



## Exploring the Virtual Realm: A Netnographic Investigation into the Processes of Nursing Online Communities

**Jovencio M. Milan Jr., PhD, MAN, RN, RM**

College of Community Health and Allied Medical Sciences  
Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-South La Union Campus  
Agoo, La Union, Philippines

### ABSTRACT

*This study explored the processes of selected nursing online communities (SNOCs) using a qualitative-netnographical design. The data gathered from SNOCs underwent thorough coding, thematic categorization, and interpretation, revealing key insights into their dynamics. As a result, the Process of the SNOCs comprises two main categories: Communicative Patterns and Matters of Contention, each generating five themes. Under Communicative Patterns are Contradicting, Harassing, Appealing, Taunting, and Sharing (CHATS), reflecting the diverse modes of interaction observed within SNOCs. Conversely, Matters of Contention encompass Governance and Authority, Professionalism, Exploitation, Rights and Privileges, and Solidarity (GAPE-RaPS), highlighting governance deficiencies, professionalism lapses, exploitation concerns, rights violations, and solidarity deficits within these communities. These categories elucidate the complex interplay of social processes and contentious issues shaping SNOCs. Moreover, communicative patterns are contributory factors in resolving or exacerbating matters of contention. Furthermore, this research provides a comprehensive examination of SNOCs, shedding light on their intricate processes and identifying areas for potential improvement and advocacy within the nursing community.*

**Keywords:** Netnography, Social Media, Nursing Online Communities, Processes, Communicative Patterns, Matters of Contention

### I. Introduction

Social media (SM) has revolutionized nursing practice and education, offering numerous advantages for professionals and students alike. It serves as a virtual space for nurses to engage in discussions with colleagues and healthcare professionals, interact with patients for monitoring and feedback, and connect with individuals globally for personal and professional development. In education, SM facilitates teaching-learning processes by providing readily available information, study materials, and learning groups, enhancing the learning environment and student participation. Additionally, SM serves as an outlet for nurses to voice complaints and gather support, highlighting its dual role in education and advocacy.

Social media platforms, like Facebook, serve as a space for nurses to feel comfortable. Here, nurses may freely express their feelings and calmly reflect or seek support from friends, colleagues, peers or virtually anyone in the online community, which is a form of journaling and reflective practice – a way of studying one's activities and experiences to enhance self-confidence and performance. Fortunately, the digital world offers an alternative means for nurses to engage in these helpful activities; however, necessary precautionary measures are very crucial as nurses are prone to disclosing too much information, especially ones classified and sensitive, which can breach patients' confidentiality and can lead to formidable consequences. Therefore, it is a very significant obligation for nurses to educate and familiarize themselves with standard ethical guidelines, policies and laws concerning the proper utilization of social media.

This study focuses on investigating selected nursing online communities (SNOCs), particularly within Facebook group pages, to explore communicative patterns and matters of contention. Facebook's features enable self-expression and group creation, making it a dominant platform for nursing professionals. Current issues in the nursing profession, such as legislative bills and workforce concerns, underscore the importance of SM in amplifying nurses' voices and fostering collective action.

However, the misuse of SM by nursing faculty and students poses ethical and legal risks, necessitating clear guidelines and policies from nursing schools and associations. Breaches of privacy and confidentiality are among the common ethical issues associated with SM use in nursing. Addressing these challenges will strengthen nursing ethical standards, education practices, and leadership, ultimately improving the profession's status and promoting responsible SM usage.

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## II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The pervasive use of social media and modern electronic communication technologies has become an integral aspect of daily life, owing to their widespread availability, accessibility, and multifaceted functionality. Within the healthcare system, these technologies play a pivotal role as they facilitate professional connections among healthcare professionals, enable timely communication with patients and their families, and enhance health education and information dissemination. Furthermore, social media platforms provide avenues for accessing and sharing health-related information and workplace experiences, engaging in healthcare practice discussions, communicating with the public, and promoting health behaviors and primary care practices. Notably, social media serves as a platform for nurses to voice concerns, seek support, and advocate for change, illustrating its dual role in education and advocacy.

In nursing, SM facilitates information sharing, evidence-based practice, and engagement in socio-political discussions (Mohamed, 2018; McLemore et al., 2015). However, the lack of guidelines and policies raises ethical concerns regarding privacy, confidentiality, and professional conduct. Senior nurses and leaders play crucial roles in formulating SM guidelines, leveraging their expertise to ensure responsible usage within the profession (Mohamed, 2018).

While SM offers numerous benefits, challenges arise regarding professional behavior, confidentiality breaches, and cyberbullying. Nurses must adhere to ethical principles and legal regulations to mitigate risks associated with SM use (Balestra, 2018). Guidelines issued by regulatory bodies emphasize the importance of maintaining patient privacy, avoiding unprofessional behavior, and preventing cyberbullying (NCSBN, 2018).

Unintentional disclosure of patient information, violation of confidentiality, and engagement in cyberbullying are among the common ethico-legal issues encountered in nursing SM use (NCSBN, 2018). Nurses must be well-versed in SM protocols and remain vigilant to uphold patient rights and professional standards (Balestra, 2018). Employers, educators, and regulatory bodies emphasize the need for awareness and adherence to SM guidelines to safeguard patient privacy and organizational reputation (NCSBN, 2018).

In conclusion, while SM offers immense potential for communication and professional development in nursing, it also poses ethical and legal challenges (Balestra, 2018). Through education, awareness, and adherence to guidelines, nurses can harness the benefits of SM while ensuring patient privacy, confidentiality, and professional integrity (NCSBN, 2018). Collaboration among stakeholders is essential to establish comprehensive SM policies that promote responsible usage and uphold ethical standards within the nursing profession (Balestra, 2018).

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## III. METHODS

### 1. Research Design

This study utilized Netnography, a qualitative-interpretive research methodology tailored for investigating social media, online communities, and computer-mediated cultural communications (Kozinets, 1998; 2010; 2015). This approach is suitable for exploring the processes of nursing online communities to understand the communicative patterns and matters of contention emerged within.

### 2. Research Locale

The research locale comprised the two most influential online communities, selected based on their high numbers of likes and follows. These communities were created and managed by Filipino registered nurses, catering to socio-political engagement both online and offline. FB Group Page A, founded in 2009 as a non-profit organization, transitioned to a Facebook group in 2011, aiming to advocate for nurses' rights and quality healthcare. Managed by six individuals, it amassed over 115K followers. FB Group Page B, created in 2013 by five individuals, focused solely on nurses' rights, garnering over 94K followers.

### 3. Data Sources

The sources of archival data in the study were posts and comments, both texts and images, from the selected online communities from January 18, 2011-April 14, 2020. The researcher utilized total population sampling, from which all posts and comments in the selected nursing online communities (NSOCs) were taken.

### 4. Research Instrument

This study utilized the following tools in collecting and organizing archival data from SNOCs: 1) FacePager Application, used to download all texts from the posts and comments, 2) a cellular phone, used to screenshot images from the posts and comments, 3) Microsoft Excel, used to organize archival data, and 4) NVivo, used to process and code data.

### 5. Data Collection Procedure

The researcher secured administrative approval and ethical clearance prior to the conduct of the study. The researcher followed the established protocol for a netnographic research design by Kozinets when data gathering commenced. To establish formality between the researcher and the participants, initiating entrée on the SNOCs was done through self-introduction, explanation of the objective of the research, description of the procedure, and assurance of the participants' privacy. The researcher collected archival data through direct observation and researcher's reflection and observation for fieldnotes data.

## 6. Data Analysis Procedure

The gathered data was analyzed thoroughly using coding, thematic categorization, interpretation, and conclusion utilizing constant comparative analysis, which included three levels of coding: open, axial, and selective (Adams et al., 2007; Hoyos & Barnes, 2012; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). NVivo, a modern qualitative data analysis (QDA) program, facilitated a systematic and insightful scrutiny of the obtained data during the analytical process. The detailed steps of data analysis are shown in Figure 1 below.

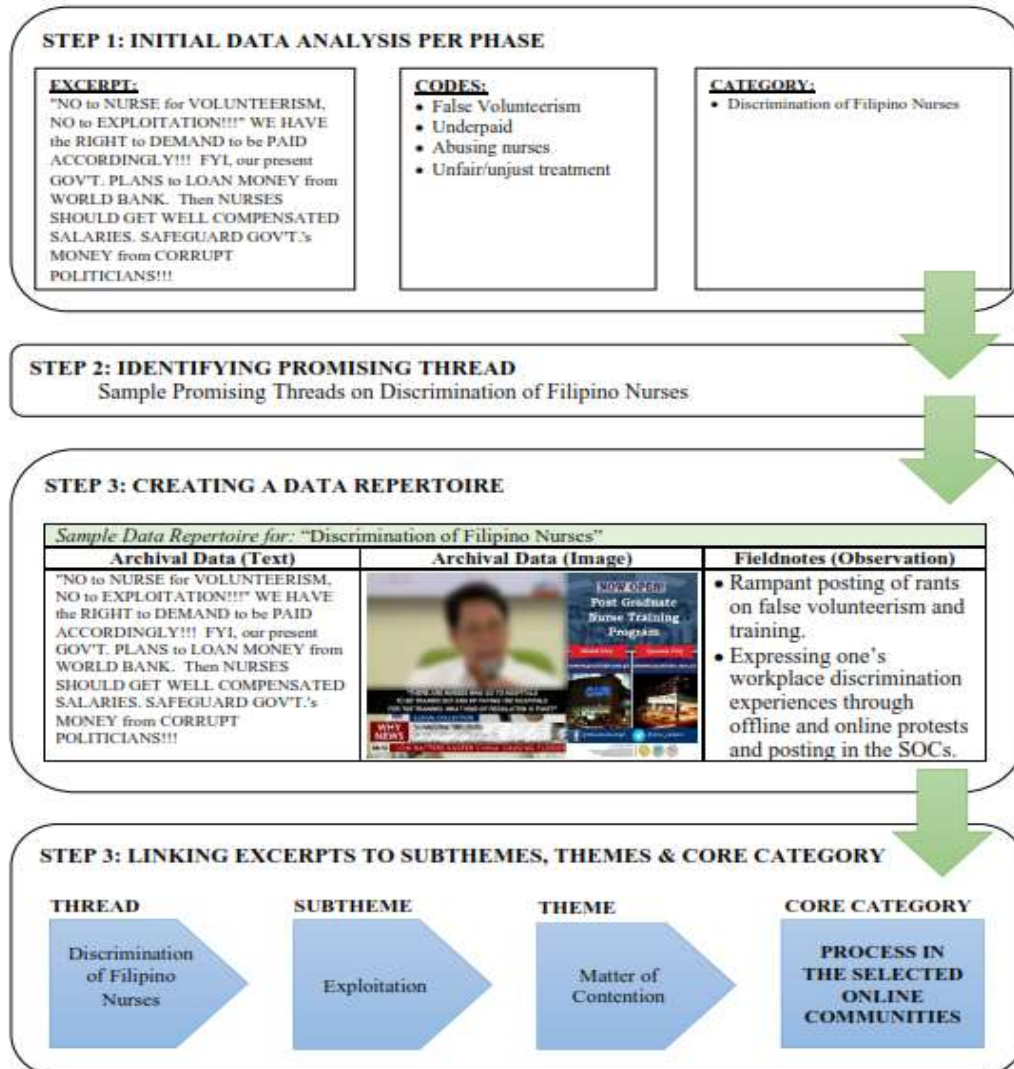


Figure 1. Steps of Data Analysis

## 7. Ensuring Trustworthiness

Credibility was ensured through collecting archival data via direct observation and fieldnotes in two SNOCs, thereby enriching accounts of structural dynamics. (Connelly, 2016). Inclusion of rephrased or translated excerpts from participants' posts and comments were done to support researcher's interpretations and to strengthen further the study's credibility (Noble & Smith, 2015). This also upheld confirmability by ensuring that interpretations are grounded in the data rather than opinion. Transferability was guaranteed through observing and maintaining participants' anonymity and confidentiality (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

## IV. RESULTS

This section discusses research problems answered by detailed data analysis and interpretation. To maintain anonymity of the sources, the posts and comments extracted from Selected Online Communities (SNOCs) were translated and paraphrased from *Tagalog* into English.

### A. Processes of the Selected Nursing Online Communities

According to Hunt et al. (1998), social processes encompass repetitive interaction patterns observed in various social contexts. Doda (2005) emphasizes their cyclical nature within social systems, occurring during interactions at individual, group, and societal levels. These observable "modes" facilitate understanding social behavior on micro and macro scales. In this undertaking, it concentrates on the Communicative Patterns and Matters of Contention within selected online communities of nurses in the digital realm.

## 1. Communicative Patterns (C.H.A.T.S)

Communication, as described by Gordon (2021), Merriam-Webster (2021), and Cambridge Dictionary (2021), involves the exchange of information, transfer of meanings, and expression of feelings through symbols or behavior for mutual understanding. Maharjan (2018) classifies communication into verbal, non-verbal, and written forms, occurring at intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, and mass levels. In this paper, communicative patterns refer to the one-to-all communication as it is made publicly accessible, primarily to the members of the selected online communities, even if the message is directed to a specific member or group. This forms the acronym CHATS: Contradicting, Harassing, Appealing, Taunting, and Sharing.

### 1.1. Contradicting

This study underscores how netizens employ contradiction to express a range of emotions within SNOCs. Issues prompting contradiction include an influential person's debunking nurse's research, private hospital owners prioritizing profit over service, and restrictions on freedom to work independently. Contradiction exposes nurses' grievances, revealing concerns about underpayment, unequal benefits, and perceived governmental apathy. Envy towards peers in more comfortable conditions elsewhere is also expressed.

For instance, a 2017 post details the tedious hospital employment process, with a sarcastic comment: *"magugulat ka mas malaki pa salary ni mamang guard sayo!"* (you will be surprised the security guard could be earning more). In 2019, protests persist against nurse underpayment, terming it *"Professional Slavery"* due to three years of volunteer work compensated by a meager salary. Nurses express excitement for overseas opportunities, intensified by feeling *"under-appreciat[ed], disrespect[ed], and [treated with] inequality"* in their country.

The 2020 Covid-19 surge highlights the medical workforce's significance, yet nurses' responses turn cynical towards public appreciation. Comments suggest gratitude posts are *"just a hype"* during the crisis and will fade, arguing that despite nurses' vital roles, laws to increase salaries are ignored. Observations of exploitation and neglect intensify grievances, leading netizens to confront nursing organizations and escalate issues to government authorities.

### 1.2. Harassing

Harassment in online posts characterized by severe accusations, criticism and condemnation often escalating to threats, ill wishes, or even demise. This pattern of communication involves direct virtual assault towards various entities, including nurses, partylists, nursing organizations and leaders, Facebook group pages, and government officials. These critical posts utilize profanity and heated arguments to inflict damage or retaliate for perceived offenses. For instance, responses to Department of Health Undersecretary Eric Domingo's statement on United Health Care and nurse shortage in 2019 gathered around 4,800 reactions and 2,400 comments. The post included aggressive expressions and local profanities directed at the USEC and politicians like *"certified idiot," "duck a\*\*," "selfish motherf\*\*\*\*\*," "p\*tang-ina"* (your mother is a prostitute), *"hinayupak"* (animal), and *"Judas."* The aggressive tone creates a hostile online environment, escalating tensions within the SNOCs.

Critics expressed repulsion towards the administrator's meddling in nurses' right to work abroad without addressing working conditions. They argued against resigning from humane workplaces and urged politicians to determine the cause of shortages or raise salaries. Allegations against politicians included drug lording and extrajudicial murders. A plea was made for nurses to seek overseas employment, discouraging parents from enrolling their children in nursing due to perceived government mistreatment to nurses, such as being *"overworked, underpaid, undervalued, and abused"*.

### 1.3. Appealing

The communication pattern of appealing serves as a platform for netizens, particularly nurses and nursing organizations, to voice their rights and advocacies, shedding light on concerns ignored by authorities. Appeals encompass a spectrum of welfare issues such as implementing laws, improving working conditions, and abolishing exploitative practices in healthcare.

A notable example is the advocacy for the realization of HB 151: Comprehensive Nursing Law since 2013. Thousands expressed support, specifying needed reforms and calling for prioritizing healthcare as a basic right. Appeals include increasing plantilla positions, abolishing the Continuing Professional Development mandate, and ending the "palakasan" or padrino system. A signature campaign for HB 151 highlights its benefits, including an entry-level rate of Salary Grade 15 and incentives. Hashtags like #NoToVolunteerism, #NursesUnite, #ImplementSG15ToALLNurses, #GovernmentNurse, and #PrivateNurse are used to amplify these appeals and express a unified call for a change through social media platforms.

Netizens from SNOCs similarly express vigor in supporting regularization for all nurses and disbanding CPD units. A netizen expresses contentment with an SG 11 entry level, provided a permanent status, emphasizing the need for opening more plantilla positions. Issues raised by SNOCs members encompass concerns about vetoing the Comprehensive Nursing Law, the lack of PPEs, and workplace bullying. These concerns further underline the urgency of addressing nurses' challenges. In essence, the appeal pattern on social media becomes a collective voice for nurses, emphasizing their rights and advocating for positive changes in the nursing profession.

### 1.4. Taunting

Taunting involves the use of sarcasm, provocation, and argumentation, often directed at individuals or organizations. Sarcasm is employed to criticize various aspects, including the corruption of budget allocation for nurses' salaries, responsibilities in health workers and job orders, delayed pay hike implementation, insufficient qualifications of permanent-status nurses, allowances for volunteers, and personalities involved in an issue. Netizens express gratitude with sarcastic comments, using derogatory adjectives to mock the nursing profession, comparing it unfavorably to other professions, and ridiculing those who encourage it.

Senator Risa Hontiveros faced derision for urging urgent action in addressing the COVID-19 crisis. Despite defending health workers' rights, she was criticized for not contributing enough. Netizens challenged her to donate money for PPEs, questioning her sincerity: "*bakit dakdak ka ng dakdak?*" (*Why do you keep on yapping?*), highlighting her alleged hypocrisy in opposing the Bayanihan Act while criticizing the President.

In April 2020, SNOCs opposed the temporary ban on deploying migrant healthcare workers in a formal letter to DOLE Secretary Silvester Bello III. Netizens expressed gratitude for the initiative, questioning other entities' contributions and accusing the Philippine Nurses Association (PNA) of exploiting nurses. Sample comments included, "*I wonder what the PNA did for this?*" and "*PNA, you are at the front in exploiting Filipino Nurses! SHAME on you!!*" The overall tone reflects a critical use of sarcasm and hashtags, creating an atmosphere of mockery and questioning.

In the examination of SNOCs, netizens engage in provocation triggered by opposing responses to allegations of inappropriate treatment of public authorities towards nurses. Quoting the comments on a shared video discussing Negros Oriental Representative Teves's resolution to hang tarpaulins in government hospitals, demanding kindness in patient treatment, netizens provoke by correcting or rebutting each other. The thread involves aggressive references to Teves as "shallow-minded" and possessing a "big, filthy mouth," with provocation escalating as fellow netizens criticize these comments.

Argumentation emerges as a heated exchange of opposing perspectives fueled by provocation, sarcasm, taunting, and denunciation. Common arguments blame nurses for abuse tolerance, give the new government a chance, criticize nurses' improvisation methods, question salaries compared to other professions, blame the constitution, and condemn trolls or fake accounts. The excerpt on Teves's issue reveals netizens not only addressing the topic but also problematizing ethics and awareness of fellow commenters. The use of "with all due respect" highlights the oblivious insult while demanding regard for their opinion. Describing a commenter's logic as "naïve and gullible" deviates attention to a personal level.

In discussions about DOH Undersecretary Domingo's proposal on nurses' required service prior to overseas employment, comments on both group pages include profanity, ranging from "Pathetic!" to "P\*nyeta!" Suggestions prioritize "permanent jobs plus tamang sweldo" to convince nurses to seek employment within the country. The discourse reflects a mix of provocation, argumentation, and emotional reactions within the online community.

### 1.5. Sharing

Sharing as a communicative pattern on social media platforms encompasses a multifaceted landscape characterized by various features such as query, dissemination, self-expression, commendation, and recommendation. These elements contribute to the dynamic nature of online interactions, fostering a sense of community and collective engagement.

Query involves the exchange of questions that span a wide spectrum of topics, from detailed inquiries about policies and programs to more complex and technical aspects of legal and procedural matters. Notably, these queries play a pivotal role in unveiling critical information, as seen in instances where netizens questioned the basis of legislative bills, exposed insufficient justifications, and challenged the practices of relevant institutions. The comments section becomes a forum for probing deeper into issues, with questions like, "*How about the salary increase for nurses in private hospitals?*" reflecting the community's collective concern.

"Dissemination" comes into play when users share information with the intention of informing others. This involves not only answering queries within the community but also providing additional details, updates, and insights. Admin posts serve as a platform for disseminating calls to action, historical narratives, and updates on advocacy efforts. Netizens, in turn, contribute to the discussion, offering supplementary information and insights, creating a collaborative knowledge-sharing environment.

Self-expression is evident through various means, including hashtags like #JustSaying, #InMyOpinion, and #ShareKoLang, signaling opinions without inviting unnecessary arguments. It includes expressions of agreement, greetings, and celebrations for victories or improvements in processes. In response to Negros Oriental Rep. Teves' attempt to raise tarpaulins against "*masungit*" (cruel) nurses and doctors, self-expressions urged understanding the real situation of nurses and addressing corruption— "*Alamin mo muna kung bakit*" (Know the reasons first) and "*Ang ayusin nyo sir eh yung corruption*" (Sir, first solve the corruption)

Commendation is the expression of gratitude and appreciation toward individuals advocating for nurses' rights and the contribution of doctors and nurses during the pandemic. Netizens commend the efforts of ANG NARS Party List, thanking them for being the true voice of Filipino nurses. To quote a few: "*So much respect and salute to your institution*", "*THANK YOU to Atty. Sharon Faith Paquiz for representing all nurses at the Supreme Court!*", and "*Thank you for being the true VOICE of Filipino Nurses*".

Recommendations involve suggestions for general concerns like job-seeking, refraining from comparing nursing to other professions, unity despite negative attributes, raising concerns in the presidential debate, and improving nursing welfare. Members suggest electing leaders who will support the nursing profession, improving healthcare, and ensuring competitive salaries. Some recommend exploring alternative career paths due to better salaries and instant permanency in roles like teaching, PNP, BFP, BJMP, or joining the army.

## 2. Matters of Contention (GAPE RaPS)

The paper explores various matters of contention within online nursing communities, defining them as crucial issues in socio-political engagement. Online communities, as per Yang (2009), are both shaped by and give rise to contention, making it an essential aspect of community dynamics. These matters of contention, encapsulated in the acronym "GAPE-RaPS" (governance and authority, professionalism, exploitation, rights and privileges, and solidarity), highlight the complex interplay of power, critical thinking, and societal processes. Examining these contentious issues provides insights into the dynamics of online nursing communities, emphasizing their role as platforms for collective empowerment and creative expression.

### 2.1. Governance and Authority

The identified category focuses on the inadequacies and deficiencies of the government, political figures, and nursing authorities in formulating, disseminating, and executing pertinent laws, policies, guidelines, and programs to safeguard the interests of nurses and the nursing profession.

In the context of this study, "governance" encompasses various entities such as the Philippine government, relevant agencies (DOH, POEA, DOLE), nursing associations, online communities, and other influential bodies like the Philippine Hospital Association. It involves leadership, decision-making processes, and the development and enforcement of relevant regulations. Concurrently, "authority" refers to individuals or organizations wielding power or control in specific political or administrative spheres. This includes politicians, nursing leaders, administrators of online communities, and other public entities.

The study highlights notable instances of concern within this category, such as non-compliance with the Philippine Nursing Act of 2002 (RA 9173), the vetoing of the Comprehensive Nursing Law by President Benigno S. Aquino III, the perceived lack of performance by the Philippine Nurses Association (PNA), and instances of mistreatment, degradation, and exploitation of nurses by the government, politicians, and PNA.

One noteworthy observation is the criticism directed at governance and authority in the SNOCs when there are infringements on rights or abuses of power. For instance, the vetoing of the Comprehensive Nursing Law was met with strong opposition in the SNOCs, where nurses expressed feeling undervalued and unappreciated by the government. The controversial Nurse Deployment Programs (NDPs) by the Department of Health (DOH) also attracted criticism, with instances of unfulfilled promises, such as nurses not receiving salaries as scheduled, causing disillusionment among Filipino nurses. The study underscores the urgent need for improvements in governmental practices to ensure the welfare and rights of nursing professionals, especially those on the frontline during the pandemic. The failure to address these concerns may lead to a further erosion of trust in the government among nurses, as indicated by comments expressing skepticism about post-pandemic treatment of frontliners.

### 2.2. Professionalism

The term "Professionalism" in this study pertains to nurse netizens exhibiting inappropriate behavior, targeting others' vulnerabilities, and acting without proper decorum. These actions include displacing frustrations, correcting claims tactlessly, criticizing ideas indiscreetly, and attempting to provoke others through sarcasm and profanity.

The research exposes a blatant lack or absence of professionalism in posts and comments within SNOCs. Profanities such as "p\*ta," "gag\*," and "b\*b\*" were rampant, along with provocative statements ("my middle finger salutes you!"), and badmouthing ("do your job properly!"). Some comments questioned the effectiveness of SNOCs administrations with daring inquiries like "ano silbi nyo sa ilang taon nyo sa congreso?" ("what have you even done in all your years in congress?").

The use of profanity and insulting statements, like "p\*tang ina mo" and "pesteng yawa ka," and insulting statements like "kung wala kang alam, stay at home para sa paraan mang yan naka-contribute ka" ("if you don't have an idea, at least stay at home so you can contribute [to the solution]), "gusto sumikat ni b\*bo" ("this idiot wants to get famous"), and "puro kuda" ("all talk"), go against proper conduct and decorum, reflecting an evident lack of professionalism among nurse netizens in the SNOCs.

### 2.3. Exploitation

The issue of rights and privileges in nursing communities is intrinsically linked to the pervasive problem of exploitation, wherein workers face various forms of abuse, violence, maltreatment, and discrimination. Netizens in SNOCs vividly highlight these issues in discussions on contractualization, false volunteerism/training, unjust nurse-to-patient ratios, indecent working environments, illegal recruitment, and unjust compensation. A central concern within working conditions is the lack of security of tenure, as nurses often work for years without attaining regular employee status with full benefits. The Ang Nars Partylist's legal assistance program plays a crucial role in addressing these concerns, encouraging oppressed individuals to "#SpeakUp" and "channel the COURAGEOUS SPIRIT of Florence Nightingale and take ACTION!"

Connected to the tenure issue are additional challenges like discrimination from peers, non-payment of overtime, and the absence of incentives. Government hospitals face complaints about unjust nurse-patient ratios, mismanagement, and inadequate breaks during shifts, contributing to nurses feeling overworked and underpaid. External discrimination is exemplified by Sen. Cynthia Villar's 2013 remarks suggesting that Filipino nurses don't need to finish a bachelor's degree, insinuating they lack intelligence, a sentiment expressed as "hindi naman sila kailangan ganoon kagaling" ("They do not have to be that intelligent"). The hashtag #SpeakUp serves as a rallying call to address exploitation, urging nurses to confront oppressive practices and advocate for their rights and privileges.

### 2.4. Rights and Privileges

This section delves into discussions surrounding nurses' salary, benefits, incentives, and other remuneration, with notable issues such as a) non-compliance with Section 32 of RA 9173 regarding salary, b) absence or insufficiency of benefits and incentives, c) inadequate plantilla positions for nurses, d) unhealthy working environments, and e) poor information dissemination.

In SNOCs, nurses frequently question and challenge their rights, particularly in matters related to their compensation. This arises from the fact that they are receiving amounts below what is mandated by law. For instance, government hospital nurses earn an average of P13,500.00 per month, while private sector counterparts bring home an average of P10,000.00.

The dissatisfaction with salaries prompts some nurses to seek opportunities abroad for better remuneration, while others prioritize security of tenure over salary grade, as expressed in a 2016 comment, "*Kahit may mababang salary grade level, basta regular lang or may plantilla position*" ("Low salary grade level doesn't matter, as long as there is a regular or plantilla position").

Issues such as the absence of benefits and extended working hours infringe on nurses' rights and privileges. Despite promising benefits in a 2019 employment opportunity post, skepticism persists, as indicated by comments like "may mga kaibigan akong nagtatrabaho dyan palaging delay ang sahod" ("I have friends who work there and [they say] salary is always delayed").

Understaffing exacerbates the problem, limiting nurses' privileges like reasonable working hours and breaks, as emphasized in a 2019 comment stating that Filipino nurses lack value compared to other countries, exemplified by the 1:12 nurse-patient ratio.

### 2.5. Solidarity

This study underscores the evident absence of solidarity among nurses—within nursing profession, among nursing professionals and organizations—manifested by conflicts, disharmony, and a reluctance to voice their rights. Nurses often engage in complaints, opposition, and suggestions without actively participating in organized protests. Some influential nursing figures, like chief nurses and leaders, support government programs that indirectly exploit nurses like "volunteerism", RN Heals, and the Nurse Deployment Project. Furthermore, nursing organizations, Facebook groups, and individual nurses remain passive in advocating for nurses' rights.

In SNOCs, conflicts arise as nurses grapple with various issues, challenging the belief in the "there is strength in numbers". Despite the notion that a group holds more power, persistent internal conflicts suggest that community solidarity isn't solely reliant on numbers. The study focuses on the lack of solidarity among nurses in the SNOCs, evident in critiques directed both at fellow members and at organizations and leaders. A notable instance in a comment questioning those who complain without contributing: "*Kayo bang nagrereklamo, may nagawa na ba kayo para marinig ang hinaing ng mga nars?*" ("To those who are complaining, have you done anything to make nurses' grievances heard?"). The blame extends to nurses themselves, criticized for falling prey to exploitative hospitals.

The lack of solidarity is further emphasized through posts and comments calling for unity and action, including rallies against educational institutions degrading nursing education quality. Some advocate forming a nursing union, emphasizing the power of numbers, and proposing a "*rally in EDSA*" to push for the approval of SG15, reflecting the yearning for collective strength in addressing systemic issues within the nursing profession.

## V. DISCUSSION

### 1. Communicative Patterns (C.H.A.T.S)

#### 1.1. Contradicting

In this paper, the communication pattern of contradiction is explored, defined as negation, opposition, refutation, or denial of prior points or comments. According to Pal (2018), contradiction involves asserting the opposite of a statement, affirming the falsity, or declaring the lack of agreement between supporting claims. It requires argumentative skills to effectively oppose an idea. Nurses have extended their socio-political participation to social media platforms, using contradiction to express opposition or negation on nursing-related issues shared online.

The socio-political engagement of nurses on social media is driven by the accessibility and convenience offered by technology (Pal, 2018). Despite their crucial role during the pandemic, health workers, including nurses, face violence and discrimination. VOA News (2020) reported various instances such as eviction, refusal of services, physical assault, and blockage at checkpoints. The maltreatment also extends to delayed salary, hazard pay, and special risk allowance, leading to calls for accountability (Casas, 2020). The Filipino Nurses United President, Maristela Abenojar, expressed nurses' frustrations, contemplating legal action against those hindering mandated salaries and benefits (VOA News, 2020). Detailed incidents, like an attack on a hospital personnel and the shooting of an ambulance driver, highlight the grave challenges faced by health workers, prompting rallies for increased security and compensation (Rappler.com, 2020; VOA News, 2020).

#### 1.2. Harassing

Harassment, defined as expressing slanderous or derogatory remarks, threats, or ill wishes to cause annoyance, is evident in the discourse where nurses, as netizens, intentionally use offensive language to criticize the government and its authorities (Qayyum et al., 2021; Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2021; Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). Casas (2020) reports health workers' demands for timely salaries and benefits, exemplified by UP Workers Union's protest against delayed COVID-19 service benefits. The Philippine Nurses Association highlights exploitative nurse volunteerism, where volunteers pay healthcare facilities, deeming it demeaning to the nursing profession (Pring & Roco, 2012; See, 2008; GMA News, 2020). Senator Pia Cayetano condemns

the practice as demeaning not only to nurses but to the entire profession (Sandra Aguinaldo's report on GMA). Hospitals exploit on-the-job training nurses by not filling vacant positions and making them pay fees (See, 2008). Tomacruz and Rey (2020) note intensified frustrations among Filipino nurses due to a sudden deployment ban, forcing them to work abroad for better conditions. A nurse affected by the ban expressed resentment, citing the government's lack of appreciation for nurses' contributions.

### **1.3. *Appealing***

In this study, the term "appeal" encompasses various actions such as requests, campaigns, pleas, movements, or petitions initiated by nurses as netizens in the social online communities (SOCs). The definition adopted for appealing involves urgent requests or petitions directed towards higher authorities for assistance, financial support, information, or a change in the status quo (FindLaw Staff, 2021; GoPetitions.com, 2021; Cambridge Dictionary, 2021).

Aligning with Laban Nurses (2018) and the Philippine Daily Inquirer (2018), trending issues in the Philippines involve House Bill 2548 for a comprehensive nursing law, repealing the CPD Act, ensuring decent work and wages, Health Workers Protection Law enactment, regularization of contractual positions, raising the starting salary to Php 30,000.00, and adherence to a safe nurse-patient ratio (DOH standards). This corresponds with official surveys conducted by renowned organizations, reinforcing the legitimacy of the issues raised.

Internationally, educational institutions like the Royal College of Nursing in the UK promote the "Fair Pay for Nursing" online campaign, advocating for a 12.5% salary increase for NHS members, acknowledging their COVID-19 efforts. Similarly, in Washington and across the US, unions demand safe working conditions, adequate protection, sufficient PPEs, hazard pay, and other incentives for healthcare workers, echoing global concerns (Royal College of Nursing, 2021; WSNA, 2020). WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros emphasizes the critical role of secure supply chains to protect global healthcare workers and highlights the urgent need to boost supplies, ease export restrictions, and prevent speculation and hoarding (WHO, 2021).

In the Philippines, healthcare workers express demands for adequate backing, protection, efficient working schedules, regular COVID-19 testing, and a salary increase (Sison, 2021; GMA News, 2020; Geh, 2021). The PNA-Cebu appeals for a balanced approach between economic gains and health standards, transparent guidelines, proper vaccine-related training, rational PPE provision, and improved salaries and benefits (Vestil & Lim, 2021). Filipino Nurses United insists on a more compassionate pandemic plan, rejecting the role of "sacrificial lambs" and advocating for equal protection in the global health crisis (Santos, 2021). Overall, these appeals collectively underscore the global and urgent nature of healthcare concerns, emphasizing the need for immediate and comprehensive responses.

### **1.4. *Taunting***

Taunting, encompassing sarcasm, provocation, and argumentation, serves as a communicative pattern within online nursing communities. Kraus et al. (2014), the Cambridge Dictionary (2021), and Lexico (2021) define taunting as a form of communication that stimulates aggression and negative behavior through provocation. Examining archival data, this study identified original posts and responses intended to ridicule, challenge, or correct others, reflecting discontent with various entities within the nursing profession.

Sarcasm emerges as a key component, manifesting through mocking remarks or insults aimed at other group members, leading to heated online exchanges. Knoblock (2016) highlights sarcasm and irony as tools for expressing frustration and anger, serving as political weapons during crises. Sarcasm fosters social ties among netizens sharing similar views and often attracts sarcastic responses, creating a discourse framed by exaggerated descriptions and mockery.

Provocation, as defined by Wex Definitions Team (2020) and Tumskiy (2019), incites anger and violence, concealing true intentions. In the nursing context, provocation encourages nurses to join movements against social or political forces, potentially leading to violence and social uprising. Three "provocation plots" conceptualized by Wahlström (2011) illustrate how provocation may lead to violence: violence as defense, retaliation, and opportunistic violence. Netizens utilize profane language on social media, especially Facebook, expressing sentiments and informing authorities about their grievances.

Argumentation, a reasoned and logical debate, intertwines with taunting in online nursing communities. Arguments often deviate from the original topic, turning into attacks on comprehension rather than addressing presented issues. Political issues and volunteerism during the pandemic are common themes, sparking heated exchanges and profanity-laden discussions.

In summary, taunting within online nursing communities reflects a complex interplay of sarcasm, provocation, and argumentation. Netizens employ these communicative patterns to express discontent with government entities, political figures, nursing organizations, leaders, and professional nurses, revealing a multifaceted landscape of grievances and challenges within the nursing profession.

### **1.5. *Sharing***

To summarize the category of sharing in online nursing communities, it involves various expressions, including asking queries, verifying facts, disclosing information, offering support, extending appreciation, and providing recommendations. Sharing is a dynamic process of disseminating feelings, ideas, and information within these communities, contributing to a shared understanding of the world (Sonnenwald, 2006).

Social media platforms, particularly Facebook, serve as powerful tools for sharing, allowing users to post messages, media, hyperlinks, and engage with a broader audience through hashtags (Bowen et al., 2017). The activities on Facebook extend beyond sharing ideas; users can endorse products, host events, follow personalities, and connect with organizations, fostering a sense of community.



Querying, a form of sharing, involves asking questions to seek information, validate content, or raise concerns about authority actions. It serves as an expression of curiosity and creativity (Molinero & García-Madruga, 2011). Question-and-answer activities on social media platforms are motivated by factors like trusting online networks and the desire to foster social connections (Morris et al., 2010).

Dissemination, another aspect of sharing, is crucial in accessing knowledge and information. It involves the distribution of ideas and information to a wide audience, facilitated by technologies like social networking sites (Chatterjee & Samanta, 2021). Social media platforms, acting as hubs for communication, contribute to the rapid dissemination of information globally (Dong et al., 2020; Chhiato, 2018).

Self-expression is manifested through sharing personal opinions, ideas, and thoughts, promoting individual liberty and freedom of speech (Kim, 2010; Kim & Sherman, 2007). Commendation involves recognizing and praising individuals or groups for significant achievements or contributions, fostering a positive and supportive online environment (Thuy, 2021).

Recommendation, expressed through hashtags and words of encouragement, suggests courses of action or advice for problem-solving (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). Online communities use these recommendations to express support, share reminders, and offer suggestions for improvement.

## 2. Matters of Contention (GAPE RaPS)

### 2.1. Governance and Authority

Governance and Authority encompass creating and enforcing laws, policies, and guidelines, alongside executing programs and projects, under the guidance of leaders and authorities. This aspect evaluates the decision-making processes and regulatory frameworks implemented by government bodies, political figures, and nursing authorities to safeguard the welfare and interests of nurses and the nursing profession.

The findings reveal widespread dissatisfaction among community members with the government's apparent neglect of the healthcare sector, as evidenced by the vetoing of the Comprehensive Nursing Law (CNL) and the delayed implementation of the Philippine Nursing Act of 2002 (RA 9173). The latter, which mandates a minimum monthly base pay for nurses, faces hindrances in full execution. Mistrust is fueled not only by delayed salaries but also by allegations of corruption within the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the influence of politicians on hospital management, disrupting standard protocols.

The impact of politicians is further evident in Local Government Units (LGUs), contributing to discrepancies in salaries and benefits for nurses in government-run facilities. This inequality in compensation raises concerns about fairness and highlights the significance of human rights in governance. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2007) emphasizes the interdependence of good governance and human rights, asserting that transparency, accountability, and public participation are essential for safeguarding rights and preserving human dignity. The study underscores the need for adherence to these principles to address the challenges and promote positive changes in the healthcare system.

### 2.2. Professionalism

Nursing professionalism extends to the digital realm, requiring ethical conduct and effective communication. Breaching professionalism, evident in actions like targeting vulnerabilities and using profanity, needs addressing for a respectful online environment, fostering constructive communication among nurse professionals in the digital space.

Dejong (2014) notes that defining professionalism is often more about identifying breaches than adherence, emphasizing its complexity. Despite childhood teachings on polite language and appropriate attire, these alone don't define professionalism. Cultural evolution, exemplified by healthcare professionals now wearing scrub suits outside hospitals due to the pandemic, highlights its dynamic nature. Professionalism extends beyond appearance and language, necessitating ethical codes like the Code of Ethics for Nurses in the Philippines (CENP) to guide professional behavior. Scrutinizing nurses in cyberspace using the CENP reveals the challenge of assessing behavior in virtual settings. Marshall McLuhan's (1994) concept that the medium is the message reinforces the influence of both content and medium.

The study exposes a lack of professionalism in SNOCs, evidenced by tactless language and provocative statements. This contradicts CENP's Article IV Section 13 (f), emphasizing the duty to honor and safeguard colleagues' reputation, and Article V Section 15, emphasizing an uplifting professional image. Profanities not only violate ethical conduct but hinder professional upliftment, as per Article VI Section 16 (BON, 2004).

McLuhan's (1994) assertion that media is an extension of oneself aligns with professionals' online expressions impacting personal and professional images. The study emphasizes the importance of aligning online conduct with established ethical codes to create a constructive digital environment for meaningful professional interactions.

### 2.3. Exploitation

Exploitation within the nursing profession encompasses the insidious practices of bullying, discrimination, and workplace violence or abuse. Nurses faced multifaceted challenges during the pandemic, including discrimination due to suspicions of carrying the virus (Albay, 2020). The World Health Organization confirmed global reports of healthcare providers facing physical and emotional assaults. Expanding on poor working conditions, systemic corruption emerged within SNOCs. Some hospitals engaged in "false volunteerism," exploiting nurses who not only worked without pay but also paid for an employment certificate. This reflects exploitation, a concept rooted in Marxist theory, where the value of labor is appropriated by capitalists, diminishing workers' power (Weeks, 2010; Young, 2009).

Exploitation in nursing encompasses working conditions, discrimination, and corruption, highlighting systemic injustices within the profession. It is evident that nurses, essential in healthcare, grapple with injustice, facing multifaceted challenges that demand attention, advocacy, and reform. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensuring fair treatment and respect for nursing professionals.

#### 2.4. Rights and Privileges

Rights and privileges for nurses, encompassing moral and legal entitlements, are central in the ongoing discourse within SNOCs (License Lawyers, 2022; Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2021). McHugh and Ma (2014) emphasize the significance of wages in tandem with a conducive work environment, crucial for nurses' career satisfaction (Buerhaus, 2008). Despite the mandated salary grade 15 by Section 32 of RA 9173, Filipino nurses receive far less, leading to their status as the lowest paid in Southeast Asia (DOLE, n.d.; Chia, 2021; Malasig, 2020). The acknowledgment of this issue is underscored by a direct comment in 2020 stating, "*Provincial government (nurses) are still salary grade 11*".

The award-winning investigative series, *Undercover Asia*, exposes the plight of overworked and underpaid Filipino nurses, revealing a nurse receiving only 630 pesos a day after 14 years of service, highlighting the severe nurse-to-patient ratio challenges (Chia, 2021). This stark reality emphasizes the imperative for just compensation, not just for the well-being of nurses and their families, but also for upholding the dignity of the nursing profession.

#### 2.5. Solidarity

Solidarity within the nursing profession encapsulates the dichotomy between nurse unity and division. It reflects the complex interplay between nurses coming together to address common challenges and the instances of division that arise within the profession.

This study underscores a paradox within the nursing profession, revealing a disparity between nurses' advocacy for change and their reluctance to engage in organized protests. Nurse advocate groups, while combating exploitation, also contend among themselves. Despite the assumption that an online advocate group fosters solidarity, unity does not equate to uniform agreement. Drawing from Yang's (2009) perspective that online communities are both a social basis and an outcome of contention, internal disagreements within these communities showcase the dynamic nature of individual empowerment and creativity. The ability to express critical thinking and dissent, even within the same community, challenges solidarity but may prove essential. Yang's assertion that contention is intrinsic to the growth of online communities suggests that internal debates contribute to the ongoing development and enhancement of the nursing profession.

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## VI. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is delimited to textual and photographic content, predominantly focusing on posts and comments within SNOCs. Videos, clips, gifs, and emoticons were excluded from the analysis, which may have overlooked valuable forms of communication prevalent in online communities. Additionally, the study recognizes the constraints of the researcher's interpretive abilities, which could have influenced the depth and accuracy of the analysis. Moreover, the use of online informant identifiers presents challenges in generalizing the results to broader populations beyond the studied sample, potentially limiting the external validity of the findings. Furthermore, while the research design employed netnography to investigate nursing online communities, it acknowledges the existing gaps in the literature concerning nurses' social media engagement and the netnographic approach. These limitations suggest avenues for future research to consider broader forms of online communication, enhance interpretive skills, address challenges in generalizability, and contribute to the evolving understanding of nurses' participation in online spaces.

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## VII. CONCLUSION

This netnographic investigation meticulously explored the processes of the selected nursing online communities (SNOCs), illuminating their multifaceted communicative patterns and matters of contention. Employing rigorous coding and thematic analysis, the study unveiled distinctive categories within SNOCs, including Contradicting, Harassing, Appealing, Taunting, and Sharing (CHATS) for communicative patterns, as well as Governance and Authority, Professionalism, Exploitation, Rights and Privileges, and Solidarity (GAPE-RaPS) for matters of contention. These insightful findings offer a comprehensive understanding of the social interactions occurring in these virtual spaces among nurses, emphasizing both their strengths and limitations. By contributing to the evolving comprehension of nurses' online engagement, this investigation provides valuable insights for advocacy and enhancement within the nursing community, paving the way for further research and initiatives aimed at fostering a supportive and constructive online environment for nursing professionals.

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## VIII. IMPLICATION

This study holds significant implications extending to practical applications within the nursing profession and healthcare industry. The identification of communicative patterns and matters of contention within nursing online communities (SNOCs) informs strategies for fostering supportive environments, promoting professionalism, and addressing issues like exploitation. Nurses' online engagement shapes discourse, advocates for change, and enhances professional solidarity, emphasizing ongoing dialogue and collaboration. Online communities serve as platforms for professional development, knowledge exchange, and advocacy. Healthcare organizations can support nurses' participation, integrate digital literacy training, and establish guidelines for ethical conduct. Overall, leveraging nursing online communities can drive positive change and innovation in healthcare delivery, highlighting the importance of understanding and harnessing the dynamics of online interactions among nurses.

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