

How to Cite:

Humbelina, O. G. M., Esthela, G. G. L., Isabel, G. G. M., & Nancy, P. S. N. (2022). Main determinants of the performance of nursing professionals and their influence on the quality of care to the users of the district 01-D01 Guaranda-Salud. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S6), 6134–6143. <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS6.10945>

Main determinants of the performance of nursing professionals and their influence on the quality of care to the users of the district 01-D01 Guaranda-Salud

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Abstract—Nursing is a profession considered in the careers of public interest for the Ecuadorian state, it is the largest labor force in the health system and interacts with the user permanently 24 hours a day, in the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual areas. Nursing covers intramural and extramural spaces and develops activities of promotion, prevention, healing, and restoration of health and life in its essential competencies, direct care, and management. The proposed objective is to identify the main determinants of the performance of nursing professionals, which allows consolidating a support system for decision-making in the work and academic areas; starting from a real analysis of the situation of nursing professionals, aiming to establish the relationship of how they influence the quality of care of the users of District 02D01, to subsequently propose improvement plans. Methodology: the present investigation is a

descriptive correlational transversal study applied to 146 nursing professionals and 4171 heads of the family of the 22 operative units of the district management and the Alfredo Noboa Montenegro Hospital, all corresponding to district 02D01 Guaranda Ecuador. Conclusions: the nursing personnel surveyed evidence that their work performance is framed by internal and external situations specific to each professional, with working conditions, knowledge, and practice, which influence their full development.

Keywords--nursing, quality performance, health care.

Introduction

In 2015, the number of nursing personnel in Ecuador was 16931 and the number of health facilities increased from 3 912 to 4 081, which represented an increase of 4.3% to previous years. According to INEC, the growth was due to the increase recorded in the number of public facilities, which was 9.5% while private facilities experienced a lack of knowledge of 16.4%, which requires that public facilities represent 83.8% of the total (*El número de médicos creció 135,1% en Ecuador desde 2015 - El Comercio*, n.d.). Nursing focuses on the care of health and life, and it is towards this aim that the efforts and work carried out for the care of the subjects of care are directed; the person, the family, and the community. Care scenarios are found in daily life since this is where people's daily activities take place. On the other hand, care also takes place in the hospital environment, but this is not the only space where the essence of nursing is developed. It can be said that nursing is "one" discipline, not several, but one that is performed in different spaces and scenarios, without losing the essence that characterizes it: health care (*El cuidado de enfermería a los grupos humanos*, n.d.)

According to Aguilar et al. (2016), the professional performance of nursing is a definition that is little addressed, so it is necessary to perform an evaluative analysis of concepts and approaches for its formation from references in the international and Cuban context and its implications for the performance of the nursing professional. Regarding the subject, they show that the determinants of nursing professionals' performance can be divided into labor, emotional, and behavioral factors. Among the labor factors are overwork, rotating shifts, staff shortages, workload, lack of rest, non-compliance on the part of the employer, and wage praxis; among the emotional factors are resentment towards the profession due to lack of recognition, lack of motivation, and sleep disorders. Finally, among the behavioral factors is a lack of collaboration among colleagues or with physicians (*Existencias: Factores que influyen en el rendimiento laboral del personal de enfermería*, n.d.).

The absence of employee training, rewards and sanctions, physical job insecurity, and excessive workload, among others, could have repercussions on professional performance, which would have an impact on the quality of care and job performance. Since in the coming years all academic units in the country will implement new curricular designs for nursing careers, there is a clear need for updated data on the main determinants of nursing professionals' performance

and their influence on the quality of care; for this reason, the present study proposes to have a baseline that gathers information that will allow the health authorities of District 02D01 and the Public Health System of Ecuador to propose strategies to offer improvements in nursing care and the working conditions of the professional.

Materials and Methods

The present research is a descriptive correlational cross-sectional study applied to 146 nursing professionals and 4171 heads of the family of the 22 operational units of the district management and the Alfredo Noboa Montenegro Hospital, all corresponding to district 02D01 Guaranda Ecuador. Two surveys were applied to collect the information. The first one was directed to nursing professionals and focused on socioeconomic, labor, and academic determinants. The criteria established for the elaboration of the survey were living conditions, labor conditions, knowledge conditions, and practice conditions, distributed in 42 questions. The second survey was directed to the users of nursing services and focused on the perception of the quality of care. For the descriptive and inferential analysis of the data, the Chi-square test was applied using SPSS-22 statistical software. In addition, correlation tests were performed between performance and quality of care, selecting as variables gender, age, marital status, health status, and working conditions.

Results and Discussion

Living conditions

98% of the total population surveyed were women. Since its birth, nursing has been closely linked to gender, being an eminently feminine activity, associated, since ancient times, with the maternal instinct (Rodríguez et al., 2011). Although different age ranges (20-60 years) were surveyed, the average age of the population is between 31 and 40 years, representing 49% of the total population surveyed. Although there is a study (*Calidad del cuidado de enfermería percibida por pacientes hospitalizados*, n.d.) The other studies have not found any relationship and rather agree that the low presence of nursing personnel under 30 years of age is due to an exodus from the province to the city for economic reasons. In this particular case, it could be inferred that a similar situation occurs: despite having an academic training institute for nursing professionals, it can be noted that the number of young people is significantly low, so it can be deduced that professionals migrate to other regions to practice in search of economic improvement.

As for the material or couple condition, the study showed that 62% of the respondents are legally married, 2% are in a free union, and 31% are single. These results generate contraposition of the standard behavior of the health professionals' capacity and the difficulty to establish a stable family life due to their high workload (Index de Enfermería, n.d.). In the case of the study, it is reported that about 71% are in a common-law union or married. Their affective or partner condition has a direct impact on the performance of health professionals "nursing personnel report exhaustion or psychological fatigue as a result of the

conditions and high workloads; to these conditions, the overload that women have to assume in family care is added"(*Repositorio Digital: Selección del cuidador familiar de pacientes dependientes y su relación con el nivel de sobrecarga, en el centro de salud "El Blanqueado", 2019, n.d.*)

One of the main factors that trigger uncertainty and affect work performance in any area is the economic factor. The results establish that 17% of the nursing personnel receive a salary of less than USD 1000 and that the majority (80%) generated an estimated income of between USD 1000 and 1500, while as far as the family nucleus is concerned, it was established that only 17% of the families of nursing professionals received an income of less than USD 1000. Several studies have been conducted on the correlation between the perceived income associated with the workload and the quality of service offered. Improving job satisfaction and living conditions should be an objective of health care institutions (Guadalupe et al., 2009). A recent study on labor statistics shows that women have less favorable working conditions, only 48.2% of them have adequate employment, while 60.7% of men do, a possible explanation is given by the assumption that women are less likely to express their dissatisfaction (Grijalva et al., 2007)

Another influential factor is the condition of life since it directly influences the emotional stability of the people. Regarding the population surveyed, it was established that 71% own their home, about access to drinking water, 100% to electronic service, and 100% access to the sewage system. Results similar to those obtained in the census showed that approximately 10.5% of the population of Guaranda owns inherited housing, representing approximately 74% of people with their own home, 10.9% rented, and the rest in other conditions. In terms of accessibility to basic services in 2010, 57% of the population had access to public water, 88% had access to electricity, 36% reported having access to sewage, and 14% had internet access. There has been an increase in housing conditions according to the projection of public infrastructure improvements (*Censos 2011 | INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE ESTADISTICA Y CENSOS, n.d.*). No type of disability was determined in the respondents, which determines that there is no inclusion of the disabled in the canton. In the same vein, it was determined that only 12% of the respondents have a diagnosed disease, however, 21% report having some type of medical check-up periodically or sporadically. A study on the perspective of nursing professionals suffering from some type of illness revealed that among the main attitudes and strategies adopted by health professionals in the face of their illness are self-deception, concealment, denial, informal consultations, and self-diagnosis/self-treatment (Guerrero Portillo et al., 2014)

As for the psycho-emotional health of the respondents, only 1% reported a condition that was not at all satisfactory; the level of achievement reached in the life project was also evaluated, showing that 62% considered their project to be moderately achieved, and 38% fully achieved. An investigation in a similar field evaluates the satisfaction of the nursing personnel in terms of achievements, showing that 62% consider a satisfactory level, 14% unsatisfactory and 24% did not answer, citing "a favorable motivation is observed in the different strata which means that people, despite the obstacles they face daily, set goals and meet them,

this allows them to feel proud of their work, of the achievements they have obtained" (Castro C, 2014).

Working conditions

Another determining agent in the degree of quality of service of health professionals, in general, is the capacity to achieve an integral development of their technical capacities due to the high level of commitment required by this type of profession, satisfaction or not can generate a certain degree of psychological vulnerability in the face of difficult and stressful situations. For the present research case, under the same concept, aspects related to professional development were evaluated from different questions. Regarding the academic level acquired by the respondents, only 21% have a fourth-level degree (master's or Ph.D.), 29% have a specialization and 60% only have a third-level degree. Regarding the educational level of the personnel interviewed, the Ecuadorian Federation of Nursing stated that less than 25% of nursing professionals carry out fourth-level studies (FEDE, 2015). Currently, it is a requirement to work with a bachelor's degree (third level) (ASEDEFE- REACE, 2015). In a study conducted regarding the educational level of the nursing staff of the Alfredo Noboa Provincial Hospital, it was determined that 59% of the staff has a master's degree, 33% with a bachelor's degree, and 8% with a specialization degree (Canacuan et al., 2014).

The contractual conditions of the employment relationship with their employers indicate that 58% have a provisional or definitive appointment and 21% present a contract relationship. In a case study, a non-proportional behavior is obtained regarding the employment status of nursing personnel (Elsa, 2017), with a result of 43% of professionals with a definitive appointment in contrast to the 55% surveyed in Guaranda, 34% provisional appointment, 23% of detected in the present case study. The results are concordant with the research of (Beltrán & Valencia, 2015) where 50% are present definitive appointments, 23.44% provisional appointments; the employment relationship with definitive or provisional appointments is concordant with what is established by the Organic Law of Public Service and its Regulations, section, 4° Art.16 to Art.22 (National Assembly of Ecuador, 2010). Of those surveyed, it was determined that 100% receive a social benefit from the IEES insurance and that they do not have private insurance. In this regard, research conducted with this same parameter establishes that there is a correlation in the quality of service of those health professionals who receive a level of security associated with social benefits, in this research they applied a satisfaction survey and determined that 35% of the surveyed population was satisfied with the perceived social benefits, and 36% were not, while the rest were indifferent (*Satisfacción laboral de los profesionales de enfermería del Hospital Pablo Arturo Suárez, período agosto-noviembre 2013*, n.d.).

Knowledge conditions

Professional fulfillment and success in the workplace are closely linked to knowledge management. For health professionals, it is imperative to keep constantly updated regarding new techniques, tools, treatments, diagnostic mechanics, and humanistic trends for patient care, amidst the sea of content and

innovative information that emerges daily worldwide. The access to knowledge of health professionals in nursing belonging to district 02D01 Guaranda-Salud was evaluated, determining that 59.18% sporadically attend some informative event, 23.47% do so systematically and 17.35% do not report participating. Of these, the continuing education modality with the highest attendance is not any of the above mentioned, but courses with 26% participation, followed by congresses with 31% and seminars with 27%, finally 5% report attending congresses and there is no evidence that they make use of scholarships. This report is somewhat alarming because of the importance of having nursing professionals with continuing education that will allow them to offer quality and avant-garde treatment to the community of the region. The responsibility for continuing education lies with each professional nurse; constant updating and development are essential to keep abreast of scientific and technical changes (Mabel, 2014). Another study showed that 54.4% (n=65) of the nurses do not consider that there is a continuing education program for them and only 14.2% consider it to be so (*Gestión de la calidad de los cuidados de enfermería hospitalaria basada en la evidencia científica*, n.d.).

One of the retractor factors in the training activities is the economic availability, the analysis of the data showed that 32.67% access the training activities by self-management, 42.57% do not access and only 4.95% have funding from the institution where they value; in the same line of research, it was determined that 75% of the population needs to make fourth-year studies to improve their professional status. A publication of a study carried out to define the educational and research factor of the human talent in an institution refers that there is a problem regarding the availability of institutional financing for the training of the nursing professional, citing that according to the evidence, the scarce organizational support, the lack of economic resources are factors that limit the development of research and continuous training, generating almost no training and disinterest in self-learning" (Alexandra & Cañas, n.d.).

Another significant aspect regarding academic updating is the motivation felt by professionals to develop research, 88% of them have not participated in any type of research, only 7% have participated in study as author or co-author and only 10% have published in indexed research journals. According to (Castro & Simian, 2018). Nursing research improves the efficiency and effectiveness of interventions and the safety and execution of patient care. Of the total respondents, 10% have been speakers at a congress with a self-authored topic and 90% have not participated in the last 5 years. Villamizar-Carvajal et al. (2018) conclude that the participation of the nursing professional in research is established as follows: 49.7% have participated in data collection, 34.1%, and 28.6% have elaborated research protocols, but only 12.4% have directed research and 13.5% have been the main responsible for the research.

Practice conditions

One of the aspects assessed in this research was the distribution of the professionals according to their levels of experience, determining that 19% of the professionals are assigned based on their preparation, 14% according to the professional's selection, and 65% by decision of the institution. 31% of these

professionals are assigned to inpatient and 27% to out-of-hospital work. A bibliographic review on the assignment of nursing personnel reports that the role of "allism" originates as one of the negative effects of modernization processes since they promote that institutions attribute and grant functions and responsibilities to the nursing professional that is not part of his or her know-how. When the role of the professional is redefined to respond to the needs of financial efficiency, the intersubjective social relationship that mediates the processes of care and the understanding of the health-disease phenomenon with the people who require the intervention of the nursing professional becomes a secondary issue (*Profesionales de enfermería y cuidado en las condiciones laborales actuales*, n.d.).

Another variable studied was the work planning exercise, establishing that 10% do not carry out this type of action ever or not at all frequently and 69% plan their work frequently or very frequently. A study of the applicability and development of the nursing care plan identified that the frequency of elaboration was 59.62% sometimes, corresponding to frequently, and 17.31% always, corresponding to very frequently, corroborating the trend described in this information analysis (*Repositorio Digital: Determinación de los factores psicosociales en el ambiente laboral que influyen en la salud mental del personal de enfermería del Centro Quirúrgico del Hospital Alfredo Noboa Montenegro de la Ciudad de Guaranda mediante el test de istas y el cuestionario Maslach Burnout*. 2013, n.d.) The most commonly applied planning tool is the EAP with 54% of incidence, followed by the assignment of activities with 27% and the rest through theoretical models or programs. In a study carried out in a hospital in Ecuador, the analysis showed that 60.9% of the professionals affirmed that there are no written and updated care plans (*Gestión de la calidad de los cuidados de enfermería hospitalaria basada en la evidencia científica*, n.d.)

One distribution evaluated was how the work performance in the district is discriminated, reporting that 91% of the respondents provide direct care in conjunction with other activities such as education, administration, or research, and only 8% are dedicated exclusively to education or research. The results obtained show a similar distribution to the referent made by (*Repositorio Digital Universidad Técnica del Norte: Análisis de la situación laboral de las/os profesionales de enfermería en los hospitales privados del distrito Metropolitano de Quito 2015*, n.d.) where it was found that 93.5% of the population performed direct hospital care similar to the sum of all nurses who perform this type of work in district 02D01 Guaranda Health 36% in another line presents 11% of professionals in administrative areas and 17% in educational activities. Regarding supervision activities at work, it was determined that 40% are performed daily, 14% weekly, and 39% monthly. Of these, 73% of the supervision activities are carried out in a programmed way to exercise a control mechanism or support the work of the nursing personnel with 73% and 23% respectively. The instrument used to carry out this type of supervision is mostly the supervision guides (55% of the time), field diary, or notebooks. In a study to define the level of satisfaction with the frequency of supervision, it was determined that the group of nurses felt a level of dissatisfaction that the nurses did not feel (*Satisfacción laboral de los profesionales de enfermería del Hospital Pablo Arturo Suárez, período agosto-noviembre 2013*, n.d.)

Regarding the evaluation parameters, 45% use the activity matrices, 32% are the nursing record and 22% with nursing reports, these evaluations are mostly applied in team meetings 33%, evaluation form 30% or personal interviews 37%, in a study conducted by (*Repositorio Digital PUCESE: Desempeño de los/las líderes de enfermería y la motivación del personal en el cumplimiento de actividades y la satisfacción de los usuarios del Hospital Fisco Misional Divina Providencia, cantón San Lorenzo provincia de Esmeraldas durante los meses abril-junio 2014*, n.d.) determined that only 37% of the nurses surveyed receive an evaluation. In the same order of ideas, the relationship of the tasks with the optimal performance profile was evaluated, determining that according to the appreciation of the nursing professionals 94% are in a related position; 42% consider that the tasks are related to their professional profile and 51% related to a graduate profile. A bibliographic study sustains that nursing professionals should have the autonomy to act in what they know, since, although they are trained under a scientific, holistic knowledge, and general knowledge of the fields of action of the profession; the interests of each professional are generally consolidated with their subsequent training and their expertise in a specific field (Arco-Canoles & Suarez-Calle, 2018).

Conclusions

In the results of the proposed research, most of the professionals are female and to a lesser extent male. Nursing has been a feminist career but nowadays it is breaking with these stereotypes and leaving them in the past. The professionals who work in the operative units are married, young, with a family nucleus of four to six members, and indicate that their life project is moderately achieved but it can be achieved with the same effort and work that they are doing in every moment of their daily life. The research shows that the monthly income of their households is under what is established for health personnel in the Ministry of Labor, which allows a sustainable income for their families and most of them have their own house and basic services necessary for subsistence at present. The research emphasizes that most of the people do not have any disability or disease, which shows that they are healthy people who do not take any type of medication, which is of great economic benefit for both the family and the state.

The nursing professionals surveyed carry out continuing education outside the institution sporadically, participating in educational modalities such as courses, seminars, and conferences, and there is no participation of the professionals in any of these educational modalities since the institution does not have self-management and financing programs. Some professionals need to be updated in different functions for the well-being of the users such as direct care, administration, and research, specializing in different fourth-level areas, especially the master's degree, and participating in some research, not all of which have been published in indexed journals, participating either as authors or co-authors of the research, and most of these research professionals have not participated in congresses as speakers.

The conditions of the practice of the nursing professionals to whom the study was conducted reflect that most of the subjects studied work in an area according to their preparation. The distribution of their work will be frequently performed the

EAP is one of the most used instruments for work planning, the organization of the work is a team; while direct care is used for the execution of their work whose frequency of supervision is Daily, among the types of supervision, control is used and the supervision guides are the most used instruments for this. In the evaluation, nursing reports are handled in team meetings and it is evident that the optimal performance profile, tasks with the professional profile, and tasks with the graduation profile are related to the professional profile and tasks with the graduation profile.

Acknowledgement

To the nursing staff of District 02D01 and the Alfredo Noboa Montenegro Hospital and its authorities for the facilities provided for the development of the research.

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