Work Habits and Job Performance of Rural Health Nurses: Basis for a Professional Development and Productivity

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Abstract:
This study examined the work habits and job performance of rural health nurses to provide a basis for a professional development and productivity enhancement program. The study aimed to assess the level of work habits and job performance among rural health nurses and determine the relationship between these variables. A descriptive-correlational research design was utilized, involving 91 rural health nurses. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire assessing work habits in five domains— time management, task prioritization, professionalism, adaptability, and teamwork—and job performance across key nursing competencies. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were employed for data interpretation. Findings revealed that rural health nurses exhibited high levels of work habits, with an overall mean of 4.017. Among the domains, professionalism (Mean = 4.040) was rated the highest, followed by time management (Mean = 4.022). Similarly, job performance was rated high across all dimensions, with compliance with professional standards (Mean = 4.035) receiving the highest score. Statistical analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between work habits and job performance, implying that stronger work habits contribute to better job performance. The results suggest that fostering effective work habits enhances rural health nurses' efficiency, professionalism, and patient care quality. These findings highlight the importance of continuous professional development programs to sustain and improve nursing competencies. A structured professional development and productivity enhancement program is recommended to further strengthen nurses' work habits, ensuring sustained high-quality healthcare service delivery in rural areas.

Keywords: Work habits, job performance, rural health nurses, professional development, productivity enhancement

INTRODUCTION

Rural health nurses are responsible for the provision of healthcare services in rural health units where resources and care access are scarce. Good work habits become key to ensuring quality service and fulfilling the varied needs of patients. Personal and professional habits such as self-management, leadership, communication, and teamwork can have a great impact on a nurse's performance. By developing robust work habits, nursing staff can more effectively manage the special demands of rural health care, including managing large volumes of patients, coping with inadequate supplies, and addressing community-based health issues. This research looks at how work habits are related to job performance, which might uncover areas in which focused enhancements would help improve patient care outcomes in rural health care.

The performance of rural health nurses also has strong associations with their work style, quality of working life, and personal values, especially in rural health where resources could be scarce. Research indicates that physical activity and health habits have strong effects on the performance of staff nurses since better well-being results in improved productivity and job satisfaction (Mohamed & Ghalab, 2022). Moreover, spiritually-oriented leadership leads to a constructive work environment with increased job satisfaction and overall performance through enhanced quality of work life (Pio, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic saw effective strategic management of the performance of employees in health facilities emphasizing adaptive

work practices as essential in order to sustain high-quality care with emphasis on facilitative management and effective communication (Qomariah et al., 2020). In addition, Gen Z nursing graduates possess different work ethics and values, which focus on ensuring that professional development is aligned with their own vision to ensure that they are as effective as possible in clinical practice (Maravilla, 2021). Collectively, these results highlight the necessity of a professional development plan that covers work habits, leadership, and personal values to improve nursing performance in rural health units.

According to observations and interviews with rural health unit nursing staff in Zamboanga del Sur, some gaps have been determined that affect work behavior and job performance. Rural health nurses complain of stress management, workload balancing, and continuous professional development. These issues point to a deficiency of organized assistance in developing critical work behaviors, including leadership and communication, that may result in the inconsistency of patient care. The inadequacy of resources and training opportunities for rural health workers further leaves numerous nurses inadequately prepared to address complicated situations in patient care. Filling these gaps with a master plan of development based on habit formation would have a remarkable impact on their work performance as well as the quality of care in rural health units.

This study aims to examine the relationship between work habit formation and job performance among rural health nurses in Zamboanga del Sur during the year 2023-2024. It seeks to explore the extent to which rural health personnel have developed key work habits, including personal vision, leadership, time management, interpersonal skills, communication, creative cooperation, and self-renewal. Additionally, the study will assess the performance profile of nursing personnel in these health units, identifying patterns and factors that may influence job outcomes. By comparing performance levels across different rural health units, the research will help determine if notable differences exist based on habit development. Furthermore, this study will investigate the relationship between work habit formation and job performance, offering insights into how positive work habits may contribute to overall effectiveness in healthcare delivery. Ultimately, the findings will provide a foundation for a proposed professional development plan that aims to strengthen work habits and improve job performance among nursing personnel, supporting better healthcare outcomes for rural communities.

METHODS
Research Design
This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between work habits and job performance among rural health nurses. As noted by Creswell and Creswell (2018), this design is appropriate for identifying and measuring the strength of associations between variables without manipulating them. It provides a clear picture of existing conditions and allows researchers to explore how one variable may predict another within a natural setting.

Research Setting
The study was conducted at Pagadian City Medical Center (PCMC), a major healthcare facility in Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur. With over two decades of service, PCMC has grown from a 10-bed clinic to a 50-bed hospital offering comprehensive services, including ICU, laboratory, radiology, and pharmacy. It plays a critical role in delivering healthcare to the province's diverse population.

Research Respondents
The respondents of this study are nursing staff currently serving in Rural Health Units (RHUs) across Zamboanga del Sur during the 2023–2024 calendar year. This includes nurses, midwives, and other active medical personnel. To ensure relevance to their current work environment, only those with at least six months of continuous service in their respective RHUs were included. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained. Individuals on leave, temporarily assigned elsewhere, or with less than six months of service were excluded.

Research Instrument
The study used a structured survey questionnaire divided into three sections to collect data on rural health nurses' work habits and job performance. The first section gathered demographic information such as age, sex, and years of experience to examine possible links with work behavior and performance. The second section assessed work habits in five areas including time management, task prioritization, professionalism, adaptability, and teamwork, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Always" to "Never." The third section evaluated job performance based on five indicators: quality of care, work effectiveness, adherence to professional standards, decision-making, and work engagement, rated from "Excellent" to "Poor." This standardized instrument allowed for reliable and quantifiable data collection to identify trends and relationships that could inform a professional development program tailored to the needs of rural health nurses.

Instrument Validity
The survey questionnaire underwent a thorough validation process to ensure reliability and accuracy. Experts in nursing and research reviewed the content for relevance and clarity. A pre-test with rural health nurses confirmed the questions were understandable and appropriate. Factor analysis verified that items measured the intended work habits and job performance constructs. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha showed consistent results with values above 0.70. After revisions based on feedback and tests, the final questionnaire was confirmed as a valid and reliable tool for data collection.

Data-Gathering Procedure
Data gathering began with securing permission from government health offices and rural health unit administrators through formal requests explaining the study's purpose and ethical safeguards. After approval, coordination with RHU heads was made to distribute the validated questionnaire. Participants received an orientation on the study, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, with consent forms obtained. Questionnaires were provided in hardcopy or electronic form based on preference, allowing ample time for completion. Follow-up reminders helped ensure a high response rate. Completed surveys were checked for accuracy, encoded, and securely stored for analysis. Confidentiality was maintained throughout, and the data collected informed the development of the Professional Development and Productivity Enhancement Program.

Ethical Considerations
This study adhered to key ethical principles as outlined by Bryman and Bell (2007). Informed consent was obtained after fully informing participants about the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw anytime. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by protecting identities and securely handling data. Questions were asked respectfully to avoid harm. The research was conducted with honesty, transparency, and integrity, with all findings reported truthfully.

Data Analysis
This study employed frequency count and percentage to describe respondents' demographics, arithmetic mean to assess average levels of work habits and job performance, and standard deviation to measure response variability. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength and significance of the relationship between work habits and job performance. These statistical tools enabled a thorough understanding of the data, supporting meaningful conclusions and recommendations for a professional development and productivity enhancement program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 - Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Profile	f	%
Age		
20 – 29 years old	21	23.08
30 – 39 years old	32	35.16

40 – 49 years old	27	29.67
50 and above years old	11	12.09
Total	**91**	**100**
Sex		
Male	31	34.07
Female	60	65.93
Total	**91**	**100**
Years of Experience		
less than 1 year	6	6.59
1 – 5 years	32	35.16
6 -10 years	30	32.98
more than 10 years	23	25.27
Total	**91**	**100**

Table 1 shows the demographic breakdown of the 91 respondents by age, sex, and years of experience. The information indicates a varied composition of participants, which leads to a balanced representation of views in the study. Based on age, the largest percentage of respondents falls within the 30 to 39 years old category, which represents 35.16 percent of all the respondents. They are followed by respondents who are 40 to 49 years old and comprise 29.67 percent. Respondents between 20 and 29 years old represent 23.08 percent of the total, while those 50 years and older represent the lowest category with 12.09 percent. This means that most respondents are at their productive working age, probably contributing quality experience and commitment to their professions.

Sex-wise, the female respondents dominate with 65.93 percent, while male respondents are at 34.07 percent. This reflects a general trend in the teaching line of work, where there are more female teachers, providing significant insights into gender representation in the workplace. With regard to years of experience, the majority of the respondents have 1 to 5 years of experience, which amounts to 35.16 percent. This is followed by those with 6 to 10 years of experience at 32.98 percent. Those with 10 years and above make up 25.27 percent, and there is a small percentage of 6.59 percent with less than one year's experience. This spread indicates an even mix of beginning, mid-level, and veteran teachers, increasing the richness of the study's conclusions.

Generally, the demographic composition of the respondents shows a preponderance of female teachers, who are mostly in their early to mid-career phases, particularly those in the 30 to 39 years age group. This profile offers a good foundation for interpreting how different demographic attributes affect key variables in the study.

Table 2.1 - Level of Work Habits of Rural Health Nurses in terms of Time Management

Indicators	Sd	Mean
1. I plan my daily tasks efficiently to maximize productivity.	0.86	4.15
2. I complete my tasks within the assigned deadlines.	1.16	3.86
3. I minimize time wasted on non-work-related activities.	1.22	3.71
4. I manage my breaks to ensure continuous workflow.	0.89	4.22
5. I handle multiple tasks without compromising quality.	1.04	4.15
Average Mean	**4.022**	**High**

Scale: 1.0 – 1.80 "Very Low", 1.81 – 2.60 "Low", 2.61 – 3.40 "Average", 3.41 – 4.20 "High" 4.21 – 5.00 "Very High"

As indicated in Table 2.1, rural health nurses depict a strong work habits dimension regarding time management, with a total mean of 4.022, which is scored as High. This indicates that the nurses tend to be efficient in coordinating their tasks, handling their timetables, and optimizing productivity, which all play a constructive role in their capacity to deliver consistent and high-level care.

The highest-rated indicator is their ability to manage breaks to ensure continuous workflow (Mean = 4.22, SD = 0.89), which falls within the Very High category. This suggests that rural health nurses are particularly adept at using their break times constructively, maintaining their energy levels and performance throughout the day. Meanwhile, the indicator "I minimize time wasted on non-work-related activities", although rated the lowest (Mean = 3.71, SD = 1.22), still falls within the High category. This indicates that nurses are generally focused and dedicated to their tasks, and even the area rated lowest reflects commendable time management and discipline in reducing distractions.

These results align with those of Xie et al. (2022), who stressed that structured time management is critical in enhancing healthcare staff's efficiency, especially in resource-limited rural settings. Their study supports the conclusion that robust time management not only boosts productivity but also helps alleviate stress and enhance mental well-being. The existing results confirm rural health nurses have better time management practices and there are opportunities to further enhance focus and efficiency in their daily work activities.

Table 2.2 - Level of Work Habits of Rural Health Nurses in terms of Task Prioritization

Indicators	Sd	Mean
1. I can differentiate urgent tasks from less important ones.	1.00	3.95
2. I prioritize tasks based on patient needs and urgency.	0.90	4.27
3. I adjust my workload efficiently when unexpected situations arise.	0.95	4.12
4. I maintain focus on high-priority tasks despite workplace distractions.	1.21	3.78
5. I follow a structured approach to completing my daily responsibilities.	0.98	3.94
Average Mean	**4.015**	**High**

Scale: 1.0 – 1.80 "Very Low", 1.81 – 2.60 "Low", 2.61 – 3.40 "Average", 3.41 – 4.20 "High" 4.21 – 5.00 "Very High"

As seen in Table 2.2, rural health nurses demonstrate a strong work habit in prioritizing tasks with a general mean of 4.015. This favourably indicates their firm ability to handle responsibilities effectively, reflecting clearly in judiciously identifying tasks that need prompt actions. Such high-level prioritization is critically essential in rural healthcare environments where resource

Among the indicators, the highest-rated item is "I prioritize tasks based on patient needs and urgency" with a mean of 4.27 and a standard deviation of 0.90, indicating that nurses consistently place patient welfare at the core of their decision-making. Meanwhile, the item "I maintain focus on high-priority tasks despite workplace distractions" received the lowest mean of 3.78 (SD = 1.21); however, it still falls solidly within the high range. This suggests that even in the presence of potential distractions, nurses remain committed to staying on task and meeting their priorities.

These findings support the work of Bergan (2024), which reinforced the importance of prioritization in sustaining productivity and quality of care in healthcare settings. The high scores on all items confirm the professional discipline and patient-centered orientation of the nurses. The somewhat lower but still excellent score on sustaining concentration despite distraction indicates a potential area for further support through facilitatory measures that enhance concentration and workflow efficiency.

Table 2.3 - Level of Work Habits of Rural Health Nurses in terms of Work Discipline and Professionalism

Indicators	Sd	Mean
1. I strictly adhere to hospital policies and ethical standards.	1.07	3.97
2. I arrive at work on time and fulfill my duties responsibly.	1.06	4.03
3. I maintain professionalism when dealing with patients and colleagues.	1.07	3.98
4. I complete assigned tasks with minimal supervision.	0.95	4.11
5. I take accountability for my actions and decisions at work.	0.99	4.08
Average Mean	**4.040**	**High**

Scale: 1.0 – 1.80 "Very Low", 1.81 – 2.60 "Low", 2.61 – 3.40 "Average", 3.41 – 4.20 "High" 4.21 – 5.00 "Very High"

As shown Table 2.3, the rural health nurses demonstrate high work habits of work discipline and professionalism as shown in an overall average mean of 4.040. This is a clear demonstration of strong and consistent ethical behavior, being punctual, responsible, and having professional decorum, all which are indispensable elements in upholding the honor and trustworthiness of healthcare services.

The indicator that received the highest rating is "I complete assigned tasks with minimal supervision", with a mean of 4.11 and a standard deviation of 0.95, highlighting the nurses' strong sense of initiative and responsibility. Meanwhile, the indicator "I strictly adhere to hospital policies and ethical standards" obtained the mean of 3.97 (SD = 1.07), which, while the lowest among the five, still clearly falls within the high range. This demonstrates that adherence to ethical and institutional standards is also a well-practiced habit among the respondents, further affirming their professional integrity.

These findings resonates with Maryani et al. (2021), which established a strong positive correlation between work discipline and the performance of employees. Their study highlighted that both motivation and discipline play a huge role in making the job effective, with an overall effect of 65.6% on performance outcomes. Consistent with this, the high ratings in all the indicators confirm that rural health nurses always maintain the standards of professionalism, discipline, and ethical conduct that are essential in the healthcare profession.

Table 2.4 - Level of Work Habits of Rural Health Nurses in terms of Adaptability to Workplace Challenges

Indicators	Sd	Mean
1. I remain calm and focused when handling stressful situations.	1.20	3.89
2. I easily adjust to sudden changes in work schedules and duties.	0.93	4.12
3. I take proactive steps to solve workplace problems.	1.05	3.94
4. I remain open to learning new skills and techniques.	0.92	4.07
5. I effectively manage work-related challenges without affecting performance.	1.06	3.95
Average Mean	**3.998**	**High**

Scale: 1.0 – 1.80 "Very Low", 1.81 – 2.60 "Low", 2.61 – 3.40 "Average", 3.41 – 4.20 "High" 4.21 – 5.00 "Very High"

As reflected in Table 2.4, rural health nurses demonstrate a high level of work habits in terms of adaptability to workplace challenges, with an overall mean of 3.998. This suggests that collectively, the nurses have excellent flexibility and resilience so that they can cope with changing work requirements, schedule changes, and unexpected circumstances without compromising on effectiveness and professionalism.

The indicator that garnered the highest rating is "I easily adjust to sudden changes in work schedules and duties", with a mean of 4.12 and a standard deviation of 0.93. This reveals the nurses' strong ability to respond positively and efficiently to changes in their work environment—a vital skill in dynamic healthcare settings. Meanwhile, the item "I remain calm and focused when handling stressful situations" recorded the mean of 3.89 (SD = 1.20), which, although the lowest among the set, still falls solidly within the high category. This illustrates that rural health nurses maintain composure and mental clarity even in high-pressure circumstances, further affirming their strong capacity for emotional regulation and stability.

These findings are also in line with the work of Castro et al. (2024), who highlighted the resilience of Filipino nurses when confronted with changing responsibilities and challenging workloads. Their study indicated that a high percentage of nurses successfully adapted to new unit assignments, which is consistent with the adaptability demonstrated in this study. The high scores on all the indicators affirm that rural health nurses not only possess the ability to handle workplace issues but also show a proactive and growth approach that enables long-term excellence in patient care.

Table 2.5 - Level of Work Habits of Rural Health Nurses in terms of Collaboration and Teamwork

Indicators	Sd	Mean
1. I communicate effectively with colleagues to ensure quality patient care.	0.99	4.02

2.	I actively participate in team discussions and decision-making.	1.02	3.87
3.	I assist coworkers when needed to maintain smooth workflow.	0.98	4.22
4.	I respect and value the opinions of my team members.	1.00	4.13
5.	I contribute positively to a supportive and cooperative work environment.	1.07	3.802
Average Mean		**4.011**	**High**

Scale: 1.0 – 1.80 "Very Low", 1.81 – 2.60 "Low", 2.61 – 3.40 "Average", 3.41 – 4.20 "High" 4.21 – 5.00 "Very High"

As shown in Table 2.5, rural health nurses demonstrate a very high degree of teamwork and collaboration, as indicated by the overall average mean of 4.011. This affirms that cooperative attitudes, communication, and shared tasks are firmly established habits among the respondents, playing an important role in quality patient care and effective team functioning.

Among the indicators, the highest-rated is "I assist coworkers when needed to maintain smooth workflow", with a mean of 4.22 and a standard deviation of 0.98. This falls under the very high category, underscoring the nurses' exceptional willingness to support team efforts and ensure continuity in service delivery. Meanwhile, the item "I contribute positively to a supportive and cooperative work environment" garnered a mean of 3.802 (SD = 1.07). Though the lowest among the set, it still resides firmly within the high category— affirming that rural health nurses consistently strive to foster harmonious and collaborative relationships in the workplace.

These findings parallel Balay-Odao et al. (2024) statement that the development of a helpful, open relationship between workers at all levels based on teamwork is crucial in bridging nursing practice and organizational outcomes. Rural health nurses' good scores for assisting, communication, and appreciation for team opinion affirm that being part of an institution's supportive learning environment does happen. Additionally, the slightly lower—though still very high—score on encouraging a cooperative culture indicates a potential to further raise team synergy through ongoing leadership encouragement and team-building programs. Overall, the results identify a strongly ingrained culture of teamwork and collective commitment to healthcare excellence.

Table 2.6 - Summary of the Extent of Effectiveness on the Result-Based Performance Management System

Components	Mean	Interpretation
Time Management	4.022	High
Task Prioritization	4.015	High
Work Discipline and Professionalism	4.040	High
Adaptability to Workplace and Challenges	3.998	High
Collaboration and Teamwork	4.011	High
Average Mean	**4.017**	**High**

Scale: 1.0 – 1.80 "Very Low", 1.81 – 2.60 "Low", 2.61 – 3.40 "Average", 3.41 – 4.20 "High" 4.21– 5.00 "Very High"

As indicated in Table 2.6, rural health nurses were highly effective in all the elements of the Result-Based Performance Management System (RPMS), as indicated by the overall average mean of 4.017. This confirms that the respondents have consistently maintained good work habits and performance behaviors that closely conform to RPMS standards, thus making significant contributions to the provision of responsive and efficient healthcare services.

The highest-rated component is Work Discipline and Professionalism (M = 4.040), highlighting the nurses' exceptional adherence to ethical standards and their responsible approach to workplace duties. This result reflects their unwavering commitment to maintaining integrity and excellence in their professional conduct. On the other hand, the component Adaptability to Workplace Challenges, with a mean of 3.998, while being the lowest, still falls within the high category. This indicates that rural health nurses demonstrate substantial resilience and flexibility in handling change and overcoming stressors—qualities essential to thriving in dynamic healthcare environments.

These results are consistent with the studies of Castro et al. (2024) and Balay-Odao et al. (2024), both of which highlighted that essential RPMS-aligned behaviors—like professionalism, teamwork, and flexibility— are essential to maintaining high levels of healthcare performance. The high and consistent ratings among all RPMS components affirm nurses' strong and stable professional practice foundation, along with the hint of the need for ongoing assistance and development interventions that can aid in further fortifying nurses with the ability to maintain and boost these competencies in the longer term.

Table 3.1- Level of Job Performance of Rural Health Nurses in terms of Quality of Patient Care

Indicators	Sd	Mean
1. I provide safe, effective, and compassionate care to patients.	0.86	4.15
2. I ensure patients receive timely and appropriate medical attention.	1.19	3.82
3. I educate patients and their families on proper health practices.	1.21	3.74
4. I follow evidence-based nursing practices to improve patient outcomes.	0.96	4.16
5. I regularly assess and address patient needs.	1.08	4.17
Average Mean	**4.013**	**High**

Scale: 1.0 – 1.80 "Very Low", 1.81 – 2.60 "Low", 2.61 – 3.40 "Average", 3.41 – 4.20 "High" 4.21 – 5.00 "Very High"

As highlighted in Table 3.1, rural health nurses recorded a high job performance by quality of care at the patient level, as reflected in the overall mean average of 4.013. This supports their exceptional dedication to the provision of safe, responsive, and patient-centered care, highlighting the critical role they have in upholding health standards and facilitating positive patient outcomes in rural areas.

The highest-rated indicator is "I regularly assess and address patient needs" (M = 4.17, SD = 1.08), reflecting the nurses' exemplary attentiveness and initiative in providing consistent, needs-based care. This proactive behavior contributes significantly to early interventions and effective management of patient health. Meanwhile, the indicator "I educate patients and their families on proper health practices" received the mean score of 3.74 (SD = 1.21), which, while being the lowest among the five, still clearly falls under the high category. This indicates that nurses are actively engaged in health education and outreach, a crucial aspect of holistic care, and presents an opportunity to further strengthen this area through additional support and capacity-building programs.

These results are consistent with Abdullah et al. (2020), which asserted that internal service quality keeps nurses' job performance and satisfaction at a high level. High scores in all indicators, especially those concerning direct interaction with patients and communication, indicate a consistently strong professional sense. The results further support the importance of ongoing development on all aspects of care provision to ensure that even already robust practices still adapt and develop further.

Table 3.2 - Level of Job Performance of Rural Health Nurses in terms of Efficiency in Completing Tasks

Indicators	Sd	Mean
1. I complete my assigned duties within the required timeframe.	0.98	3.95
2. I handle patient records and documentation efficiently.	0.91	4.33
3. I maximize my time to ensure all tasks are completed.	0.99	4.14
4. I manage workload effectively, even during busy shifts.	1.22	3.70
5. I use hospital resources responsibly to maintain efficiency.	0.88	4.02
Average Mean	**4.031**	**High**

Scale: 1.0 – 1.80 "Very Low", 1.81 – 2.60 "Low", 2.61 – 3.40 "Average", 3.41 – 4.20 "High" 4.21 – 5.00 "Very High"

As evident in Table 3.2, rural health nurses portrayed a considerable level of task completion efficiency with an overall mean average of 4.031. This means that they possess a good capacity for time management, working diligently, and staying productive despite challenging healthcare settings, which makes important contributions toward operational effectiveness in rural health facilities.

The highest-rated indicator was "I handle patient records and documentation efficiently" with a very high mean score of 4.33 (SD = 0.91), showcasing nurses' exceptional precision and reliability in administrative tasks that are crucial to patient safety and care continuity. Meanwhile, the indicator "I manage workload effectively, even during busy shifts" received the lowest mean of 3.70 (SD = 1.22), yet still falls within the high performance range. This reflects the nurses' resilience and adaptability during peak work periods, highlighting their consistent professionalism, even in challenging circumstances.

These findings resonate with those of Sarıköse and Göktepe (2021), who learned that resource management and a supporting work environment contribute significantly to increased job performance. The exceptionally high efficiency levels attained here reinforce the rural health nurses' commitment to clinical and administrative excellence. On-going support by means of workload management techniques and focused capacity development programs will contribute to maintaining — and even boosting — this already impressive level of performance.

Table 3.3 - Level of Job Performance of Rural Health Nurses in terms of Compliance with Professional Standards

Indicators	Sd	Mean
1. I strictly follow nursing protocols and hospital guidelines.	1.03	4.02
2. I consistently adhere to safety and hygiene protocols.	1.08	3.94
3. I document patient information accurately and confidentially.	1.06	4.01
4. I comply with legal and ethical responsibilities in nursing.	0.96	4.11
5. I participate in continuous learning to improve my nursing skills.	0.99	4.08
Average Mean	**4.035 High**	

Scale: 1.0 – 1.80 "Very Low", 1.81 – 2.60 "Low", 2.61 – 3.40 "Average", 3.41 – 4.20 "High"   4.21 – 5.00 "Very High"

The data in Table 3.3 highlights the outstanding job performance of rural health nurses in adhering to professional standards, as shown by the overall average mean of 4.035. This indicates how much the nurses are committed to upholding very high standards in nursing practice, providing quality nursing care, and fulfilling ethical as well as legal obligations in the profession.

The highest-rated indicator, "I comply with legal and ethical responsibilities in nursing" (M = 4.11, SD = 0.96), underscores the nurses' dedication to professionalism and patient trust, setting a strong example for ethical practice. Even the lowest-rated indicator, "I consistently adhere to safety and hygiene protocols" (M = 3.94, SD = 1.08), is still rated high, reflecting a high level of commitment to safety, with only a small room for further improvement. The variation observed here is minimal and indicates that overall, the adherence to these protocols is still highly regarded and practiced across the board.

These findings are consistent with Maghsoud et al. (2022), where the authors concluded that compliance with professional standards significantly improves nursing performance and quality of care. The overall high ratings for all indicators reaffirm the exemplary practice of the nurses and the positive effect on patient outcomes. The slight deviation in safety and hygiene procedures provides an excellent chance to further improve consistency, but generally, the performance is exceedingly strong, reiterating the nurses' adherence to excellence.

Table 3.4- Level of Job Performance of Rural Health Nurses in terms of Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills

Indicators	Sd	Mean
1. I analyze situations carefully before making clinical decisions.	1.18	3.97
2. I respond effectively to emergencies and critical situations.	0.94	4.14
3. I use critical thinking to provide solutions to work-related issues.	1.09	3.91
4. I confidently make decisions based on my nursing expertise.	0.92	4.07
5. I seek guidance from colleagues or supervisors when needed.	1.06	3.95
Average Mean	**4.013**	**High**

Scale: 1.0 – 1.80 "Very Low", 1.81 – 2.60 "Low", 2.61 – 3.40 "Average", 3.41 – 4.20 "High"   4.21 – 5.00 "Very High"

As shown in Table 3.4, rural health nurses have a high standard of job performance in problem-solving and decision-making ability, as indicated by an overall average mean of 4.013. This indicates their high ability to solve clinical problems, make timely decisions when facing pressures, and make valuable contributions to patient care through effective judgment and reasoning.

The indicator that received the highest rating is "I am able to respond effectively to emergencies and critical situations," with a mean of 4.14 and a standard deviation of 0.94, emphasizing the nurses' preparedness and competence in managing urgent healthcare scenarios. Meanwhile, the indicator "I use critical thinking to provide solutions to work-related issues" obtained the lowest mean of 3.91 (SD = 1.09). Although this is the lowest among the set, it remains within the high range, suggesting that while critical thinking is a strength, there is room for enhancement in structured and strategic decision-making approaches.

These results are corroborated by the research of Chen et al. (2021), which found that formal training programs greatly improve clinical decision-making and rational problem-solving abilities among healthcare workers. Their study showed significant improvements in clinical decision-making ($t = 7.677$, $p < 0.05$) and rational problem-solving ($t = 2.312$, $p < 0.05$), further emphasizing the need for ongoing professional development to further improve the critical thinking skills of rural health nurses.

Table 3.5 - Level of Job Performance of Rural Health Nurses in terms of Work Engagement and Commitment

Indicators	Sd	Mean
1. I feel motivated and dedicated to my job.	0.99	4.02
2. I take pride in being a rural health nurse.	1.02	3.87
3. I actively seek ways to improve my job performance.	0.98	4.22
4. I am committed to staying in my workplace for the long term.	1.00	4.13
5. I contribute positively to the overall success of my healthcare facility.	1.07	3.80
Average Mean	**4.011**	**High**

Scale: 1.0 – 1.80 "Very Low", 1.81 – 2.60 "Low", 2.61 – 3.40 "Average", 3.41 – 4.20 "High"   4.21 – 5.00 "Very High"

As presented in Table 3.5, rural health nurses demonstrate a high level of job performance in terms of work engagement and commitment, as evidenced by an overall average mean of 4.011. This indicates a high sense of motivation, professionalism, and active involvement in contributing to the healthcare environment, all of which are important in maintaining high-quality service delivery in rural areas.

The indicator that received the highest rating is "I actively seek ways to improve my job performance," with a mean of 4.22 and a standard deviation of 0.98. This underscores the nurses' commendable initiative and desire for continuous professional growth. Meanwhile, the indicator "I contribute positively to the overall success of my healthcare facility" obtained the mean of 3.80 (SD = 1.07), which, while the lowest among the five, still firmly belongs to the high category. This suggests that rural health nurses recognize their role in the broader success of their institution, although some may modestly view their contributions, reflecting a culture of humility and a desire to do more.

These findings are corroborated by the study of Ghazawy et al. (2019), which confirmed that work engagement strongly predicted job performance ($\beta = 0.14$). Their study showed the importance of motivation, autonomy, and support climate in promoting engagement. Likewise, the high scores in this research indicate the high inner drive and professional dedication of rural health nurses. The modestly lower rating in perceived contribution indicates the possibility of improving institutional support and appreciation mechanisms to increase an even more committed and valued workforce.

Table 3.6 - Summary of Teachers' Performance

Components	Mean	Interpretation
Quality of Patient Care	4.013	High
Efficiency in Completing Tasks	4.031	High
Compliance with Professional Standards	4.035	High
Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills	4.013	High
Work Engagement and Commitment	4.011	High
Average Mean	**4.021 High**	

Scale: 1.0 – 1.80 "Very Low", 1.81 – 2.60 "Low", 2.61 – 3.40 "Average", 3.41 – 4.20 "High" 4.21– 5.00 "Very High"

As presented in Table 3.6, rural health nurses exhibit a high level of job performance across all evaluated components, as evidenced by an overall average mean of 4.021. This simply means that the nurses invariably show excellence in different areas of their professional duties—ranging from patient care and task effectiveness to problem-solving and professional adherence—highlighting their dependability, commitment, and competency in the provision of quality health services.

The component that received the highest rating is "Compliance with Professional Standards," with a mean of 4.035. This highlights the nurses' strong adherence to established ethical guidelines and institutional protocols, affirming their professionalism and commitment to upholding the integrity of their practice. Meanwhile, the component "Work Engagement and Commitment" garnered the lowest mean at 4.011, yet still falls solidly within the high category. This suggests that rural health nurses maintain a commendable level of enthusiasm and loyalty to their roles, with continued opportunities to further enrich engagement through recognition and ongoing support.

These results are echoed by Ghazawy et al. (2019), whose research highlighted that commitment to professional standards and consistent work engagement are key job performance predictors ($\beta = 0.14$). The consistency of the present study with prior research highlights the need to develop a supportive culture that appreciates ongoing development, engagement, and professional excellence. These initiatives can ensure rural health nurses sustain and possibly improve their already high levels of performance in all areas.

Table 4 - Test of Significant Relationship Between Rural Health Nurses' Work Habits and Job Performance

Variables	r value	p-value	Decision
Rural Health Nurses' Work Habits and Job Performance	0.911	0.000	reject the H_o

Note: If $p \leq 0.05$, with a significant difference

As presented in Table 4, there exists a strong and statistically significant relationship between rural health nurses' work habits and their job performance, as evidenced by a correlation coefficient of r = 0.911 and a p-value of 0.000. This exceptionally high correlation underscores that nurses who consistently demonstrate positive work habits are also those who exhibit superior job performance. It highlights the critical role that discipline, professionalism, and commitment play in achieving excellent healthcare outcomes.

The strength of the relationship between work habits and job performance is remarkable, with r = 0.911, indicating a very strong positive association. Furthermore, with the p-value well below the 0.05 threshold, the result is statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (Ho). This affirms that improvements in work habits are closely tied to enhanced job performance, reinforcing the value of fostering strong professional behavior in clinical settings.

These findings are consistent with those of Morrell et al. (2020), who reported that structured work habits significantly enhance employee performance in healthcare environments. Their research supports the premise that reinforcing daily routines, time management, and personal accountability through targeted training can lead to measurable performance improvements. In alignment with this, the current study emphasizes the

importance of professional development initiatives focused on nurturing effective work habits, ultimately contributing to the continued excellence of rural health services.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Conclusion
The study concludes that rural health nurses in Zamboanga del Sur demonstrate consistently high levels of work habits and job performance. Their strong discipline, adaptability, time management, and teamwork significantly contribute to effective patient care and adherence to professional standards. The positive correlation between work habits and job performance affirms that improving nurses' work behaviors can enhance overall job effectiveness. These findings underscore the need for a structured professional development and productivity enhancement program tailored to rural healthcare contexts.

Recommendation
It is recommended for nursing personnel to engage in continuous training focused on time management, adaptability, and teamwork, as these competencies are essential in enhancing professional efficiency and job performance. In line with this, healthcare administrators are encouraged to implement support systems such as workshops, mentorship programs, and team-building activities that promote collaboration and improve work habits. Moreover, rural communities should be encouraged to recognize and support the efforts of nurses, as fostering appreciation and cooperation can significantly boost their morale and overall performance. Likewise, it is advisable for educational institutions to integrate training on professional ethics, time management, and rural healthcare challenges into nursing curricula to better equip students for rural practice. To support these initiatives, health policymakers are urged to formulate policies and invest in infrastructure that facilitate continuous development tailored to the unique needs of rural health workers. Furthermore, professional organizations are encouraged to advocate for skill enhancement programs while providing platforms for networking and sharing best practices, thereby promoting sustained growth and improved performance among rural health nurses.

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