






Assessment of nurses' performance by professional competence
Avaliação de desempenho de enfermeiros por competência profissional
Evaluación del desempeño de enfermeros por competencia profesional

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Objective: to analyze the assessment of nurses' performance by professional competence. **Methods:** cross-sectional research with a descriptive design and quantitative analytical approach carried out from March to June 2021, using an online platform with a Skills Assessment Questionnaire. **Results:** 49 professionals participated, predominantly female, aged between 31 and 40 years old and with experience in care; specializing in private school; length of service at the institution between 11 and 15 years. It was found that in the "excellent" ranking, *Professionalism* and *Communication* stood out (71% and 62.4% respectively), followed by the "good" ranking, the *Nursing Process*, *Problem Solving* and *Management* domains (57.2 %, 54.4% and 48% respectively). **Conclusion:** The *Nursing Process*, *Problem Solving* and *Management* domains require greater intervention in terms of skills, such as continuing education actions.

Descriptors: Employee performance appraisal; Nurses, Male; Professional competence.

Objetivo: analisar a avaliação de desempenho do enfermeiro por competência profissional. **Método:** pesquisa transversal com delineamento descritivo e abordagem quantitativa do tipo analítica realizada de março a junho de 2021, com o uso de uma plataforma online com Questionário de Avaliação de Competências. **Resultados:** participaram 49 profissionais, com predominância do sexo feminino, com idade entre 31 e 40 anos e experiência com assistência; com especialização em escola privada; tempo de serviço na instituição entre 11 e 15 anos. Verificou-se que no ranking "excelente", tiveram destaque o *Profissionalismo* e a *Comunicação* (71% e 62,4% respectivamente), seguido do ranking "boa", os domínios *Processo de Enfermagem*, *Resolução de Problemas* e *Gerenciamento* (57,2%, 54,4% e 48% respectivamente). **Conclusão:** Os domínios *Processo de Enfermagem*, *Resolução de Problemas* e *Gerenciamento* se mostraram domínios que necessitam de maior intervenção no tocante às competências, como ações de educação permanente.

Descritores: Avaliação de desempenho profissional; Enfermeiros; Competência profissional.

Objetivo: analizar la evaluación del desempeño de enfermeros por competencia profesional. **Método:** estudio transversal con diseño descriptivo y enfoque analítico cuantitativo realizado de marzo a junio de 2021, utilizando una plataforma online con un Cuestionario de Evaluación de Competencias. **Resultados:** participaron 49 profesionales, con predominio del sexo femenino, con edades comprendidas entre 31 y 40 años y experiencia asistencial; especialidad en centros públicos; y antigüedad en la institución entre 11 y 15 años. Se constató que en la clasificación de "excelente" destacaban *Profesionalidad* y *Comunicación* (71% y 62,4% respectivamente), seguidos de la clasificación "buena", los dominios *Proceso de Enfermería*, *Resolución de Problemas* y *Gestión* (57,2%, 54,4% y 48% respectivamente). **Conclusión:** Se demostró que los dominios *Proceso de Enfermería*, *Resolución de Problemas* y *Gestión* requieren una mayor intervención en términos de competencias, como acciones de formación continuada.

Descritores: Evaluación del Rendimiento de Empleados, Enfermeras, Competencia profesional.

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INTRODUCTION

The demands of the job market are increasingly greater in terms of professional skills. Companies always look for workers with a different profile, with specific capacity for tasks and up to date daily practices¹. The multiplicity of actions that nurses perform in hospital services stem from responsibility for care, know-how and even the activities carried out by their team; which requires attitude to achieve a level of excellence in the development of specific capabilities for professional practice².

The largest number of people in a hospital institution is in the nursing service, which requires increasing capacity of nurses to acquire new skills³. To this end, it is necessary to implement an undeniable and motivating performance management practice, improving human and organizational activity⁴. The managerial skills of nurses have evolved continuously in all services, specifically in hospitals¹.

After graduation, nurses are not always prepared to deal with various activities, having difficulty managing various functions, whether in the care or administrative areas⁵. Educational institutions in Brazil must enforce the National Curricular Guidelines (*Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais* - DCN) that establish a professional profile, including the following skills during the training period: health care; decision making; communication; leadership; administration; management and continuing education⁶⁻⁷.

Performance assessment seeks reflective, democratic and dialogical evaluative development and shows cognitive, procedural and attitudinal knowledge². This process will be a continuous movement applied to all members of the work team⁴. It can also promote administrative decisions, career plans, monitoring the team as a whole, showing the learning curve of each professional. Assessment also involves the teaching-learning process, making it possible to plan the profile of comprehensive human care, developing fundamental skills to deal with patients, families and the community⁸⁻⁹.

Qualifying professionals to improve health care involves several work fronts, such as teaching, assistance, and research, in addition to government investment in actions. It is worth mentioning the Brazilian government's goal of increasing the number of nurses trained to carry out management actions. The continuous need for training and training of health professionals, both in quantity and quality, is clear, with a view to obtaining the essential skills to meet the goals of the World Health Organization (WHO).

The assessment of professional competence is a social requirement that can result in possibilities for monitoring and evaluation. The use of these methodologies and instruments also makes it possible to define maintenance strategies or changes in professional qualification

proposals presented at the institutional level regarding the quality of assistance offered by these professionals. Nursing, as a profession, actively participates in health care. Understanding, acquiring and evaluating the competence of those who work in the area becomes essential for humanized and scientific care for people, families and society. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the evaluation of nurses' performance by professional competence.

METHODS

This is a cross-sectional research with a descriptive design, a quantitative analytical approach with correlation between variables. The research setting was a philanthropic teaching hospital institution located in the interior of the state of São Paulo, in a medium-sized city. The research population consisted of nurses from the institution. Sampling was non-probabilistic in sequence, that is, all nurses in the population accessible from March to June 2021, in managerial and care positions, in the exercise of their activities, participated in the research. Exclusion criteria were nurses on vacation, medical leave or similar.

The survey was anonymous, carried out via the Google Platform, with the Google Forms™ App, and social media, such as WhatsApp, was used for contact. Participants received the online link to access the virtual questionnaire, allowing the participation of individuals without direct contact with the researcher, complying with current recommendations from the Ministry of Health regarding the COVID-19 pandemic at the time.

When opening the virtual questionnaire, a Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF) was inserted, consisting of a page explaining the research, in addition to requesting authorization for the use of the data.

The data collection instrument provided information about the personal profile, academic and professional background. Subsequently, to assess skills, an instrument was used, originally published in Portugal and validated in Brazil⁷ called the Competence Assessment Questionnaire (CAQ), specifically to assess the frequency of nurses' skills. The CAQ consists of 27 items distributed across five domains: Professionalism, Communication, Management, Nursing Process and Problem Solving, presented in Chart 1^{2,7}. In this instrument, respondents expressed themselves using the five-point Likert scale, where 1 – Not applicable; 2 – Low frequency; 3 – Moderate frequency; 4 – Good; 5 – Excellent.

Chart 1. Competencies assessed for hospital nurses and their respective domains set out in the Competence Assessment Questionnaire - CAQ.

COMPETENCIES	ITEMS
Management	Communication with hospital administrative staff (human resources and finance sector) Participation in scientific research and/or application of results Generation of new knowledge related to the development of the profession Administrative and accountability skills Enthusiasm and motivation in carrying out nursing activities Appropriate application of hospital philosophy and procedures
Professionalism	Personal appearance and professional posture Commitment to punctuality and working hours Comply with and enforce hospital rules and regulations Commitment to the ethical guidelines of the profession Conceptual knowledge of nursing (familiarity with basic sciences and theoretical concepts of nursing)
Problem Solving	Ability to assess patient needs (biological, psychological, social and spiritual) Ability to establish priorities in patient care Carrying out nursing responsibilities based on appropriate scientific foundation Appropriate management of critical patients Efficient use of time at work
Nursing Process	Safety in implementing nursing skills Up to date knowledge in the field of nursing Knowledge of the stages of the nursing process Ability to carry out the steps of the nursing process Ability to make precise and accurate nursing diagnoses
Communication	Communication with patients and their families Communication with doctors and other members of the multidisciplinary team Communication with fellow nurses Maintaining patient safety Documentation of nursing activities Communication of activities with the nursing team

Source: Henriques SH⁷.

Data were tabulated and statistical-descriptive analysis was carried out, through which the profile of the studied sample was drawn, including the variables analyzed and their developments were replicated in an absolute and relative way.

The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculdade de Medicina de São José do Rio Preto, São Paulo, under CAAE 39972220.3.0000.5415.

RESULTS

Of the 62 (100%) nurses at the studied institution, 49 (79%) participated. Of these, 43 (87.76%) were female, 26 (53.06%) were aged between 31 and 40 years, the training period of 19 (38.78%) was predominantly from five to 10 years, and 44 (89.80%) completed a specialization in private schools. Only 45 (91.84%) had experience in assistance and only 13 (26.53%) in management. It was noticed that the length of service of nurses at the institution was over nine years for 40.82% of the participants. The infirmary was the workplace in the

institution with the largest number of nurses, 13 (26.53%), and in intensive care, there were 10 (20.41%). The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of nurses according to personal, educational and work characteristics in the area. Fernandópolis, São Paulo, Brazil. 2022.

Profile of nurses		No	%
		49	100.00
Sex	Female	43	87.76
	Male	6	12.24
Age	22 years to 30 years	9	18.37
	31 years to 40 years	26	53.06
	Over 40 years	14	28.57
Training period	1 to 4 years	6	12.24
	5 to 10 years	19	38.78
	11 to 15 years	17	34.69
	16 years or more	7	14.29
Postgraduate <i>lato sensu</i> - Specialization	Public	2	4.08
	Private	44	89.80
	Does not apply	3	6.12
Postgraduate <i>stricto sensu</i> - Masters	Public	2	4.08
	Private	1	2.04
	Does not apply	46	93.88
Assistance experience	No	4	8.16
	Yes	45	91.84
Management experience	No	36	73.47
	Yes	13	26.53
Length of service at the Institution	1 to 3 years	15	30.61
	4 to 6 years	7	14.29
	7 to 9 years	7	14.29
	Over 9 years	20	40.82
Sector of activity at the Institution	Intensive Therapy	10	20.41
	Emergency Room	9	18.37
	Infirmaries	13	26.53
	Surgical Center/Sterilization of Materials Center	3	6.12
	Obstetric Center/Nursery/Pediatrics	1	2.04
	Hemodialysis	7	14.29
Administrative Sector Nurse	6	12.24	

Table 2. Competency assessment questionnaire (CAQ) and domains in the items Professionalism, Communication, Management, Nursing Process and Problem Solving according to the nurses' perception. Fernandópolis, São Paulo, Brazil. 2022.

COMPETENCIES AND DOMAINS	Frequency(No)/Percentage (%)				
	Does not apply	Low	Moderate	Good	Excellent
PROFESSIONALISM	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)
1. Personal appearance and professional posture	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	21 (42.9)	28 (57.1)
2. Commitment to punctuality and working hours	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	6 (12.2)	43 (87.8)
7. Comply with and enforce hospital rules and regulations	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.1)	13 (26.4)	35 (71.5)
8. Commitment to the ethical guidelines of the profession	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	10 (20.4)	39 (79.6)
9. Conceptual knowledge of nursing (familiarity with basic sciences and theoretical concepts of nursing)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.1)	19 (38.7)	29 (59.2)
COMMUNICATION					
3. Communication with patients and their families	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	17 (34.7)	32 (65.3)
4. Communication with the doctor and other members of the multidisciplinary team	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.1)	21 (42.9)	27 (55.0)
6. Communication with fellow nurses	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.1)	18 (36.7)	30 (61.2)
25. Maintaining patient safety	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.1)	27 (55.0)	20 (40.9)
26. Documentation of nursing activities	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (10.3)	27 (55.0)	17 (34.7)
27. Communication of activities with the nursing team	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.1)	21 (42.9)	27 (55.0)
MANAGEMENT					
5. Communication with the hospital's administrative staff (human resources and finance sector)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.1)	5 (10.3)	27 (55.0)	16 (32.7)
12. Participation in scientific research and/or application of results	6 (12.3)	7(14.3)	10 (20.4)	18 (36.7)	8 (16.3)
21. Generation of new knowledge related to the development of the profession	0 (0.0)	1 (2.1)	5 (10.2)	27 (55.0)	16 (32.7)
22. Administrative and accountability skills	1 (2.1)	1 (2.1)	13 (26.4)	21 (43.0)	13 (26.4)
23. Enthusiasm and motivation in carrying out nursing activities	1 (2.1)	0 (0.0)	6 (12.3)	24 (49.0)	18 (36.6)
24. Appropriate application of hospital philosophy and procedures	1 (2.1)	1 (2.1)	7 (14.2)	24 (49.0)	16 (32.6)
NURSING PROCESS					
10. Safety in implementing nursing skills	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.1)	28 (57.1)	20 (40.8)
11. Up to date knowledge in the area of nursing	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (8.2)	30 (61.2)	15 (30.6)
13. Knowledge of the stages of the nursing process	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (6.1)	25 (51.0)	21 (42.9)
14. Ability to carry out the steps of the nursing process	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (6.1)	26 (53.1)	20 (40.8)
16. Ability to make precise and accurate nursing diagnoses	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (8.2)	31 (63.2)	14 (28.6)
PROBLEM SOLVING					
15. Ability to assess patient's biological, psychological, social and spiritual needs	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.1)	26 (53.1)	21 (42.8)
17. Ability to establish priorities in patient care	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.1)	23 (46.9)	24 (49.0)
18. Carrying out nursing responsibilities based on appropriate scientific foundation	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (6.1)	32 (65.3)	14 (28.6)
19. Appropriate management of critical patients	0 (0.0)	1 (2.1)	3 (6.1)	22 (44.9)	23 (46.9)
20. Efficient use of time at work	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	30 (61.2)	19 (38.8)

In the competency assessment (CAQ) it was found that, in the “excellent” ranking, *Professionalism* and *Communication* stood out (71% and 62.4% respectively), followed, in the “good” ranking, by the *Nursing Process*, *Problem Solving* and *Management* (57.2%, 54.4% and 48% respectively), as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Competency Assessment Questionnaire (CAQ) for the domains Professionalism, Communication, Management, Nursing Process and Problem Solving according to the nurses' perception. Fernandópolis, São Paulo, Brazil. 2022.

COMPETENCIES AND DOMAINS	Frequency(No)/Percentage (%)				
	Does not apply	Low	Moderate	Good	Excellent
	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)
Professionalism (Q.1, 2, 7, 8, 9)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.8%)	69 (28.2%)	174 (71%)
Communication (Q.3, 4, 6, 25, 26, 27)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (3.4%)	131(44.6%)	153 (62.4%)
Management (Q.5, 12, 21, 22,23, 24)	9 (3.1%)	11 (3.7%)	46 (15.6%)	141 (48%)	87 (29.6%)
Nursing Process (Q.10, 11, 13, 14, 16)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	15 (6.1%)	140 (57.2%)	90 (36.7%)
Problem Solving (Q.15,17,18,19, 20)	0 (0%)	1 (0.4%)	10 (4.1%)	133 (54.3%)	101 (41.2%)

Note: Values expressed as the average of the sum of skills per domain.

DISCUSSÃO

Of those surveyed, the majority were female (87.76%). Similar data were found in other studies in different parts of Brazil, such as in the Urgency and Emergency Hospital in the city of Belém, in the state of Pará, where most were females (80%)¹⁰, as well as in private hospital institutions (90.6%)¹¹ in a city in the Triângulo Mineiro region, in the state of Minas Gerais. Nursing is still a female profession, as shown by data from the Federal Nursing Council (*Conselho Federal de Enfermagem* - COFEN), in which 86.2% of its workforce are women, across the vast Brazilian territory¹².

The predominant age group in this research ranged from 31 to 40 years old (53.06%), revealing that nurses are young adults. In a study carried out in a large philanthropic hospital, under private law, in the Northwestern region of the state of Paraná, the average age of nurses was 35 years⁴, and in another research carried out in five private hospital institutions in a municipality in the Triângulo Mineiro region, reports younger ages, from 20 to 29 years old (48.80%)¹⁰. Likewise, data revealed by COFEN in studies on the category showed that 69.5% of nurses are between 26 and 40 years old¹².

Specialization was completed by 93.88% and those who completed a master's degree were the minority (6.12%). The data corroborate a study carried out at a State General Hospital (*Hospital Geral Estadual* - HGE), located in the Northeast of Brazil, which showed that the *Lato Sensu* postgraduate course was taken by 92.3% of the participants, and the *Stricto Sensu* postgraduate course by 7.7%¹³.

The health sector needs educational investment due to major daily changes, as do many professions. It opened up to the field of specializations, to the detriment of more generalist areas, mainly management. The significant number of specialists was above the national indicator (70%), according to data from the COFEN report, but below in the national *Stricto Sensu* postgraduate category (10.9%)¹². These data may be a reflection of the institution not having a career plan and/or incentives for professional qualification, given a higher investment cost for qualification in the *Strictu Sensu* modality. It is up to nurses and managers at the studied institution and higher education institutes to make changes to meet these important factors in the area's growth. Partnerships could be negotiated to improve professionals in the region.

The length of service at the institution was 9 years (40.82%) related to the training time of 5 to 10 years in 38.78%; probably many have been part of the institution since their academic training. Another study carried out at a Public Hospital Institution, in a municipality in the Northeastern region of the state of São Paulo, had nurses working at the institution between 17 and 21 years (66.6%) and training time above 20 years (33.4%)¹⁴.

In an investigation carried out in a large philanthropic hospital under private law in the Northwestern region of the state of Paraná, it is reported that for the managerial work process to have resolution, the nurse as manager has the role of articulator and driver of team motivation³. Therefore, the development of managerial competence is of paramount importance. In the results found, there was a predominance of experience in assistance (91.84%) compared to experience with management. These results corroborate those found in a religious hospital institution in a city in the state of Santa Catarina, where not all those who had more experience in care presented essential management skills¹⁵.

Analyzing the responses of the nurses participating in the study, the consistency of the different competencies listed in the CAQ was observed. Most frequencies were considered by nurses to be good or excellent. Another study demonstrates similar results, revealing that even in the face of the complex reality of the hospital environment, the constant updating of technologies and new forms of work relationships with the presence of multidisciplinary teams, there is a committed performance of nurses, that is, positive attitudes occur with the quest to develop numerous professional skills⁷.

Performance evaluation is an instrument that can manage administrative decisions such as career plans. The approval of people selection criteria makes it possible to monitor the nursing service individually, the relationship between expected and achieved results and to comprehensively and continuously monitor the progress of the team as a whole, showing the

learning curve of each professional. Therefore, it provides a diagnosis of information regarding the educational process¹⁵.

This method helped to positively identify gaps and personal difficulties and the possibilities of leveraging the professional development of nurses at the institution studied.

When the nursing process is flawed in any care sector, methods must be used whose performance assessment instruments are specific to measure and improve the professional's skills.

Considering that nurses in their work process are dynamic professionals, who must be attentive and assertive in their conduct, communication is essential for the development and implementation of all activities. The results found in relation to communication were satisfactory, as this skill was considered excellent by the majority of nurses. This domain was different from those reported in another study, in which it was shown that nurses still have difficulty developing and applying this in practice¹⁶.

For services to be effective, they depend on the presence of links, like a chain, in leadership practices, which depend on the organization of processes, in multiple tasks with a high level of demand, which interfere with care assistance.

The competence of the nurse's professional profile can help meet the needs of the hospital organization. Training must guarantee its graduates effective communication, theoretical and practical knowledge, team and multidisciplinary work, applicable learning at times when they become professionals, thus allowing them to become a team leader and supervisor, with quick resolution of problems, skills and attitudes of their professional competence.

CONCLUSION

The *Nursing Process*, *Problem Solving* and *Management* domains presented aspects that showed lower rankings in terms of competencies, a context in which interventions are needed, such as continuing education actions.

The study had limitations, since the method used, the CAQ questionnaire, is a new tool inserted in professional assessment, requiring further work on its applicability; Despite this, this research brings visibility and reflection on the considerable skills of professional nurses, given the multiplicity of their duties, as well as identifying gaps in care, knowledge and management that need to be developed.

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