**ABSTRACT**

*Human expectations and realities are very different from one another, often resulting in disappointment, frustration, or even anger when what one has expected doesn't happen. An example of this would be when a student sets expectations, or better yet, standards, for how their educational experiences should proceed, like finishing school and graduating at a specific time, and then those plans don't work out because unforeseen circumstances like the COVID-19 pandemic could interfere. This study aimed to identify the pre-learning expectations and lived experiences of student nurses during the pandemic, as well as the factors and influences shaping the transformation of pre-learning expectations into actual learning experiences. A descriptive research design was utilized in this study, for it aims to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation, or phenomenon. This design facilitates the utilization of a diverse range of research methods to investigate one or more variables, especially with the topic of this research study. The data gathered was obtained through semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions and was analyzed through thematization. According to the findings, two major themes emerged from the participants’ narratives: NurSEEK and NurSHAPE. The first major theme, NurSEEK, explores the pre-learning expectations and lived learning experiences of nursing students during the pandemic, supported by four subthemes, while the second major theme, NurSHAPE, with three subthemes, centers on the factors that shape the transformation of pre-learning expectations into the actual learning experiences of nursing students. Both themes are influenced by the participants' experiences, insights, and opinions. In order to enhance nursing education and the nursing and healthcare systems in the Philippines, the researchers strongly advise student nurses, the government, educational institutions, and future researchers to take into account the recommendations suggested.*

**Keywords:** *pre-learning expectations, lived experiences, COVID-19 pandemic, online learning, student nurses*