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THE EXPERIENCES OF UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE PUBLIC NURSING COLLEGE DURING THE COVID 19 LOCKDOWN IN GAUTENG PROVINCE.

Research article

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ABSTRACT

Background The emergence of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) has posed a significant global threat to both health and economic stability. Government structures had to address the challenges. The lockdown of the country was introduced as a measure of controlling the spread of COVID-19.

This also affected Higher Education Institutions, including nursing students in public colleges.

Purpose and method: The qualitative descriptive phenomenological method was used to explore the participants' experiences on academic support offered by the public college in Gauteng Province

Results: The following themes emerged during data analysis: Experiences in supportive communication, experiences in the availability of learning resources, experiences of psycho-social support, and experiences of support to ensure continuity of learning.

Conclusion: The students had different experiences concerning academic support during COVID-19. The lack of provision of effective academic support during the COVID-19 lockdown to students contributed to participants' frustrations and the extension of the study programme.

Key words: COVID-19; Lockdown; undergraduate nursing students; teaching; learning; public college; experience, academic support.

INTRODUCTION

On March 15, 2020, the South African State President announced a 21-day lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Speeches | South African Government, 2021). Nursing students left their campuses during this period. Labrague, De los Santos, and Falguera (2021:1) supported the lockdown's aim to curb COVID-19 transmission, noting its emotional and psychological impact, particularly on social isolation and loneliness in young people.

As observed by the researcher, a nursing educator, During the initial COVID-19 lockdown, discussions arose among public nursing college executives and student leaders on whether to send student nurses home or to clinical areas. Public nursing college students, having dual status as both students and employees of the Department of Health (Mtshali & Zwane, 2019: 7), faced challenges. The Minister of Health did not announce the closure of public nursing colleges until the Minister of Higher Education clarified lockdown regulations for all higher education institutions, including training colleges managed by other ministries (Speeches | South African Government, 2021).

The COVID-19 measures significantly impacted teaching and learning at a public nursing college in Gauteng Province. The college suspended classes without a

contingency plan, leading to a 12-week disruption of the academic calendar. The institution, reliant on face-to-face teaching, faced challenges complying with the South African Nursing Council's clinical practice requirements. After the lockdown extension, lecturers improvised with platforms like WhatsApp, Zoom, and Teams for virtual teaching, often using personal funds. Inconsistency and ineffectiveness arose due to student participation issues and limited lecturer resources. Savitsky, Findling, Erel, and Hendel (2020: 2) indicated that despite lockdown changes, academic staff were expected to adapt and complete semester activities, including examinations.

Tomietto, Comparcini, Simonetti and Cicolini (2020: 131) noted that the global responses to the COVID-19 outbreak, particularly lockdowns, altered people's lives and impacted behaviours and relationships. These changes extended to nursing care and education, affecting workload, daily practice risks, and challenging the relevance of nursing curricula to patient and student needs. Despite these challenges, the situation provided student nurses with an opportunity to develop their professional identities (Dewart, Corcoran, Thirsk, & Petrovic, 2020:3)

Amidst this period, one might question whether the objectives of nurse training programmes were achieved. These programmes aim to equip student nurses

with competencies ensuring their ability to deliver safe and effective nursing care (South African Nursing Council 2013:6).

METHOD

DESIGN

The qualitative descriptive phenomenological Polit and Beck (2021:477) method was used to explore participants' experiences on academic support offered by a public college in Gauteng Province during COVID 19 lockdown. This study was conducted on selected campuses of a public nursing College in the Gauteng Province.

The study focused on undergraduate students from a public nursing college in Gauteng Province in 2020. Fourteen participants were purposefully selected (Polit and Beck 2021:499) for their knowledge of the study phenomenon, and unstructured individual interviews were conducted as the data collection method to enable participants to describe their experiences.

SETTINGS

The researcher conducted the study in four campuses of a public nursing college in Gauteng, engaging with participants in their natural setting to comprehend their experiences. The researcher visited each campus, for data collection. research coordinators in each campus organized

interview rooms for data collection. In 2020, 194 students were registered for the "Course leading to registration in the category Staff Nurse (General Nurse)" Diploma in Nursing, with the cohort reaching level 3 at the time of data collection.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were recruited from 194 students registered for the programme "Course leading to registration in the category Staff Nurse (General Nurse)" Diploma in Nursing in 2020. 14 participants were selected purposefully Polit and Beck (2021:499) based on their knowledge of the phenomenon under study.

Table 1 Participants' biographical

Information

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No	Gender	Age
P1	Female	30
P2	Female	31
P3	Male	22
P4	Female	29
P5	Female	31
P6	Female	31
P7	Female	27
P8	Female	20
P9	Male	29
P10	Female	26
P11	Male	39
P12	Male	24
P13	Female	22
P14	Female	33

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection occurred over two weeks, from February 17 to March 3, 2023. Fourteen individual interviews were conducted with level 3 students enrolled in a specific program at four campuses of a chosen public college in Gauteng. Each interview lasted 30-60 minutes, continuing until data saturation was achieved.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis was conducted according to Colaizzi's (1978) seven steps

Polit and Beck (2021:548). Four main themes emerged with 13 sub-themes.

Table 2 Themes and subthemes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1. Experiences of supportive communication	Ineffective communication from the college management
	Effective communication from the lecturers
	Communication challenges between the college and clinical area
2. Experiences of the availability of learning resources	Challenges in the provision and acquirement of electronic gadgets and internet data
	Inconsistency in the provision of textbooks
	Barriers to clinical learning
3. Experiences of psycho-social support	Inconsistency in the utilization of college student support services
	Challenging experiences regarding accommodation during the lockdown
	Continuous financial support
4. Experiences of support to ensure continuity of learning.	Effective clinical learning support
	Complicated experiences during online learning
	Inefficient administration of online assessment
	Partial catch-up plan following the resumption of contact classes
	Experiences of delayed accomplishment of the study programme

RESULTS

THEME 1: EXPERIENCES IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION

The initial theme in data analysis was "experiences in supportive communication," revealing discrepancies in communication across levels impacting learning and academic progress. Sub-themes include ineffective communication from college management, effective communication from

lecturers, and communication which are discussed next.

Subtheme 1: Ineffective communication from the college management

Participants found communication from college management inadequate, lacking a formal channel accessible to all students. Announcements were made via WhatsApp, which participants did not view as a proper formal communication channel.

"The communication with students was very poor, whenever we have concerns, we were told about ..., and I do not even know who ... is; "Re mo kwatetse ... o wa teng (we are very angry to that)" (P1)

Participants highlighted that the inadequate communication from the college affected their relationships with family and support systems, lacking formal documentation to justify their need to continue learning at home. Parents perceived their constant phone use as distracting and lazy.

"... the parents were complaining that I was always playing on my phone just to avoid doing the chores....". (P8).

Subtheme 2: Effective communication from the lecturers

Participants emphasized that lecturers were the sole college personnel available for communication, especially regarding academic matters. The lecturers demonstrated strong support, making themselves accessible and taking time to explain content individually.

"We wrote many tests. The lecturer for the module ... tried very hard to facilitate many tests on WhatsApp on a regular basis to reinforce the content ..." (P3)

The study revealed that Participants viewed lecturers as distinct from college management, noting their efforts, including using personal funds to buy data for classes.

"We also managed to contact lecturers using WhatsApp or a call. Though there were challenges with connectivity lecturers were very supportive. They also gave us

activities that we can submit. In this module we were given activities which were stimulating our learning". (P4)

Sub-theme 3: Communication challenges between the college and clinical area

Clinical practice for students resumed only after the critical lockdown stages were lifted. The study revealed financial strain on both the college and clinical areas due to the additional budget needed for providing personal protective equipment (PPE) to students. Participants expressed frustration over unclear responsibility for PPE distribution, being sent between clinical area managers and college management, creating confusion and inconvenience for the students.

".... Then we were told it was the responsibility of the clinical area. When we get there were told why the college did not supply the PPE as the clinical area indicated that their stock only covers their staff members. No one wanted to take responsibility for student safety. That also raised an issue whereby we embarked on strike" (P14).

THEME 2: EXPERIENCES ON THE AVAILABILITY OF LEARNING RESOURCES

Three sub-themes emerged from this theme, namely: (i) provision and

acquisition of electronic equipment and internet data, (ii) inconsistency in the provision of textbooks and (iii) barriers to clinical learning.

Sub-theme 1: Challenges in the provision and acquisition of electronic equipment and internet data

Participants expressed concerns about attending classes without proper electronic equipment and internet data during the COVID-19 lockdown. The college did not provide laptops or internet data. Students had to use their cell phones for online classes, disadvantaging those without smartphones at that time.

"SRC (Student Representative Council) told us that, they were fighting to have the college provide us with laptops and data ... So other students were having even a bigger challenge because they didn't have a laptop, or even have a phone. You don't have data, so basically, how are you supposed to attend?" (P5)

Participants further stated that the lack of provided internet data and electronic equipment caused frustration, as they had to share resources with siblings and spend additional funds to ensure continued learning.

Other higher education institutions gave pupils laptops, and they gave

pupils data. ... we were expecting those things when we started asking, we were told not to compare the institutions as they are not the same...". (P11).

Sub-theme 2: Inconsistency in the provision of textbooks

Amid the 4th industrial revolution, higher education institutions

are transitioning to e-textbooks. Despite this trend, the Gauteng public college of nursing continued to rely on printed textbooks during the COVID-19 lockdown.

COVID-19 disruptions affected the college's textbook distribution plan for nursing students. Despite students receiving a textbook allowance, the college ensured all students got their prescribed books by coordinating with the contractor.

This study found that some textbooks were not delivered before the initial phase of COVID-19.

In the first year the first semester, they bought us textbooks and some of the books were not readily available. The lecturers sent us pictures from various textbooks to help us to learn. ...in terms of PHC (Primary Health Care module) we got the 2nd textbook when we came back". (P3)

The other participant stated that:

"We did not receive academic support ... and we did not have all the study material that was required we were short on one textbook". (P6)

The study also showed inconsistent textbook provision across campuses, leading to varied participant experiences.

"I think we already had textbooks, I remembered, they gave us the box of textbooks and they were complete ...". (P11)

Sub-theme 3: Barriers to clinical learning resources

While other programmes shifted to online learning, nursing students faced challenges as their curriculum required physical clinical placements. Adapting to social distancing, isolation, and COVID-19 measures made learning difficult for them.

The supply of PPE to students that was not well handled negatively affected students' readiness for clinical practice, creating fear and eroding confidence.

"At times you will find that the other group is denied PPE, they will just sit outside, and when the minority complains there won't be a solution so they will sit outside until the end of the shift" (P1).

A lack of clinical staff for student supervision emerged as a significant barrier during the COVID-19 lockdown, causing stress for undergraduate students.

"... In the first year, there was quite a number of procedures to be carried out. Having a nurse to supervise you

was quite a challenge as they were complaining of short staffing". (P8)

THEME 3: EXPERIENCES OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT

Undergraduate nursing students from the public college in Gauteng are from diverse backgrounds and economic strata. Participants raised different psychosocial challenges that they experienced while they were responding to the COVID-19 lockdown call.

Three sub-themes from this theme, namely, (i) inconsistency in the utilization of student support services by the students, (ii) challenging experiences regarding accommodation during the lockdown, and (iii) continuous financial support.

Sub-theme 1: Inconsistency in the utilization of college student support services

Participants reported that there is a student counselling and development department, but most of the time they depended on each other and their families for support.

"...There is a student counselling and development department, but most of the time we lean on each other as students and our families. ..." (P8).

Participants further indicated Few students utilized available counseling services due to scheduling conflicts with class periods. To address this, the college extended

psychosocial support through WhatsApp, aiming to provide online support services to undergraduate students.

"The Counselling and Development department was opened for us to assist those who were struggling with COVID-19 issues ... but I did not use the student counselling services, sharing with my family was enough to pull through". (P10)

The study found that although the college offers student support services on all campuses, some students, whether psychosocially affected or not during the COVID-19 lockdown, did not consistently or effectively utilize these services.

Sub-theme 2: Challenging experiences regarding accommodation during the lockdown

The decision to close the college and evacuate nursing students from campuses in Gauteng had varied impacts.

Participants expressed frustration due to increased household responsibilities, a lack of privacy, an unsuitable study environment, parental misunderstandings about academic commitments, and challenges such as load shedding. Some students had to rent accommodation, unable to return to their parents' homes.

One participant said:

"... (With tears in her eyes) Honestly, I just wanted to quit. I had already even

told my family that if we continue under these lockdown conditions, I am not going to remain in the course because I can't. I can't take it because even at home, there are expectations people expect you to cook. You still must clean this laundry. It's a lot and there is no one to assist ... had network connectivity problems and had load-shedding issues". (P5)

The other participants said:

"It also depends on one's background, if where you come from you don't have a study room, a table, and a quiet place to study it becomes very difficult to attend class at home, ...". (P9)

The study found that most undergraduate students in a public nursing college in Gauteng faced accommodation challenges during the COVID-19 lockdown, impacting their academic expectations.

Sub-theme 3: Continuous financial support

Ninety percent of the study population relies on state bursaries, while only 10% on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) are on fully paid study leave. Participants mentioned receiving their stipends during the COVID-19 lockdown, albeit some experiencing delays.

"We do receive a stipend. It was the same throughout COVID-19 and throughout lockdown didn't change, was not less or more". (P14)

This study finds that students in a public nursing college in Gauteng experienced continued financial support during COVID-19 lockdown to enhance academic support.

THEME 4: EXPERIENCES OF SUPPORT TO ENSURE CONTINUITY OF LEARNING.

COVID-19 lockdown regulations led to changes in teaching strategies, including online seminars, recorded sessions, online exams, assignment submissions, and varied facilitator access. This shift affected nursing education globally, with different countries adopting diverse approaches to academic progression.

The management of the public nursing college in Gauteng put a plan into place to continue teaching and learning, the following sub-themes emerged from this theme: (i) effective clinical learning support, (ii) challenging experiences during online learning, (iii) inefficient administration of online assessment (iv) partial catch-up plan following the resumption of contact classes and (v) experiences of delayed accomplishment of the study programme.

Sub- theme 1: Effective clinical learning support

The clinical learning environment is crucial for nursing student development. Disruptions during the COVID-19 lockdown caused anxiety for participants, but they

reported improved clinical learning support from their lecturers during this period.

“In terms of clinical I don't think the lockdown had a big impact ... coming to clinical everything was ok we had time to go over everything even though we were not completely comfortable ...” (P3)

This study revealed that nursing students were exposed to real-life clinical learning, and experienced effective clinical support from the college during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Sub-theme 2: Complicated experiences during online learning

Participants noted the absence of a formal online platform at the public nursing college during the COVID-19 lockdown. Lecturers resorted to using WhatsApp, though it was deemed frustrating and not user-friendly. Attempts with other platforms like Teams and Zoom were also reported as unsuccessful.

“When they introduced WhatsApp learning trying to have classes via WhatsApp. Each morning we had to log into WhatsApp. Every module has its group. In the morning we woke up we were expected to log in. For me at first, it was very awkward especially because I was using a cell phone first, staying on the phone for such long hours was very awkward”. (P14)

The study found that online learning at a public nursing college in Gauteng lacked effective planning to support nursing students academically. Students faced challenges and frustrations with online learning during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Sub-theme 3: Inefficient administration of online assessment

Participants stated that lecturers attempted to introduce online assessments and daily activities on WhatsApp. However, the study reveals that these assessments were not well planned and lacked security. Additionally, students encountered difficulties with accessing online tests on a different platform, impacting their ability to complete assessments crucial for their year mark, without proper technical support.

“There was also an individual test that took place online which we accessed through a code, and it was stressful as it has a time limit but as students, we went to the extent of consulting each other for certain questions we were hardly prepared for the online test. It felt more like one is rushing to complete a form. Students were sharing answers as there was no invigilation. “. (P9)

The study found that students faced inadequate administration of online assessments, lacking proper support from the college to ensure academic progress during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Sub-theme 4: Partial catch-up plan following the resumption of contact classes.

The college *implemented measures to address gaps from online learning and ensure student competency. However, participants* reported that the one-week contingency plan was *insufficient*, as the *condensed content negatively* affected them. *They felt* the effort was not supportive, but rather *an attempt* to cover the expected curriculum.

“The 1-week for reinforcement was partially supportive (we got the support that we needed in one way or the other), we were expected to know the content whereas in some of us half of the online classes we couldn’t log in because of network problems. The lecturers were expecting a lot from us ...” (P10)

The study found that participants perceived the catch-up program as partially effective, citing uneven workload distribution. While the college attempted to address under-preparedness with a one-week contingency plan, it was noted that the catch-up program added to students' existing stress.

Sub-theme 5: Experiences of delayed accomplishment of the study programme

Participants reported that despite the shift to online learning during the COVID-19 lockdown, all online-taught content was reiterated, causing an extension of the program. Originally set to conclude in February 2023, it was extended and completed by the end of May 2023.

Participants *further expressed* disappointment and *frustration due to the extended study program, disrupting* their life goals. *They were not psychologically prepared for the delay, and decisions about their studies were not factored into their plans.*

“COVID-19 took away our time which is why we are still in level three though we were supposed to be done. I wished that the lecturers went deeper into the content than just flying above it, based on that it was taught online”.
(P10)

DISCUSSION

The thematic description of undergraduate nursing students in Gauteng Public nursing college explains their experiences regarding the academic support offered by the college during COVID – 19. The participants expressed different experiences regarding the academic support offered. This study revealed a notable communication discrepancy at different levels within the college that affected students' learning,

support, and academic progress. Ineffective communication was noted between the college management and students, Abukhalaf and Von Meding (2020:1559) observed similar issues in Florida, noting a lack of tailored communication and the use of inappropriate platforms in the emergency communication system at the University of Florida

Informal channels such as WhatsApp were used for announcements resulting in nursing students facing challenges in accessing information due to a lack of a proper communication channel.

Decisions were made without student consultation, leading to unrest in some campuses.

Participants further experience effective communication between the students and lecturers, similar experience was reported from United Kingdom students (Henshall, Davey, Merriman, Strumidlo, Serrant, Brett, et al. 2023:7).

Communication challenges between the college and clinical area was also reported by the participants. Miscommunication between the college and nursing practice caused student frustrations, resulting in nursing students' unrest across all four campuses of the Gauteng public nursing college Luo, Luo, Yang, Cui, and Ma (2023: 6) in their systemic review advised that nursing managers should provide a supportive clinical practice environment.

Participants revealed that there were challenges in the provision and acquirement of electronic equipment and internet data, This was different from how other institutions and countries supported continuity of learning during COVID-19 lockdown; in Namibia university nursing students received sim cards for mobile internet devices, which are distributed by the university in partnership with a local telecommunications company (Nuuyoma, Lauliso, & Chihururu, 2023:7).

Participants also reported inconsistency in the provision of textbooks. Zengulaaru and Nyamekye (2022:24) support the contention that the COVID-19 lockdown brought about challenges that led to new routines in almost every sphere of life but asserted that enough textbook manufacturing is required for everyone who has not yet received them to ensure that learning is accessible to all and to ensure students are still able to learn in an emergency.

The undergraduate nursing students in Gauteng Province experienced frustrations and fear while in clinical learning during the COVID-19 lockdown similar results was found in a study done by Nabavian, Rahmani, and Alipour (2021:4).

The lack of clinical staff to supervise and teach students added to their stress during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Students reported feeling ill-equipped to work with COVID-19 patients due to insufficient training and fear of the unknown. The same was found in India (Kalal & Rana,

2022:495) and in Nepal (Pokharel, Shakya, Shrestha and Gurung, 2021:79)

The study revealed that student counselling and development departments are available, but nursing students did not utilise these services effectively.

Kalal, and Rana, (2022:496) in India discussed the importance of students to use the Student Counselling department to deal with psycho-social challenges during COVID-19 pandemic. Some cited support services schedules conflicts with class periods as a reason for not using the counselling services. The study also revealed that information sharing with respect to access to student support services during the COVID-19 lockdown was not made clear to all nursing students; this was discouraged by Zhu, Wang, Qian, Shi, Zhang, Xu, Xu et al. (2023:10) who advised that institutions need to find more innovative and engaging solutions to support students in their learning journey. Kalal, and Rana, (2022:496) indicated that India also implemented online class meetings to enable students to connect and interact with one another to promote mutual support.

Some students faced challenges related to accommodation during the lockdown, which had an impact on their academic expectations. These challenges were influenced by the students' backgrounds.

Cengiz, Gurdap, and Işik, (2022:50) reported virtually similar experiences from

nursing students from Turkey who experienced an increase in family conflicts.

The study also highlighted continuous financial support of nursing students during COVID-19 lockdown. Through state bursary system, these findings are in contrast with that found by Visser and Law-van Wyk (2021: 235) and other researchers.

The study revealed that the COVID-19 lockdown had a significant impact on nursing education, prompting the adoption of new teaching strategies such as virtual class facilitation, and online assessments, this has been confirmed by Espin, LeGrow, Bookey-Bassett, Rose, Santa Mina, & Indar, (2022:283). However, the implementation of these strategies varied across different countries. In Gauteng, South Africa, the public nursing college also faced challenges but managed to continue with teaching and learning.

It was found that during the lockdown, nursing students experienced effective clinical learning support, despite anxiety about their clinical placements.

They praised their clinical lecturers for regular accompaniment and advocacy for their safety in high-risk COVID-19 environments. This was also supported by Henshall et al. (2023:7) that students indicated that support structures were vital to students' ability to cope with stressors of being on placement, managing their

academic pathways and the pressures raised by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Simulation laboratories were used to practice skills when needed, although virtual clinical practice was not explored as compared to India (Kalal, and Rana, 2022:496).

Nursing students in Gauteng received real-life clinical exposure and effective support from the college during the lockdown, but they were not directly involved in caring for COVID-19 patients. The interruption of clinical services and the lack of a formal online platform led to delays in completing their studies. Several studies also reported the challenge of course extension due to suspension of training and switching to online teaching and learning in response to COVID-19 management (Callender, LuValle, Johnson, Clark, & Terrero de la Osa, 2021:396), Agu, Stewart, McFarlane-Stewart and Rae (2021:155) and (Rasmussen, Hutchinson, Lowe, Wynter, Redley, Holton et al. 2022:6) just to mention a few.

The college relied on WhatsApp for teaching and learning, which was frustrating and not user-friendly.

Adesuyi, Akingbade, Tola, Otun, Faleti, Fawole et al. (2023:6220) argued that proper online learning platforms could stimulate nurses and nursing students' interest and to ensure a good learning culture and outcomes.

Poor internet connectivity and limited technology knowledge further hindered online classes. Online assessments were introduced but were not well planned, leading to issues such as cheating and technical difficulties similar findings were reported in Namibia (Nuuyoma et al (2023:7).

Same challenges were identified by Rahman, (2021: 85) in India.

A one-week catch-up program was implemented to address the gaps in theoretical knowledge caused by online learning, but participants found it only partially effective. The course program was extended, delaying the completion of the nursing programme by a semester, this is contrast to what was reported by Espin et al. (2022:287) in Canada that, graduate programme was found accommodating and flexible, it enabled students to complete academic requirements irrespective of the impact of COVID-19.

Overall, this study reveals the challenges faced by nursing students regarding academic support offered by the public college in Gauteng during the COVID-19 lockdown; this includes issues with online learning, clinical experiences, and assessments, which led to delays in their education.

LIMITATIONS

The researcher adopted a qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach,

focusing on the experiences shared by 14 undergraduate nursing students concerning the support offered by the public nursing college during the COVID-19 lockdown. The study was conducted in a Gauteng public nursing college. There is a possibility of the findings being different if conducted in other provinces and/or private nursing education institutions. There is also a possibility that students could have forgotten some experiences as the lockdown was experienced some time before the study.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the experiences of undergraduate nursing students on the academic support provided by a public nursing college during the COVID-19 lockdown and to explore and describe the enablers implemented to support the academic progress of undergraduate student nurses during the COVID-19 lockdown in a public nursing college in Gauteng Province. The study adopted the qualitative method and applied phenomenological principles to gather and analyse data. Different experiences focused on supportive communication, the availability of learning resources, psycho-social support, and support to ensure continuity of learning. The lack of provision of effective academic support during the COVID-19 lockdown to students contributed to participants' frustrations and the extension of the study programme.

It is recommended that the experiences of undergraduate nursing students about academic support during the COVID-19 lockdown be taken into consideration. Nursing students should be fully supported during any disaster to ensure the continuity and quality of nursing education. Nursing education and training are the pillars and foundation of nursing practice and the entire health system; therefore, it is further recommended that the public nursing college in Gauteng should adjust and transit to appropriate online teaching and learning platforms supported by higher education. Clinical practice and nursing education institutions strive to clear misunderstandings and gaps to ensure that students are not frustrated during training. South Africa has developed clinical teaching units in most clinical areas, those units need to be evaluated regularly to determine if they are disaster ready to ensure continuity of learning and teaching of students, Clinical practice should play a supportive role to students and nursing education institutions; a nursing education institution relies on clinical areas to ensure that students are competent and have acquired relevant skills to render quality care. Continuous in-service training to reinforce the teaching role of professional nurses should ensure that clinical nursing education is not compromised even during disaster periods. The COVID-19 pandemic was one of the global disasters that all needed to manage to ensure continuity of daily functioning and

livelihoods, including learning and teaching.

The following is recommended:

Further research in other provinces and private nursing education institutions to explore the experiences of student nurses during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The status of disaster readiness in nursing education in public nursing colleges should be explored.

Quantitative studies to explore and describe the problems with technology in learning in public nursing colleges are required as there is an international move towards hybrid learning.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

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ETHICAL APPROVAL

The researcher was granted approval to conduct the study by the Gauteng Department of Health, the public nursing college in Gauteng, Research Ethics committees as well as the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Pretoria.

INFORMED CONSENT

The informed consent document entailed full study information and participant instruction in the language which participants understood was shared and discussed with each participant. Individual informed consent was obtained from each participant verbally and in writing.

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