paradigm, which views knowledge and meaning as constructed through lived experience, social interaction, and individual interpretation. Phenomenology provides the central inquiry through which the experiences of Filipino nurse-parents are explored and interpreted. Goode's Role Strain and Conflict Theory explains how the expectations associated with multiple roles may exceed an individual's available time, energy, and coping resources. For nurse-parents, the simultaneous roles of nurse, healthcare provider, parent, caregiver, and graduate student may produce fatigue, time pressure, stress, conflict, and role discord (Goode, 1960). The Work-Life Balance perspective frames balance not as an equal division of time but as the perceived manageability, satisfaction, and wellbeing achieved while negotiating competing demands. This perspective directs attention to participants' strategies for prioritizing tasks, managing time, establishing boundaries, and adjusting routines.

Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory explains how autonomy, competence, and relatedness influence motivation and persistence (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Nurse-parents may pursue graduate education for career advancement, professional growth, personal fulfillment, and the desire to serve as role models for their children. Motivation, support, connection, and perceived competence may influence their coping, resilience, and continuation in graduate education. Heideggerian interpretive phenomenology emphasizes the interpretation of lived human experience within cultural and social contexts (Heidegger, 1962/2008). It supports examination of how Filipino nurse-parents understand their identities, responsibilities, struggles, motivations, and experiences of balance. The broader phenomenological orientation also recognizes the importance of meaning and essence in lived experience (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Conceptually, the study links the hybrid learning environment with competing academic, professional, and family roles. These competing demands may produce role strain, stress, time pressure, exhaustion, and conflict. Work-life balance and motivation may influence how nurse-parents cope with these demands, while family, workplace, peer, and institutional support may strengthen persistence and wellbeing. The resulting lived experiences are interpreted through phenomenological inquiry within a constructivist paradigm.

The literature provides evidence on hybrid education, nursing education, work-life balance, role conflict, motivation, resilience, and institutional support. However, several gaps remain. First, research commonly examines healthcare professionals, nursing students, working parents, and hybrid learners as separate groups rather than as intersecting identities. Second, many studies emphasize academic achievement, technology use, engagement, satisfaction, or measurable stress indicators, with less attention to the personal, emotional, relational, and culturally situated meanings of these experiences. Third, limited research examines how Filipino nurse-parents interpret and negotiate the simultaneous demands of nursing practice, parenting, and graduate education in hybrid learning environments. Philippine research also remains limited regarding post-pandemic hybrid graduate nursing education examined through phenomenological or narrative perspectives. Fourth, existing discussions of resilience may emphasize individual perseverance without fully examining the institutional and structural conditions that either support or intensify nurse-parents' responsibilities. This study responds to these gaps by using phenomenological inquiry to explore the lived experiences of working Filipino nurse-parents enrolled in hybrid graduate nursing programs. It examines how participants understand academic achievement, manage work and family responsibilities, experience stress and role conflict, sustain motivation, use support systems, and pursue life balance. The study also seeks to provide insights that may inform learner-centered academic policies, workplace practices, and support structures.

The study aligns most directly with the following Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being. The study addresses the physical, emotional, and psychological wellbeing of nurse-parents who manage work, family, and graduate education. Understanding exhaustion, stress, emotional strain, support, and life balance may inform approaches that protect the wellbeing of healthcare professionals. SDG 4 – Quality Education. The study examines access, participation, persistence, and academic engagement in hybrid graduate nursing education. Its findings may support more inclusive, flexible, responsive, and learner-centered educational environments for working adult learners. SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth. Graduate education may contribute to nurses' professional development, career advancement, leadership capacity, and retention in healthcare. The study also highlights the need for workplace conditions and policies that recognize employees' educational and family responsibilities. SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. Hybrid education depends on digital platforms, technological resources, communication systems, and reliable infrastructure. The study identifies how technology and institutional arrangements influence educational continuity and participation. SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals. The experiences of nurse-parents demonstrate the importance of collaboration among academic institutions, healthcare employers, families, peers, and community support systems. Coordinated support is necessary to sustain educational participation and professional wellbeing.

The study contributes to health and public-health sustainability by examining conditions that affect the wellbeing, persistence, and professional development of working nurses. Supporting nurse-parents may help sustain a capable and emotionally resilient healthcare workforce and may contribute indirectly to patient care, family relationships, and professional retention. It contributes to educational sustainability by identifying how graduate nursing programs can accommodate adult learners who manage employment and caregiving responsibilities. Flexible academic arrangements, supportive faculty practices, mentoring, counseling, adaptable deadlines, and

family-sensitive policies may help sustain participation and reduce academic attrition. The study also contributes to socio-economic sustainability because graduate education may strengthen nurses' career opportunities, professional growth, and capacity to support their families. However, the study emphasizes that individual motivation must be accompanied by supportive institutional and workplace structures. Finally, the research contributes to technological and community sustainability by showing that hybrid education is influenced by access to digital resources, internet connectivity, social interaction, family support, peer relationships, and institutional responsiveness. Its multidisciplinary significance lies in connecting nursing, graduate education, adult learning, family responsibility, workplace organization, mental wellbeing, technology, and institutional support within one shared inquiry into the lives of Filipino nurse-parents.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach, with phenomenology as the main research framework. Phenomenology is well-suited to explore the lived experiences of Filipino nurse-parents participating in hybrid graduate nursing programs as it aims to reveal the meanings and essences of events as experienced and understood by those involved (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). This phenomenological approach enables an in-depth understanding of the shared meanings and dominant patterns that shape people's academic and personal experiences, as reflected in their interpretations of hybrid learning within the context of career and family responsibilities. This research is grounded in Heideggerian interpretive phenomenology and recognizes that lived experiences are intertwined with the socio-cultural and historical contexts in which they are situated (Heidegger, 1962/2008; van Manen, 2016). This view aligns with the aim of exploring the culturally anchored experiences of Filipino nurse-parents, particularly the influence of hybrid learning on their educational journeys and on their views of life balance, wellbeing, and role satisfaction. The objective of this study is to explore how individuals process and understand the stressors, motivators, and barriers encountered while engaging in the concurrent roles of nurse, parent, and graduate student. Phenomenology was the study's research framework, as it was well-suited to exploring and understanding the lived experiences of Filipino nurse-parents who participated in hybrid graduate nursing education. The aim of the study is to explore how people experience hybrid learning while juggling the twofold responsibilities of nursing practice and education, as well as familial responsibilities. Phenomenology is especially suitable, as it focuses on the interpretation of life events and the significance individuals derive from them. Phenomenology is concerned with the essential, common meaning of a phenomenon as experienced by individuals, unlike case study research, which is concerned with a bounded system, and ethnography, which is concerned with collective cultural practices. Although the personal stories and reflections of the participants are central to the data collection process in this study, it does not aim merely to record individual life stories, as in narrative inquiry, but to discover the common meanings, structures, and patterns in the lived experience of Filipino nurse-parents. This perspective allows the research to move from description to a deeper analysis of the effects of hybrid learning on participants' academic engagement, coping mechanisms, sense of balance, and general wellbeing. The research adopts an interpretive phenomenological approach to acknowledge the significance of the participants' social, work, family, and educational contexts in shaping their experiences.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The research was carried out in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, Philippines. The study focused on licensed Filipino nurse-parents residing in this area who were employed in healthcare settings and enrolled in graduate nursing programs delivered through hybrid learning modalities. The locale was selected because it provided access to participants who met the inclusion criteria and because it represented a context in which nurse-parents navigated the intersection of professional nursing practice, parenting responsibilities, and graduate education within post-pandemic hybrid learning environments.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study were licensed Filipino nurse-parents living in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, who were practicing in healthcare settings and enrolled in graduate nursing programs taught in hybrid learning environments. Participants were required to be at least 30 years of age, have parental responsibilities, and be enrolled in a hybrid program combining online and in-person education. Nurses not enrolled in graduate programs, nurses without parenting responsibilities, unemployed students, students in fully online or fully in-person programs, and nurse-parents younger than 30 years were excluded from this study because their professional and family situations may differ. These standards helped to ensure that participants were mature enough and had enough contextual experience to engage in thoughtful reflection on the complex nature of hybrid learning while navigating professional and parenting challenges. Gender diversity, nursing experience, and institutional affiliation were assessed to reflect diverse perspectives and deepen understanding of the phenomenon across personal and professional contexts.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who could provide rich and relevant stories related to the topic under consideration. Purposeful sampling is commonly used in phenomenological studies because it allows the researcher to select individuals who have a lived experience of the phenomenon and can articulate and describe it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A purposive sample is appropriate for qualitative research, which aims to understand issues in depth rather than generalize (Patton, 2015). Phenomenological research does not sample for generalizability to a population, but rather for the ability to describe the phenomenon of interest in depth and detail. The study included 8 subjects, and the final sample size was determined by data saturation. Data saturation occurs when no new themes, meanings, or insights are being revealed from the data, regardless of continued data collection. The sample size was chosen in line with the phenomenological research literature, which emphasizes depth of investigation over large sample sizes. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that the sample size in phenomenological studies is usually small, allowing researchers to conduct in-depth investigations of lived experiences. Moustakas (1994) likewise stated that the goal of phenomenological research is to produce rich, in-depth narratives that can disclose the essence of a collective phenomenon. According to Dukes (1984), phenomenological research uses small, purposively selected samples of participants to allow for in-depth reflection and thematic analysis. The selection of 8 participants was considered appropriate for producing rich, culturally relevant, and meaningful narratives of the lived experiences of Filipino nurse-parents in hybrid graduate nursing education. A smaller sample allows for a more intimate engagement with the narratives, insights, and understandings of the participants, and thus, a more thorough phenomenological analysis.

2.5 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument for this study was a semi-structured interview guide designed for online, in-depth phenomenological interviews. The data collection for the study was mainly through extensive, semi-structured online interviews, which are suitable for a qualitative phenomenological approach to investigating and understanding participants' lived experiences. The semi-structured interview format allowed participants to freely articulate and interpret their experiences within a flexible framework aligned with the research topic and study goals. This approach enabled phenomenological research by encouraging participants to provide detailed, introspective, and meaning-making accounts of their experiences as Filipino nurse-parents pursuing graduate education in a hybrid learning environment. Open-ended, narrative-oriented questions were included in the interview protocol to explore participants' perceptions of academic success, work-life integration, challenges experienced in hybrid graduate education, coping methods, and sources of support and motivation. The questions were intentionally kept neutral to enable genuine reflection and a deeper exploration of participants' actual experiences. For each question in the interview, the relevant problem statement and study objective were associated with it. This was done to maintain the consistency of the research aim, data-gathering method, and phenomenological evaluation.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The approach to data collection was participant-centered and consistent with the phenomenological framework, which focuses on participants' lived experiences, reflections, and interpretative processes. An online semi-structured interview was the primary data collection method because it was accessible, flexible, and convenient for Filipino nurse-parents juggling their professional, academic, and family responsibilities. Participants' confidentiality was guaranteed and protected during the interview process with encrypted internet platforms. The interviewees were provided with a copy of the interview guide before data collection, including the main topics and questions to be reviewed. Participants had time to reflect on what they had experienced and prepare for meaningful sharing. The interviews were conducted in a dialogic, unstructured fashion that allowed participants to express and interpret their experiences within a hybrid graduate nursing education context. The researcher assumed the role of an empathetic listener and co-creator of meaning during the interview process, fostering a supportive, non-judgmental environment that encouraged open dialogue. Follow-up and exploration questions were used to enhance contemplation and to elucidate important events. Field notes were written to record contextual observations, nonverbal cues, the researcher's reflections, and emerging insights relevant to the phenomenological analysis of the data, in conjunction with the audio recordings. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim after each interview to preserve the accuracy and authenticity of participants' narratives. Member checking was then implemented by offering participants the opportunity to review and validate their interview transcripts to ensure they accurately represented their experiences. All information collected, such as transcripts, recordings, and field notes, was kept secure and available only to the researcher and the academic advisor, in accordance with ethical research guidelines and data privacy regulations.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The lived experiences of Filipino nurse-parents enrolled in hybrid graduate nursing programs were studied using van Manen's Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis. van Manen's approach is appropriate because it addresses the interpretation of meaning in participants' experiences and emphasizes the importance of personal, social, cultural, and professional contexts (van Manen, 1990; van Manen, 2016). This approach also recognizes the active and reflexive position of the researcher in interpreting both participants' narratives and their processes of meaning-

making. During the analysis, the researcher engaged in bracketing through continuous reflexive awareness, recognizing that eliminating personal assumptions is neither feasible nor consistent with van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Rather than attempting to achieve complete detachment, the researcher consciously identified, acknowledged, and examined preconceptions, beliefs, experiences, and expectations that may have influenced the interpretation of participants' narratives. Bracketing in this study therefore involved becoming aware of the researcher's prior understanding of the phenomenon and intentionally setting these assumptions aside, as much as possible, to remain attentive to the meanings expressed by participants. The researcher maintained a reflexive journal throughout the data collection and analysis process. Before analyzing the transcripts, the researcher recorded personal assumptions and expectations, prior experiences, beliefs, and initial understanding of hybrid learning, nursing practice, parenting duties, academic achievement, and work-life balance. Such reflections served as a reference point for the study of later interpretations. Throughout the analysis, the researcher continued to document personal resonance, emotional responses, emerging assumptions, and expectations that may have influenced interpretation. The reflexive journal served as an audit trail of the researcher's reflexive and interpretive process.

The analysis commenced with multiple readings of the interview transcripts to enable the researcher to become familiar with the data and to develop a holistic understanding of participants' experiences. The immersion illuminated hybrid learning, work-family balance, graduate education, and challenges, motivations, and coping mechanisms in their academic journeys. The researcher deliberately bracketed, remained open to the participants' accounts, and did not interpret the participants' experiences in terms of the researcher's own experiences or expectations. The researcher focused on the unique meanings expressed in each narrative rather than assuming that participants shared similar experiences. The researcher adopted van Manen's phenomenological thematic reflection to identify and analyze significant statements and experiential accounts. Significant statements and meaning units were carefully examined to reveal the fundamental meanings inherent in participants' narratives and to gain insight into the deeper dimensions of their lived experiences. These statements were then clustered into emerging themes to capture patterns across participants' experiences. Throughout this process, bracketing was used to prevent premature interpretation and the imposition of predetermined categories. The researcher repeatedly returned to participants' narratives to determine whether emerging interpretations were grounded in their accounts rather than derived primarily from the researcher's prior knowledge or personal experience. However, the researcher remained attentive to individual differences and did not assume that all participants experienced the phenomenon in the same manner. The analysis focused on participants' personal experiences and on the influence of institutional, social, cultural, familial, and professional contexts on their perceptions and lived experiences as Filipino nurse-parents involved in hybrid graduate education.

Consistent with van Manen's methodology, thematic reflection was performed through detailed, selective, and careful engagement with the transcripts. The holistic approach required the researcher to consider each narrative to understand its overall meaning and significance. The selective approach focused on statements or phrases that were particularly revealing of the phenomenon; the detailed, line-by-line approach examined individual sentences or groups of sentences to uncover deeper meanings and experiential significance. These approaches were used iteratively rather than as rigid sequential steps, allowing the researcher to move between individual statements, emerging themes, and the participant's narrative. Bracketing was maintained throughout all stages of analysis as an ongoing reflexive process rather than as a single procedure conducted only before data analysis. The researcher continuously examined whether interpretations were grounded in participants' accounts or were being shaped by personal experiences, assumptions, or expectations. When an interpretation appeared to reflect the researcher's own experience, the researcher revisited the original transcript, examined the participant's actual words and the surrounding context, and considered alternative interpretations before incorporating it into an emerging theme. The researcher also actively examined negative, divergent, or contradictory cases. Experiences that differed from the researcher's expectations were not excluded simply because they did not fit into an emerging pattern. Instead, these accounts were considered carefully because they might reveal additional or alternative dimensions of the phenomenon. This process strengthened bracketing by challenging the researcher's assumptions and preventing personal expectations from becoming the basis for theme development.

The credibility of the findings was enhanced by using multiple sources of qualitative information, including in-depth interviews, reflexive notes, field observations when applicable, and participants' comments, to support and corroborate the interpretation of themes. Participants were also invited to review summaries or synthesized interpretations of their experiences through member checking. Their feedback was considered in refining the interpretations while recognizing that phenomenological interpretation extends beyond simple participant confirmation of the researcher's analysis. Dialogue with academic colleagues and the research adviser further provided opportunities to critically examine emerging interpretations and potential researcher influence. Thick, rich descriptions of participants' experiences and contextual circumstances were also provided to support the transferability and credibility of the findings. Through the combined use of reflexive bracketing, thematic reflection, an audit trail, member checking, peer or adviser debriefing, and thick description, the study sought to establish credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Formal ethical approval was secured from an accredited Institutional Review Board (IRB) before the initiation of the research. The study rigorously adhered to recognized ethical standards, safeguarding the rights, dignity, privacy, confidentiality, and welfare of participants throughout the research process. The provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations also governed the study. All personal data collected from participants were kept confidential and used only for research purposes. Participants' identities were protected by using pseudonyms or participant codes, and all identifying information was removed from interview transcripts, field notes, and study documentation. Audio recordings, transcripts, consent forms, and other research materials were stored in password-protected digital files and accessible only to the researcher and academic advisor. Participants were provided with specific information on the study purpose, details of their participation, risks and benefits, confidentiality procedures, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained, and all data management, storage, retention, and disposal processes were conducted in accordance with ethical research norms and applicable data privacy laws.

Participants were provided with detailed information about the purpose, procedures, possible risks and benefits, and their rights as participants, including the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. Written consent was electronically obtained prior to each interview. The research excluded individuals who were not enrolled in a graduate nursing program, not engaged in hybrid learning models, not working and without children, showing signs of serious mental distress or fatigue or mental instability which might be aggravated by talking about personal problems, or unable to consent because of cognitive or psychological impairment. The research was of low risk, but there was a possibility of some minor emotional distress during conversations about sensitive events. To minimize this, the researcher was aware of any sign of discomfort during the interview and ensured that participants knew they could stop or leave at any point and that there would be no negative consequences. Additionally, a list of mental health resources and supplemental services was provided, including in-house counseling, online resources, and social work referrals. These measures reflected the investigator's concern for the well-being of the participants throughout the research process.

The researcher established rapport with the participants by welcoming them and making some small talk before any recording was made, thus ensuring that scientific and ethical considerations were involved. The first contact created a relaxed atmosphere and set the scene for an open discussion. The investigator demonstrated an understanding of the nurses' professional and academic challenges and was aware of the nurses' individual circumstances. The procedure ensured that privacy, confidentiality, and respect for personal disclosures were maintained, thereby building confidence and encouraging honest sharing of experiences. Transcripts and reports contained pseudonyms in place of all personal identifiers. Audio recordings were preserved in encrypted files secured by passwords, available only to the researcher and supervising academics. Physical documents were stored in a locked cabinet. The data were retained for 5 years in accordance with institutional rules and then irretrievably destroyed.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Hybrid Learning as a Source of Support and Strain

3.1.1 Flexibility as an Enabler of Academic Participation

Participants consistently reported that the flexibility of hybrid learning enabled them to continue their graduate studies despite demanding work schedules and parenting responsibilities. The availability of recorded lectures and asynchronous learning materials allowed them to study during available hours after work or household duties. For many participants, this flexibility became essential to sustaining their academic participation. Participants noted that recorded lectures helped them manage their time and that enrolling in online classes made it possible to balance school with other obligations. Their narratives indicated that hybrid learning served as a successful strategy for managing multiple commitments, as virtual sessions eliminated the need for travel and fixed schedule requirements. This flexibility allowed them to continue their studies despite irregular timetables, family commitments, and hospital duties.

The findings support existing literature indicating that blended learning suits mature and working students well. The asynchronous learning and prerecorded lectures were found to be useful for healthcare students, as they facilitated access to and continuity of education (Lucañas, 2025; Leszczyński et al., 2018; Wagner et al., 2010). According to Lucañas (2025), flexibility in hybrid programs led to high levels of participation and educational continuity among Filipino graduate students, particularly in healthcare. Likewise, Leszczyński et al. (2018) and Wagner et al. (2010) commented that hybrid learning contexts enhanced learner autonomy and self-directed learning capabilities. However, the results also indicate that flexibility operates not just as a convenience but as an essential requirement. For Filipino nurse-parents, engagement in graduate education was largely contingent on the ability to access coursework asynchronously and adjust study schedules to accommodate work and familial obligations.

3.1.2 Cognitive and Emotional Overload Affecting Academic Engagement

Despite its enabling role, hybrid learning was also experienced as mentally and emotionally exhausting. Participants described difficulties concentrating during online classes because household responsibilities, childcare, and unfinished chores frequently competed with academic tasks. Although they remained enrolled and attended classes, sustaining focus and meaningful engagement became increasingly difficult. Participants reported that they often prioritized finishing chores before studying and that they could not focus on their studies due to competing demands. The findings indicate that participants were often studying in distracting environments with divided attention and mental fatigue. Many study schedules were interrupted by domestic duties, and educational pursuits were undertaken alongside caregiving responsibilities. Some respondents said they were in virtual class but not present, distracted by other demands. The split attention led to decreased concentration and emotional exhaustion, which affected the quality of academic engagement.

The results suggest that hybrid learning was a dual-sided framework in participants' lives. It gave access to education, but it also blurred the lines between home, work, and school. Therefore, participants had difficulty maintaining a regular study schedule and concentrating during study sessions. The emotional strain and mental burnout were compounded by the pressures of managing care work, work, and study. Working healthcare students have reported that time constraints, irregular study schedules, and mental fatigue may interfere with their ability to balance their academic responsibilities (Heng & Shorey, 2023). The findings of the current research are consistent with prior research, as participants reported that competing demands and fatigue were significant contributors to their attention and academic engagement. The results also align with extensive Philippine literature that highlights the cultural and relational aspects of role conflict experienced by Filipino nurse-parents. Working parents, especially Filipino mothers, are often full-time caregivers. This creates logistical, emotional, and role ambiguity. Furthermore, the results support academic warnings about the perception of flexibility as inherently positive. Hybrid learning did improve accessibility, but it also set up expectations of ongoing availability and self-regulation. Adult learners in digital learning environments reported stress related to work, time constraints, and competing demands (Heng & Shorey, 2023). Participants' experiences indicate that hybrid learning can be helpful but also cognitively and emotionally taxing without institutional and structural support.

3.2 Constant Negotiation of Time, Energy, and Roles

3.2.1 Fragmented and Unpredictable Schedules

Participants uniformly described their daily experiences as a constant struggle between work commitments, parental responsibilities, household chores, and graduate studies. Balance was described by participants as a fluid, often strenuous process of reprioritizing in response to urgent demands rather than a stable equilibrium between work and personal life. Participants described their schedules as fragmented, unstable, and largely dictated by the unpredictable nature of hospital work. Nurses assigned in areas such as the operating room, intensive care unit, emergency room, and hemodialysis units explained that studying often occurred only during limited and inconsistent periods, such as late evenings, early mornings, or brief breaks between responsibilities. Because work schedules frequently changed in response to hospital demands, participants found it difficult to establish consistent study routines or adequate rest periods. Participants noted that they often finished chores before studying and that they were tired from work and still had to attend to household matters upon arriving home.

The participants' narratives show that academic responsibilities were often delayed or interrupted by the prioritization of domestic chores and caregiving tasks after long working hours. While participants planned to conduct studies, their academic engagement was often hindered by unfinished tasks, childcare responsibilities, and physical fatigue. Study timetables became fragmented and unpredictable, reducing opportunities for recuperation, rest, and focused learning. Results suggest a complex relationship between participants' perceptions of imbalance and the structures of nursing employment. Due to rotating shifts, overtime duties, urgent assignments, and unpredictable patient needs, the participants had difficulty maintaining regular routines. Rather than maintaining distinctly defined areas for work, family, and education, participants managed obligations that intermingled and perpetually competed for their time and focus. The results indicated that the irregularity and unpredictability of nurses' work schedules, including night shifts, weekend work, and emergency calls, have a significant impact on nurses' work-life balance. The findings also support earlier studies in the Philippines that the role conflict experienced by Filipino nurse-parents is not only logistical but also relational and emotional obligations related to caregiving responsibilities. Further, the findings suggest that Filipino nurse-parents' balance of life cannot be understood solely in terms of production or time allocation. Participants' choices to prioritize domestic tasks over academic responsibilities highlight culturally embedded standards of care and family support. Within this framework, equilibrium was a permanent process of negotiation, not a static achievement.

3.2.2 Physical and Emotional Exhaustion

Participants frequently described exhaustion as a persistent part of their daily lives. Long work shifts, caregiving responsibilities, and academic tasks often occurred consecutively, with insufficient opportunities for sleep or recovery. Many participants studied while physically and emotionally exhausted, and demanding duties resulted in chronic fatigue and emotional strain, affecting their overall wellbeing. Participants reported that they did not have exact shifts or times for sleep, that they needed to work while also taking care of their kids and completing reports and assignments for their studies, and that time management was a problem because they had to start

working early, pack their children's food, and go straight to studying. The participants' stories reveal how normal it was to be physically fatigued and emotionally drained in their everyday lives. Many academic tasks were often completed late at night after employment and caring demands, when sleep deprivation was common. But the participants kept studying even when they were physically exhausted, reflecting the pressure of trying to do their jobs, care for their children, and study at the same time. The results demonstrate that fatigue was not only physical exhaustion but also emotional and psychological distress. Participants reported constant cognitive overload while trying to meet multiple demands simultaneously. The ongoing balancing act between nursing duties, childcare, household responsibilities, and academic work led to emotional fatigue, reduced concentration, and little time to rest and recharge.

Prior research has similarly noted that graduate student nurses often juggle their time and focus among institutional needs, caregiving responsibilities, and professional obligations. Heng & Shorey (2023) found that simultaneous obligations often lead to emotional exhaustion, stress, and reduced wellbeing of healthcare students. The present study supports these findings, as all participants reported studying after long working hours while simultaneously managing childcare and household responsibilities. The findings also point to the large body of Philippine literature on the emotional dimension of role conflict among Filipino nurse-parents. Working parents in the Philippines experience fatigue, shame, and being overwhelmed when the purposes of education and caring clash. The participants in this present study showed resilience and the importance of career advancement as they continued to pursue graduate education despite experiencing fatigue and mental distress. However, findings also support research cautioning against romanticizing resilience without addressing systemic and institutional barriers (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The participants were in graduate studies, and their perseverance did not negate the need for institutional support structures, manageable workloads, and flexible academic arrangements that recognized the context of nurse-parents.

3.3 Parenting Duties Intersecting with Academic and Work Responsibilities

3.3.1 Child-Centered Prioritization

Participants unanimously described their parental roles as follows: their children's and families' needs often dictated school schedules, leisure activities, job responsibilities, and personal time. These obligations were tied to their professional and academic responsibilities. Parenting was not a separate task but an ongoing interaction with work and study, demanding that people constantly reprioritize and devote time and energy. Participants consistently described prioritizing their children's needs even while managing professional responsibilities and graduate studies. Parenting duties included assisting children with schoolwork, attending school activities and therapy sessions, managing household routines, and providing emotional care. These responsibilities became even more demanding for participants who were solo parents. Participants reported that they were awake the whole day taking care of their children, that they had to sacrifice rest time to accommodate their duty as a father when their child had a school program, and that they needed to take care of their kids while also doing their best in school. Participants' accounts suggest that parental responsibilities, even when faced with professional and educational responsibilities, were the most significant. Participants consistently invested their time and effort in accordance with their children's needs, often sacrificing sleep, leisure, or studies in doing so. Their experiences show that caring responsibilities influenced not only daily life routines but also emotional priorities and personal decisions. This is consistent with broader patterns observed among working parents, particularly those who simultaneously manage employment and family caregiving responsibilities and who tend to prioritize family obligations in their daily lives. In the Philippine context, caregiving is understood not only in logistical terms but also through relational duties such as sacrifice, emotional availability, and parental involvement that are culturally emphasized. This perspective differs from many international conversations on work-life balance that focus primarily on efficiency and time management. Participants' experiences demonstrate the direct impact of caregiving responsibilities on academic engagement, time management, and mental health. However, the flexibility of hybrid learning was hampered by the constant, urgent demands of parenting, making it difficult for participants to maintain consistent academic engagement. Further, the findings are consistent with existing evidence that flexibility alone does not reduce role pressure for working learners. While asynchronous learning environments enabled individuals to continue their graduate education, caregiving responsibilities always affected their educational engagement. In the current study, the participants' study routines, breaks, and mental health were largely determined by parental roles.

3.3.2 Guilt and Emotional Conflict

Participants also expressed guilt and emotional conflict when work and academic responsibilities reduced the time, attention, and emotional energy they could devote to their children. Participants described experiencing emotional strain when caregiving duties competed with academic requirements and professional obligations. Physical exhaustion from work and studies also affected their patience, emotional availability, and ability to fully engage with their children. Participants reported that their time was consumed by work, reducing the time they could spend with their children, and that their children were not properly attended to. Findings suggested participants experienced emotional stress negotiating their identities as parents, nurses, and graduate students. Long work hours, academic work, and fatigue often compromised the quality of time with their children, according to the participants. This engendered feelings of guilt, failure, and psychological distress, especially when they felt

they were not adequately meeting caring demands. The results suggest that the emotional conflict between the participants was not simply a matter of scheduling. Participants also felt internal conflicts between completing culturally valued parental responsibilities and pursuing career progression and academic goals. Emotional fatigue and role discord were reported as ongoing problems as they tried to meet the conflicting demands of their familial, professional, and educational spheres.

Healthcare students reported family-school-work conflicts as a source of psychological distress and emotional exhaustion (Heng & Shorey, 2023). Professional, institutional, and caregiving responsibilities often compete for emotional and time resources. These findings are echoed by the current findings. The participants repeatedly mentioned that parenting responsibilities are closely tied to their academic involvement and mental health. The results also highlight Philippine literature that underscores the emotional and relational aspects of role conflict experienced by Filipino nurse-parents. Filipino working parents may also suffer emotional distress when they perceive work or study as a hindrance to their parental role. In the present study, participants' guilt was associated with time constraints and fear of failing to fulfill the culturally prescribed parental duties of presence, attentiveness, and caregiving. The findings also align with academic cautions against viewing resilience as a purely individual characteristic. Although exhausted and emotionally distressed, the participants did not give up on their professional, parental, and academic responsibilities; however, this persistence often came at the expense of their personal health and emotional recovery. Resilience, however, is romanticized and masks the institutional and systemic forces that generate stress and burden (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The results suggest that, regardless of motivation and resilience, strong institutional and social support systems are needed to ease the emotional burden of being a nurse-parent and a graduate student.

3.4 Reliance on a Support System to Survive

All the participants emphasized that they would not have been able to manage graduate courses, career responsibilities, and family duties without the help of others. Support structures were important for their mental health, for keeping them academically engaged, and for helping them cope with the challenges of everyday life. Relational and institutional support did not emerge as extra assistance but as enabling conditions that allowed participants to continue their graduate studies despite ongoing fatigue, role conflict, and competing obligations. The findings support research emphasizing the need for support networks for employed graduate students and healthcare practitioners. Academic, professional, and caregiving demands, both physical and emotional (Heng & Shorey, 2023), help participants get through graduate school with support, stay motivated, and manage stress. As stated previously, family, work, peer, and organizational support have been identified as important. Hybrid graduate students are dependent on a combination of emotional, practical, and structural support.

3.4.1 Family and Household Support

Participants described family members, spouses, parents, and childcare providers as essential sources of practical and emotional support. These individuals assisted with childcare, household management, and emotional encouragement, allowing participants to attend classes, complete academic requirements, and recover from exhaustion after work shifts. Participants acknowledged that without these forms of assistance, sustaining graduate studies alongside nursing and parenting responsibilities would have been extremely difficult. Participants reported that they lived with their mothers and received assistance, that their husbands supported them in their studies and work, that they had nannies who helped take good care of their children, and that their spouses and parents helped when they knew the participants could not manage on their own. Participants' narratives suggest family support was a key factor in their capacity to remain intellectually engaged despite multiple responsibilities. Caregiver support from partners, parents, and childcare providers eased some of the day-to-day stressors of caregiving and home management, enabling participants to focus on academic responsibilities or recover physically and emotionally from demanding work schedules. Also, the findings suggest that support systems are more than just logistic assistance. Emotional support from their family members increased participants' resilience and motivation to continue their graduate studies despite fatigue and pressure. Participants were able to endure challenging educational and professional situations, knowing that family members were available to assist in times of great pressure. These findings are consistent with those of Heng & Shorey (2023), who found that families provided emotional and practical support to healthcare students during employment. It helps adult learners to deal with their roles and to reduce their stress. Filipino literature also promotes care for the community and the family, in which family members do housework and raise children.

3.4.2 Workplace and Academic Understanding

Participants also identified workplace and academic support as important factors that reduced stress and enabled them to continue their studies. Supportive supervisors, colleagues, and instructors provided understanding, flexibility, and accommodations during periods of high academic or professional demand. This type of support allowed participants to better manage overlapping responsibilities and maintain participation in graduate education. Participants reported that they had to ask for considerations from colleagues or leeway from management or supervisors, and that they had schedules that allowed them to work and study. Findings suggest that job flexibility and educational understanding help participants manage competing demands. Accommodations made by supervisors and colleagues, such as scheduling, workload changes, or shift arrangements, permitted

participants to attend classes, to meet academic responsibilities, and to maintain some balance between work and school commitments. This, in turn, reduced emotional stress and fostered ongoing engagement in graduate work and the development of supportive academic environments. The participants benefited from the flexible educational structures, which allowed them to balance their work and family responsibilities while maintaining their academic progress. These findings suggest that nurse-parents' experiences in hybrid educational environments are significantly affected by the institutions' knowledge and flexibility. These findings add to the call for flexible and student-centered learning for working students. Flexibility in scheduling, the availability of asynchronous learning, instructor responsiveness, and readily available support services helped students remain engaged and persistent.

3.5 Personal Development Through Struggle

Participants described becoming more resilient, disciplined, and self-aware as they navigated the challenges of balancing nursing work, parenting responsibilities, and graduate education. Through repeated experiences of adjustment and sacrifice, participants reported improvements in time management, emotional endurance, and confidence in their professional and personal capabilities. Participants described their experiences as overwhelming and challenging but also very rewarding. The findings indicate that personal development was not without its challenges but rather an ongoing process of overcoming fatigue, time constraints, and competing commitments. Long-term exposure to conflicting obligations has been found in research on health care students to be associated with increased resilience, better problem-solving skills, and greater personal adaptability (Heng & Shorey, 2023). The participants' experiences in the present study show that personal development was not without its challenges but rather an ongoing process of overcoming fatigue, time constraints, and competing commitments. These results correspond with existing studies emphasizing wellbeing, adaptability, and support networks for employed graduate students. Health care students can develop emotional resilience through healing, supportive relationships, and coping skills (Heng & Shorey, 2023). Mental health, emotional healing, and work-life balance are important in adult learner-centric environments.

3.6 Lessons and Insights for Fellow Nurse-Parents

Participants shared lessons and insights for fellow nurse-parents, emphasizing the importance of flexibility, adaptability, support systems, and self-care. They acknowledged that constant work and academic pressure, without any opportunities for relaxation, led to emotional exhaustion and reduced their overall wellbeing. Activities such as relaxation, leisure, and family interaction were considered important for supporting physical and emotional recovery. Participants' responses suggest that in hybrid learning environments, where schedules change and competing demands exist, flexibility and adaptability are important survival strategies. The results also suggest that people came to a more inclusive definition of success and wellbeing from their own experiences. The participants were asked to measure themselves against something other than academic achievement alone. These findings highlight the significance of comprehensive approaches to nursing education that acknowledge students as learners and individuals with complex personal, professional, and family demands. The findings generated the theme that hybrid learning provides educational continuity but also creates cognitive and emotional stress. The lived experience of Filipino nurse-parents in hybrid graduate studies is an exercise in balancing. Hybrid education was a stressor and a facilitator. The daily lives of people include shift rotations, childcare duties, household chores, emotional pressures, and academic pressures. Yet within this struggle is a story of resilience, flexibility, and intent. Their daily work was nurturing, guiding, instructing, learning, and self-denial. They were tired but determined to make their dreams come true for themselves and their family.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study revealed that hybrid learning serves as both an enabler and a burden for working Filipino nurse-parents pursuing graduate degrees, providing flexibility and accessibility through recorded lectures and asynchronous materials while simultaneously imposing cognitive strain, emotional fatigue, and divided attention due to competing work, family, and academic demands. Participants experienced fragmented and unpredictable schedules dictated by hospital work, persistent physical and emotional exhaustion from juggling nursing duties, childcare, and graduate studies, and child-centered prioritization that often led to guilt and emotional conflict when academic or professional obligations reduced time with their children. Support systems from family members, spouses, parents, childcare providers, workplace supervisors, colleagues, and academic instructors emerged as essential enabling conditions that allowed participants to persist in their graduate education despite ongoing fatigue and role conflict. Through these challenges, participants reported personal and professional development, including strengthened resilience, discipline, self-awareness, time-management skills, confidence, and professional identity, while emphasizing the importance of flexibility, rest, self-care, and emotional support to maintain balance amid graduate studies in a hybrid learning environment.

Nursing faculty are encouraged to increase the use of flexible and responsive teaching strategies in hybrid graduate nursing programs, including recorded lectures, asynchronous learning, flexible scheduling, efficient course organization, realistic academic expectations, and clarity about deadlines and participation to minimize stress and

maximize academic engagement among employed graduate students. Nursing administrators and healthcare executives should consider workplace policies that foster nurses' pursuit of graduate studies, including scheduling options, shift flexibility, work modifications, and supportive communication from supervisors and peers to help nurses more effectively balance academic and family demands. Graduate nursing students should develop versatile and adaptive coping mechanisms, including time management, flexibility, taking breaks, and self-care, while seeking help from family, friends, colleagues, and teachers during difficult times. Nurse-parents should maintain social networks that support them in managing caregiving, mental health, and academic demands, improving communication and collaboration within their support systems. Family members and partners can provide important emotional and practical support, while academic institutions should expand support systems for students and flexible academic programs for working adult learners, including mental health services, workplace support, family engagement, academic flexibility, faculty mentoring, and support for digital learning.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The study complied with established ethical standards for research involving human participants. Ethical approval was to be obtained from an accredited Institutional Review Board prior to data collection. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained before interviews. Participant identities were protected through pseudonyms or codes, while recordings, transcripts, and research documents were securely stored and accessible only to authorized researchers. The study also adhered to the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) and applicable institutional data-protection requirements.

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