

Work performance and interpersonal relationships of nursing professionals. Review of the topic

Desempeño laboral y relaciones interpersonales de los profesionales de Enfermería. Revisión al tema

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ABSTRACT

Interaction between individuals is fundamental for social development and the achievement of common goals, especially in the workplace. In the context of nursing, it is crucial for professionals to develop interpersonal skills and knowledge that improve their performance, as this directly impacts the quality of the health service. In high-pressure situations, such as emergencies, the ability to work as a team and maintain effective interpersonal relationships becomes even more relevant, as stress can affect both staff performance and patient care. Therefore, it is essential to assess these dynamics to ensure a healthy and efficient work environment. A literature review was developed with the aim of updating knowledge about job performance and interpersonal relationships of nursing professionals. Several studies conducted in different hospitals in Lima and other Latin American countries have explored the relationship between interpersonal relationships and job performance of nursing staff. In general, it was found that nurses with better interpersonal relationships tend to have higher job performance, while those with poor relationships usually experience average or low performance. Furthermore, it is noted that a work environment characterized by poor interpersonal relationships can generate stress, depression and negatively affect the professional quality of life of the staff. The perception of workers indicates that improving these relationships could increase their productivity and well-being at work.

Keywords: Interpersonal Relationships; Job Performance; Nurse; Emergency.

RESUMEN

La interacción entre individuos es fundamental para el desarrollo social y el logro de objetivos comunes, especialmente en el ámbito laboral. En el contexto de la enfermería, es crucial que los profesionales desarrollen habilidades interpersonales y conocimientos que mejoren su desempeño, ya que esto impacta directamente en la calidad del servicio de salud. En situaciones de alta presión, como emergencias, la capacidad de trabajar en equipo y mantener relaciones interpersonales efectivas se vuelve aún más relevante, ya que el estrés puede afectar tanto el rendimiento del personal como la atención al paciente. Por lo tanto, es esencial evaluar estas dinámicas para garantizar un entorno laboral saludable y eficiente. Se desarrolló una revisión bibliográfica con el objetivo de actualizar el conocimiento sobre el desempeño laboral y las relaciones interpersonales de los profesionales de Enfermería. Varios estudios realizados en diferentes hospitales de Lima y otros países latinoamericanos han explorado la relación entre las relaciones interpersonales y el desempeño laboral del personal de enfermería. En general, se encontró que las enfermeras con mejores relaciones interpersonales tienden a tener un rendimiento laboral más alto, mientras que aquellas con relaciones deficientes suelen experimentar un rendimiento regular o bajo. Además, se destaca que un ambiente laboral caracterizado por malas relaciones interpersonales puede generar estrés, depresión y afectar negativamente la calidad de vida profesional del personal. La percepción de los trabajadores indica que mejorar estas relaciones podría incrementar su productividad y bienestar en el trabajo.

Palabras clave: Relaciones Interpersonales; Desempeño Laboral; Enfermera; Emergencia.

INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal relationships

It is the mutual interaction between two individuals. It refers to the institutions and laws of social interaction regulated by social relationships. Interpersonal relationships allow us to achieve specific goals necessary for our societal development, most of which are understood when forming bonds with another person.⁽¹⁾

Regarding job performance, according to Tarqui and Quintana,⁽²⁾ two the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) mention that it is essential for nursing staff to know how to manage a set of knowledge to improve job performance because it is the professional's mission to increase or develop their skills to improve health services. The nursing staff's behavior and interpersonal skills are critical in efficiently contributing to and performing work. "Health workers, like all other workers, must enjoy their right to decent work, safe and healthy working environments, and social protection in terms of health care, sick leave, and occupational diseases and injuries."

In Peru, Aguilar and Huamani⁽³⁾ mention a direct relationship between interpersonal relationships and job performance in nursing professionals. If these are not positive, quality indicators are put at risk.

In an emergency, the high number of patients, interpersonal skills, and work efficiency are closely related. When staff are under a lot of stress, teamwork and the value of good interpersonal relationships are reflected in these circumstances. This can cause problems during their activities, which in turn affects the work team. In this context, a literature review was conducted to update knowledge on nursing professionals' job performance and interpersonal relationships.

METHOD

A literature search was conducted in the Redalyc, Elsevier Science Direct, PubMed/Medline, SciELO databases, and the Google Scholar search engine. Search strategies were used to retrieve information, employing descriptors and similar terms in Spanish and English. From the resulting documents, those that provided theoretical and empirical information on the subject were selected.

DEVELOPMENT

Castro⁽⁴⁾ defines that there are different types of interpersonal relationships, such as intimate or emotional relationships, which are those in which there is a deep connection of intimacy with the other person; family relationships, which are formed between people in our family; superficial relationships, which are defined as those in which there is no depth, they are brief and fleeting; circumstantial relationships, are those that are halfway between superficial and intimate relationships, and rivalrous relationships: this type of relationship stems from enmity, competition, or even hatred and resentment.

Galdós and Huamani⁽⁵⁾ conceptualize interpersonal relationships as the exchange of information, attitudes, and treatment between nursing professionals and healthcare personnel and the person being cared for, establishing three dimensions: communication, attitudes, and treatment.

Dimension 1 Communication. According to Quintanilla,⁽⁶⁾ communication is exchanging information between two or more individuals to provide and receive information.

The sender, the receiver, and the message presented are all part of the communication process.

Nonverbal language is transmitted through nonspoken language via gestures and body language. Communication functions include representing emotions, appealing, contact, and bodily communication.

According to Pérez and Gardey,⁽¹⁾ the word derives from the Latin *comunicare*, which means "to share something, to put in common"; communication is a phenomenon inherent in the relationship that living beings maintain when they are in groups.

Communication involves sending a message through signals such as sounds and gestures, among others. In addition, the receiver must have the skills to decipher the message for communication to be successful, after which the receiver becomes the sender.⁽¹⁾

Dimension 2 Attitudes. Attitude is the condition that guides human behavior in any situation in life. It reflects a person's intentions and purpose in their positive or negative actions and can affect others' environment. Therefore, it is essential to maintain a good attitude, as it has a direct impact on decision-making. It is crucial to be optimistic when carrying out activities and facing life's decisions to ensure a good quality of life.

It should be noted that companies pay greater attention to these characteristics when hiring a candidate for a job position. They review the attitudes of the worker, their ability to collaborate in a team, adaptability, time management, stress control, communication, analytical skills, proactivity, and ability to resolve conflicts.⁽⁷⁾

Dimension 3 Treatment. Refers to the actions and effects produced by treatment. This verb can mean the act of doing something to someone since treatment is also a way of communicating or establishing relationships with another person or group. The type of treatment considered morally ethical or correct is related to sound therapy.⁽⁸⁾

Likewise, humans interpret the information they receive from the outside world differently and have different values and needs. In this sense, the ability to personalize the cordial treatment of others is essential. It is fundamental to understand that respect, communication, and attitude are the three basic characteristics of personal therapy.⁽⁹⁾

Job performance

According to Acosta,⁽¹⁰⁾ it assesses an employee's ability to perform their job. It is an individual assessment based on each

person's effort and achievement of objectives. It is the evaluation of an employee's performance during their career progression. It is an individual assessment based on effort and professional and personal skills evaluation. The human resources department carries out this assessment and is responsible for assessing the employees' effectiveness and determining whether they are a good fit for the company's success.⁽¹¹⁾

For Licari⁽¹²⁾, there are seven methods of evaluating job performance:

- Objective evaluation: this type of evaluation is beneficial for monitoring progress toward achieving an objective and establishing quality parameters.
- Graded assessment: In this type of evaluation, grades are assigned depending on the level at which the assignment was completed. This evaluation allows factors external to the employee's performance to be taken into account and, in turn, facilitates the measurement of other indicators by obtaining an average of them.
- Test evaluation: This type of evaluation involves paying more attention to the process than the final result. It facilitates assessment in the conflict resolution stage.
- Self-evaluation: Self-evaluators allow employees to evaluate their performance and thus rate their work.
- Hierarchical evaluation: Team leaders are responsible for evaluating their team's performance, as they are the people with the most knowledge and experience in the field. In addition, they know their colleagues best, so they can evaluate their performance both quantitatively and qualitatively.
- Peer evaluation: This type of evaluation is based on colleagues of the same rank evaluating each other and diagnosing their performance and results, either anonymously or publicly.
- 360-degree evaluation: These evaluation tools not only take into account the opinions of managers but also the opinions of coworkers and impartial individuals who do not belong to the same department or work service.

In Peru, Baquerizo & Nieves⁽¹³⁾ establish six dimensions for the job performance variable:

Dimension 1 Knowledge of the job. Workers are expected to have the knowledge, responsibility, and ability to interact with the rest of the team to achieve synergies and constant innovation through teamwork, training, and the ongoing pursuit of performance improvement to offer the best personal service to the organization. It is at this point that human resource management policies have begun to play an essential role in organizations, seeking to identify the drivers that motivate knowledge workers, sometimes even unconsciously, to intelligently satisfy these motivational elements and achieve, individually and collectively, the most significant possible contribution to the company and their long-term retention.⁽¹⁴⁾

Every profession is a world unto itself and requires skill, but there are skills that every job requires. As competition for jobs increases and more interviews are required, more qualities are taken for granted in workers.⁽¹⁵⁾

Dimension 2 Quality of work. The quality of our work largely determines our well-being. Most of us spend a large part of our time at work and work for a large part of our lives, so the quality of our work significantly determines our quality of life.⁽¹⁶⁾

Quality at work or quality of working life refers to the satisfaction of key needs for workers. It refers to the resources, activities, and outcomes derived from people's participation in the workplace.⁽¹⁷⁾

Dimension 3 Relationships with people. A human relationship is any interaction between two or more human beings, either directly or indirectly, in which each person attempts to satisfy their needs and is governed by a code of reference. Most of the time, these needs are not met, and the interaction becomes deficient.⁽¹⁾

Córdova Cardey⁽¹⁸⁾ tends to define it as that interaction between people with an intrinsic fundamental element: personal acceptance and acceptance of others. It guarantees that both attitudes are connected and that when people can accept themselves, they can also accept others. A person must work on this to fulfill themselves as a person. Having difficulty communicating or expressing themselves harmoniously with their family or friends will cause problems in their professional and personal lives.

Dimension 4 Emotional stability. Emotional stability is precisely one of the personality traits that refers to remaining calm and tranquil and determines how a person copes with and faces complicated situations in life without problems or blockages and in a satisfactory manner.⁽⁴⁾

Some people have a trait that allows them to cope with and manage their emotions favorably. People with this skill can face and overcome stressful situations without them affecting them. Therefore, they will not remain stuck in negative emotions and can develop positive perspectives.⁽¹⁹⁾

Dimension 5 Capacity for synthesis. Synthesizing is an act of will: we need to be courageous and determined to define a single idea, proposal, or alternative that we consider to be the best, whether we choose one of those analyzed or merge several of the options studied and go down that integrated path.⁽²⁰⁾

The power of analysis and synthesis enables us to thoroughly understand our situations, simplify their explanation, reveal connections that might otherwise go unnoticed, and generate new knowledge from what we have already learned. This skill is versatile and linked to various aptitudes and competencies, such as critical thinking, conflict resolution, organization, planning, and decision-making.⁽²⁰⁾

One of the qualities essential in a good instructor is the ability to synthesize. When a guide teaches us, it is imperative that they speak concisely and that the message is always appropriate, easy to understand, and straightforward. There is a high risk of explaining concepts in a complicated way and with too many meaningless words because some instructors habitually like to hear themselves talk and lose sight of the importance of getting their message across to their students.⁽²¹⁾

Dimension 6 Analytical ability. Analytical skills help us gain a deeper understanding of the reality we face. With rational analysis, we can see where we stand as a company, better define problems, and find more effective solutions. Critical thinking is about applying critical thinking to our work area to establish relationships between elements, acquire new knowledge, and always seek new perspectives to approach our problems.⁽²³⁾

Pérez⁽²³⁾ mentions that analytical ability could be defined as the skill that allows us to process information in a way that will help us make better decisions and obtain better results. Other skills directly related to analytical ability include observation, logic, and creativity.

Hildegard Peplau's theory describes psychodynamic nursing as the ability to understand one's behavior to help others identify their difficulties and thus apply basic principles to address their problems and develop better human relationships. It is an interpersonal and therapeutic process that works in cooperation with other human processes, making health a possibility for individuals in communities. This approach is based on the idea that people are human beings who live in a kind of unstable equilibrium so that when that equilibrium is disturbed, illness appears.⁽²⁴⁾

According to Chiavenato and Sapiro,⁽²⁵⁾ "Performance evaluation is the assessment of an employee's performance based on the goals achieved in their job, which is evaluated using pre-established objectives. This evaluation encourages employees to strive for excellence and consider their strengths through individual strategies already established to meet the institution's goals. Workers should be evaluated formally and informally regularly. This process can also be referred to as merit evaluation, employee evaluation, progress reports, or functional efficiency evaluation.

López et al.⁽²⁶⁾ researched whether the quality of life at work indicates any significance about the level of work performance perceived by doctors at the Mexican Social Security Institute. The study used a quantitative, cross-sectional, and predictive approach. The sample consisted of 169 doctors who were given instruments such as the CVL-HP questionnaire and a work performance measurement scale, EDL. They also validated and obtained optimal reliability, determined a positive and significant linear influence between both variables and finally concluded that the quality of working life significantly influences the work performance of doctors.

Junco,⁽²⁷⁾ conducted research in Ecuador to establish the influence of interpersonal relationships on the job performance of nursing professionals at the IESS Babahoyo General Hospital to determine strategies to improve interpersonal relationships among nursing staff. Using a quantitative, descriptive, and correlational approach, he used a Likert-type questionnaire consisting of 18 items on interpersonal relationships. The work performance variable consisted of 16 items. Reliability and validity were optimal, and a positive and significant relationship between the two variables was found with a correlation coefficient of 0,856. The study concluded by developing social activities and internal events to strengthen interpersonal relationships among nursing staff.

Cordero et al.,⁽²⁸⁾ conducted a research study in Mexico to describe the dimensions of interpersonal relationships among nursing professionals in a second-level unit. It was a cross-sectional analytical study with a sample of 75 nursing professionals. They used an instrument of three dimensions (communication, teamwork, and conflict management) with optimal validity and reliability. The results showed that interpersonal relationships were fair in 54,7 % of cases. They concluded that the fair level of interpersonal relationships among nursing professionals offers improvement opportunities.

Escobar⁽²⁹⁾ conducted research in Ecuador to determine the quality of life and job performance of nursing staff at the San Vicente de Paúl Hospital. The study was quantitative, descriptive, correlational, and cross-sectional. The sample consisted of 118 nurses, and the data collection instrument was the Whoqol Bref quality of life questionnaire, with optimal validity and reliability. The results found that the relationship between quality of life and work experience suggests that those with more work experience consider their quality of life normal due to greater job stability, with 37,3 %. Finally, it concluded that balancing job and personal stability efficiently facilitates nursing care roles. Still, it is necessary to strengthen the recognition of professional advancement and the level of work organization.

Ustua,⁽³⁰⁾ in a quantitative study of descriptive and correlational scope with a non-experimental design was carried out in Cusco in 2022 to evaluate the degree of relationship between interpersonal skills and job performance development in nursing staff at the Curahuasi Health Center in the Apurímac region. The study population consisted of 59 professionals, and the sample was non-probabilistic and convenience-based. In addition, surveys and questionnaires were used as techniques, which obtained optimal validity and reliability. The results found among the respondents were that 59,3 % considered that they had good job performance, 37,3 % thought that they had intermediate job performance, and only 3,4 % mentioned that their job performance was poor. Finally, it was concluded that there is a significant relationship between job performance and interpersonal relationships since good interpersonal relationships were maintained and represented a considerable percentage of good job performance.

Motta⁽³¹⁾ conducted research in Lima to establish the relationship between interpersonal relationships and conflict management among nursing staff in the emergency department of a hospital in Lima. The study was quantitative, correlational, non-causal, and non-experimental with a cross-sectional design. The sampling was non-probabilistic, based on convenience, and consisted of 118 people. The study used an interpersonal relations instrument adapted to the national health context. Validity and reliability were optimal, with 64 % of respondents reporting regular interpersonal relationships and 56 % reporting that they know how to manage workplace conflicts regularly. All of this means that improving interpersonal relationships will improve efficiency in the workplace.

Venturo⁽³²⁾ researched Lima to determine the relationship between interpersonal relationships and job performance among nursing professionals at the Good Hope Clinic. The study was quantitative, non-experimental, correlational, and cross-sectional, with a sample of 200 nurses. Espinoza's summary version of interpersonal relationships was the questionnaire used as an instrument. For work performance, the Baquerizo 2016 questionnaire was used. The results revealed that 62,7 % had moderately unfavorable interpersonal relationships, and only 2,5 % had favorable ones. In terms of work performance, 59,3 % had average work performance and 15 % had poor performance.

Bruno and Pusari,⁽³³⁾ conducted a study in Lima to determine the relationship between interpersonal relationships and the job performance of nursing staff at the Guillermo Almenara National Hospital. The study was non-experimental, cross-sectional, prospective, and analytical. It was a quantitative investigation of 98 nurses selected by non-probabilistic sampling, using the interpersonal relationships and job performance scale as an instrument. The results obtained for the interpersonal relationships variable were 41,8 % at a medium level, 35,4 % at a low level, and 22,8 % at a high level. Regarding job performance, 40,5 % obtained a medium level of performance, 35,4 % a low level, and 24,1 % a high level. They concluded that interpersonal relationships impact the job performance of nursing assistants.

López⁽³⁴⁾ conducted a research study in Lima with the aim of determining the relationship between interpersonal relationships and work performance among nursing professionals in the Emergency Department of Vitarte Hospital in 2017. It was a simple descriptive, correlational, non-experimental, cross-sectional study with a population of 40 nurses. The technique used was a survey, and the instruments were two questionnaires on interpersonal relationships and work performance. The validity and reliability were optimal. The results showed that nursing professionals with poor interpersonal relationships had a regular work performance of 12,5 %, those with regular interpersonal relationships had a regular work performance of 30 %, and those with good interpersonal relationships had an average work performance in 10 % of cases. I conclude that a significant relationship exists between interpersonal relationships and work performance among nursing professionals in the Emergency Department of a public hospital in Lima.

Hanco et al.⁽³⁵⁾ mention in their study that at least a minimum percentage of participants perceive that interpersonal relationships are not practiced effectively in their work performance; most of them, representing 65 %, believe that interpersonal relationships would almost always improve their performance, 16 % think that they would occasionally enhance their performance, and 19 % decide not to respond. Poor interpersonal relationships have a significant impact on the work performance and coexistence of the staff of the Otavalo Canton Government. In addition, it was evident that most workers were unaware of the great value of developing positive interpersonal relationships because it would improve productivity and work performance, positively impacting the workgroup.

Similarly, in Mexico, Hernández and Hinojos⁽³⁶⁾ point out that poor interpersonal relationships are a very important factor in the well-being of nurses. Interpersonal relationships among nursing staff are crucial to creating a healthy work environment, which leads to mutual care. This facilitates the search for solutions to problems that may arise as a group, thus reducing work stress collectively.

On the other hand, Terán in Latin America⁽³⁷⁾ showed that counterproductive interpersonal relationships in nursing, as is the case in countries such as Brazil (65 %), Peru (56 %), Ecuador (40 %), Argentina (30 %), Chile (27 %), and Cuba (20 %), involve a hostile, heavy atmosphere, disagreements, and environments that do not promote motivation for quality productivity in service; indecision, lack of cooperation, limited communication, harmony, and integrity, affecting work efficiency, leading to depression, stress, and harming their professional quality of life.

In Peru, Campos⁽³⁸⁾ points out that interpersonal relationships among healthcare personnel require strengthening soft skills and individual resources with a common goal: optimal patient care. Therefore, creating, maintaining, and fostering good interpersonal relationships is necessary. These relationships help create a comfortable work environment and increase work efficiency as a group. Furthermore, better interpersonal relationships as a group are very beneficial when resolving conflicts, an essential skill in professional healthcare.

CONCLUSIONS

Several studies conducted in different hospitals in Lima and other Latin American countries have explored the relationship between interpersonal relationships and the job performance of nursing staff. In general, it was found that nurses with better interpersonal relationships tend to have higher job performance, while those with poor relationships tend to experience average or low performance. Additionally, it is highlighted that a work environment characterized by poor interpersonal relationships can generate stress and depression and negatively affect the professional quality of life of staff. Workers' perceptions indicate that improving these relationships could increase their productivity and well-being at work.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

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