

# Perception of academics, teachers and preceptors about nursing management

Percepção de acadêmicos, docentes e preceptores sobre o gerenciamento em enfermagem

Percepción de académicos, docentes y preceptores sobre la gestión de enfermeira

## RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar a percepção de acadêmicos, docentes e preceptores sobre o gerenciamento de enfermagem. Método: pesquisa descritiva de natureza qualitativa, realizada entre os meses de agosto e setembro de 2018, com acadêmicos, docentes e preceptores de um curso de graduação em enfermagem em uma instituição privada na região nordeste do Brasil. Resultados: do total de 29 participantes, 25 eram acadêmicos, 2 docentes e 2 preceptores, a maioria era do sexo feminino. Entre os 25 acadêmicos que participaram 11 eram trabalhadores formais e/ou autônomos, sendo 5 profissionais da área da saúde (técnicos de enfermagem e/ou agente comunitários de saúde). Discussão: O estudo aponta uma dissintonia entre assistência e gerência, bem como, sobre a percepção do papel de líder e gerente/gestor do enfermeiro. Conclusão: Considerando a formação do enfermeiro generalista, se faz necessário dirimir as lacunas existentes no ensino relacionadas a atuação desses profissionais na gestão da saúde e dos serviços, para que possam contribuir na qualificação do serviço e na assistência de enfermagem.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Gestão em Saúde; Enfermagem em Saúde Pública; Supervisão de Enfermagem.

## ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the perception of academics, professors and preceptors about nursing management. Method: descriptive research of a qualitative nature, carried out between August and September 2018, with academics, professors and preceptors of an undergraduate nursing course at a private institution in the northeast region of Brazil. Results: of the total of 29 participants, 25 were academics, 2 professors and 2 preceptors, most were female. Among the 25 students who participated, 11 were formal and/or self-employed workers, 5 of whom were health professionals (nursing technicians and/or community health agents). Discussion: The study points to a lack of harmony between care and management, as well as the perception of the role of leader and manager/manager of nurses. Conclusion: Considering the training of generalist nurses, it is necessary to address the existing gaps in education related to the performance of these professionals in health and service management, so that they can contribute to the qualification of the service and nursing care.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Health Management; Public Health Nursing; Nursing, Supervision.

## RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar la percepción de académicos, profesores y preceptores sobre la gestión de enfermería. Método: investigación descriptiva de carácter cualitativo, celebrada entre agosto y septiembre de 2018, con académicos, profesores y preceptores de un curso de pregrado en enfermería en una institución privada en la región noreste de Brasil. Resultados: de un total de 29 participantes, 25 eran académicos, 2 profesores y 2 preceptores, la mayoría mujeres. De los 25 estudiantes que participaron, 11 eran trabajadores formales y / o autónomos, de los cuales 5 eran profesionales de la salud (técnicos de enfermería y / o agentes comunitarios de salud). Discusión: El estudio apunta a una discrepancia entre la atención y la gestión, así como la percepción del rol de líder y gerente / gerente de la enfermera. Conclusión: Considerando la formación de la enfermera generalista, es necesario resolver las brechas existentes en la enseñanza relacionadas con el desempeño de estos profesionales en la gestión de la salud y los servicios, para que puedan contribuir a la calificación del servicio y en los cuidados de enfermería.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Gestión de la Salud; Enfermería de Salud Pública; Supervisión de enfermería..

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**INTRODUCTION**

In the context of health care, Nursing is committed to the development of the main activities for disease prevention, recovery and health promotion, from territorialization and diagnosis of the area to the analysis of the process of organization and management of services. This is due to their generalist training, which consequently makes the nurse one of the main interpreters of this scenario, making it necessary to build skills since their academic training.<sup>1</sup>

Management is defined as the activity of directing a health system, be it municipal, state or federal, public or private, through the exercise of functions such as coordination, articulation, negotiation, planning, monitoring, control, evaluation and auditing.<sup>2-4</sup> The nursing work method is developed from the cohesion between the dimensions of care/assistance, management/administration and teaching/research.<sup>4,5</sup>

Resolution No. 573/2018 of the Ministry of Health (MS) and the National Health Council (CNS), confirms that nursing professionals should include during their training process the development of the following skills: health care, communication, leadership, decision making, continuing education, administration and management.<sup>6</sup>

It is noteworthy that the managerial training of nurses is a major challenge for professors and managers of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), due to the understanding that management goes beyond the development of skills of a technical nature of direct care, meeting the use of administrative instruments and knowledge. In this scope, it was evidenced that future nurses disassociate management and direct care, noting the importance of understanding the magnitude of the managerial dimension in the construction of their work process, since itself, it is nothing more than the indirect care to the patient.<sup>3,5</sup>

It appears that in the process of undergraduate Nursing, direct assistance is emphasized for the development of technical assistance skills. Thus, a deficiency in the distribution and integration of contents on nursing management is perceived, making evident the fragmentation of the process of formation of administrative knowledge that does not favor the harmony between the care and management dimensions, strengthening the dichotomy between them.<sup>1,7</sup>

Therefore, this research sought to analyze the perception of academics, professors and preceptors about nursing management.

**METHOD**

Descriptive exploratory study with a qualitative approach.<sup>8</sup> Two scripts with semi-structured interviews were used for data collection, one aimed at academics and another aimed at teachers and preceptors. The sample group consisted of 25 students from two classes of the 10th period of the Bachelor of Nursing course, 2 professors and 3 preceptors, in a teaching HEI in the Northeast region of Brazil, however,<sup>1</sup> preceptor was excluded due to unavailability, totaling a final sample of 29 participants.

Eligibility criteria for students are considered to be: being duly enrolled, having attended courses focused on nursing management and having completed the practical activities of supervised internship in Primary Care (PC). Exclusion criteria were defined as: academics who failed the aforementioned subjects. Regarding professors and preceptors, those who taught theoretical and/or practical subjects focused on Nursing management, with at least 1 year of experience, were included. Those who were not available during the data collection period and who were not nurses were excluded.

Data collection took place between August and September 2018. The interviews were recorded, on the premises of the HEI, after signing the free and informed consent form (ICF) and later trans-

cribed in full. Participants were identified through a sequential alphanumeric code, using A for academics, D for professors and P for preceptors, followed by an Arabic numeral referring to the interview (EX.: A1; A2; A3; ...; A25; D1; D2; P1; P2).

To appreciate the material, Content Analysis Techniques were used,<sup>9</sup> considering three stages: the exhaustive reading of the material; data coding, establishing the units of analysis through their frequency or implicit relevance and their subsequent thematic classification.

This study was guided by the ethical and legal principles contemplated in CNS resolution 466/12 and 510/16, as well as by COFEN resolution 564/17 and later submitted to the Research Ethics Committee, being approved under opinion No. 3,123,457/2018. CAAE. 90064318.0.0000.5179.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results showed, regarding the sociodemographic profile of the participants, that among the 25 students, 84% are female, with a mean age of 30.12 years ( $\pm 7.89$  years) ranging from 22 to 49 years. As for occupation,<sup>10</sup> are formal and/or self-employed workers, of which 6 are health professionals divided between nursing technicians and/or CHA. Regarding the length of experience, the average was 3.83 years ( $\pm 5.92$  years).

As for the professors, both were female, one being a specialist in Human Rights and the other a specialist in Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and Public Health Management. They taught subjects that addressed management/management, collective health and public health. As for age, they had an average of 35 years ( $\pm 7.07$  years) and the average experience time was 6 years and 9 months ( $\pm 1$  year and 9 months).

Finally, as for the preceptors, both were also female and taught subjects that addressed adult patient care and public health. They had a mean age of 35.5 years ( $\pm 2.12$  years) and a mean time of professional experience of 7.50 years ( $\pm 6.36$  years).

Table 01. Sociodemographic characteristics of the students interviewed

ACADEMICS INTERVIEWED					
SEX		AGE	OCCUPATION		EXPERIENCE
Male	16%	Average of 30.12 years between 22 to 49 years old ( $\pm 7.89$ years)	Nurse technicians or CHAs	6	Average of 3.83 years ( $\pm 5.92$ years).
Female	84%		Self-employed	4	

SOURCE: author, 2018.

Table 02. Sociodemographic characteristics of the teachers interviewed

TEACHERS INTERVIEWED				
SEX		AGE	OCCUPATION	OPERATION TIME
Female	D1	Mean age of 35 years ( $\pm 7.07$ years)	Nurse specialist in human rights	Mean of 6 years and 9 months ( $\pm 1$ year and 9 months)
	D2		Specialist nurse in ICU and public health management	

SOURCE: author, 2018.

Table 03. Sociodemographic characteristics of the interviewed preceptors

PRECEPTORS INTERVIEWED				
SEX		AGE	OCCUPATION	OPERATION TIME
Female	P1	Mean of 35.5 years ( $\pm 2.12$ years)	Nursing Technicians and Nurse Specialist in Dermatology and Stomatherapy	Mean of 7.50 years ( $\pm 6.36$ years)
	P2		ICU specialist nurse	

SOURCE: author, 2018.

The content analysis allowed the construction of three thematic categories: Perception of academics on nursing management and the profile of a nurse leader/manager; Challenges in the training of nurses and methods to improve the teaching-learning process of management and Teaching about management and its importance in the training of nurses and for nursing care.

### PERCEPTION OF ACADEMICS ABOUT NURSING MANAGEMENT AND THE NURSE LEADER/MANAGEMENT PROFILE

This category addresses aspects related to the perception of academics about what it means to be a nurse manager of a health unit and administrator of a health system. It consists of speeches that allow identifying which activities are performed by nurses as managers and administrator in health services.

*“The nurse leader, he manages to manage the difficulties that may arise during his work hours, his shift or in his unit in a way that he can reverse that together with his team*

*[...] a leader he is together with his collaborators. [...] the nurse manager, in addition to what I said now, they also have to take care of the administrative part, that is, all that protocol that exists in the case of the e-SUS, all that dynamic of filling in documents, reports [...]. A21*

*"Learning about management is important because you will be managing, leading a team as well as managing a healthcare facility. Having the posture of a leader, coordinate and guide". A25*

Some academics describe that the unit manager and the system administrator basically perform the same functions, which demonstrates a discrepancy between the previous finding, indicating a lack of knowledge in relation to these areas, as can be seen in the statements below:

*"[...] the manager and administrator are not very different, why should the manager deal with what else? With the material, like equipment, these things, and the administrator does not. They will deal more with the population, with their own co-workers. In the PSF, he will manage [...]". [...] in my case it was not a nurse, the manager. She was a physical therapist. The nurse did more of the bureaucratic part and attendance of consultations. In a health department, I won't be able to answer you, because I didn't experience it and also no one gave me any information about it". A3*

It is worth mentioning that in the speech of interviewee A3, an inefficiency of the internship field is pointed out in relation to the training of nurses for the management of the health unit, which is reaffirmed in the speech of another participant in the following graft:

*"When they are a manager in a department, in a larger scope, we see*

*that we do not have a good training for this, we do not receive from the unit [...]. So I think it leaves something to be desired in that part on a larger scale". A6*

The studies corroborate the superscripted findings, highlighting that higher education graduates face obstacles/difficulties in learning, which directly interfere with student performance, understanding of certain contents and later in their field of work.<sup>5,10</sup>

Regarding the profile of leader and manager/administrator, it is possible to verify some activities pointed out in which it is difficult to clearly distinguish the characteristics of each competence.

*"[...] I believe that the leader is that nurse who dominates the team. In this case, that is more the nurse of the care part leading, I think it fits more in the part of this leader, who will organize shifts, team, procedures. And the manager/administrator, I believe he is the manager of the bureaucratic part in the matter of documentation, in a broader way of managing the system itself and not focused so much on the part of the assistance". A14*

In the statements below, it is also verified that the leader nurse is more related to direct care, while as a manager/administrator he is restricted to system requirements, compliance with goals and protocols. Leading to the understanding that in their practical activities they did not have contact with a professional who could synergistically cover both competencies, due to the presence of the new professional category (UBS manager) or the inefficiency of nursing professionals in performing these functions.

*"[...] the manager, in my opinion, is the one who dictates the rule, he sets certain goals and walks away and lets the goals be accomplished. He demands that those goals be met*

*and often without participation." A4*

*"It is the one who wants to command, who leads the entire team and the nurse manager is the one who commands and seeks the results. He doesn't want to know if he's in charge, he wants to know about the results, the manager". A13*

Furthermore, in some students' testimonies, the difficulty in describing what it means to be a leader and manager/administrator is perceived, being pointed out as synonyms and performing the same functions, evidencing a conflict between these competencies. Therefore, it is understood that the conception of the theoretical-practical training process does not provide sufficient information and clarification, confirming the fragility of teaching on nursing management:

*"I think the leader is the main thing that commands you to do your tasks, like, plan, all that stuff in the hospital or in another service. Manager, I think it's managing, as you say. I think it's almost that, I think it's almost the same thing". A9*

*"[...] how many managers will he identify, right? The problems, the things that are happening in that area that he manages, and trying to solve these problems. Yes, there is a direct relationship, it seems a lot, both are very similar. But so, when talking about nurse managers, he is looking for problems, things that happen and that should be improved in that sector so that care flows well [...]". A15*

Both the leader and the manager can direct the work process, align resources and motivate people. Managers seek to maintain the organization, ordering, stabilization of work as well as organization of resources and seek solutions to existing



problems, planning and budgeting, establishing standards and seeking to maintain order, while the leader encourages, inspires and seeks to develop new achievements.<sup>11,15</sup>

In this direction, in relation to the care profile pointed out in the students' speech, although the nurse has a high potential to assume management/administration, their training process is still focused on the biomedical care model, which may be related to the overload of care and management work, in addition to the lack of ability to manage the services that comes from the inefficiency of teaching.<sup>4</sup>

#### CHALLENGES IN NURSE TRAINING AND METHODS FOR IMPROVING THE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS OF MANAGEMENT

This category gathers testimonies that make it possible to identify difficulties evidenced by professors and preceptors in the academic training process, in addition to verifying strategies adopted by professors to improve students' understanding of competences and abilities. Through the challenges experienced by professors in the teaching-learning process, we verified the presence of the technical-assistance model that still prevails in the undergraduate nursing course and that favors the dichotomy between management and assistance, as can be seen in the statements below:

*"[...] the greatest difficulty is, first, to have training based on the collective health care model, which is what is set by primary care and what most converges with the SUS [...] if they do not understand the change in logic from the hospital-centered model to the collective health model, which looks at the subject, that makes an integral approach, where actions are based on prevention, promotion and rehabilitation of health, everything becomes difficult". D1*

*"[...] when they go to management, students when they are in the academic part they want to leave here as assistant nurses, they don't want to leave here as nurse managers, right? [...] The difficulty is*

*how to conduct the entire work process [...]". D2*

In addition, with regard to the internship field, the difficulty of accessing services to the health team is proven, comforting the preceptors' speech:

*"[...] as a preceptor, I cannot invade the nurse's work in the unit, so we have to ask permission for everything, right? [...] we have to ask for permission, this is one of the difficulties, because often the nurse there, the employee, they're like: they block, you know? They don't pass everything and block the student's entry [...]". P2*

*"[...] they don't have much access, as a preceptor, I was a little lucky, especially in the hospital area. Not every preceptor is welcome in the hospital area [...] we are not well received, when a preceptor arrives with the students in such an environment, it is rare for a nurse to go straight to his face and open the doors and show us everything [...]". P1*

The use of active methodologies by teachers with a pedagogical plan focused on the student, through the problematization of real cases, teamwork and the articulation of theory with practice is fundamental in the development of a critical-reflexive subject, being used as strategies by several HEIs.<sup>7</sup>

Regarding the strategies adopted to improve the teaching of Nursing Management, it is important for students to experience experiences that allow direct contact with the nurse's attributions, both with regard to assistance and the management of health services, as represented in the following lines:

*"First, they link that the nurse's work is not based only on working in a family health unit or in the hospital environment [...], it is im-*

**Regarding the profile of leader and manager/administrator, it is possible to verify some activities pointed out in which it is difficult to clearly distinguish the characteristics of each competence.**

*precisely that, for them to begin to understand that management is everywhere they go to work, because he is the leader, and the leader has to manage [...] the difficulties are precisely these, it is to work with people who have a profile and know*

*portant that they have practices not only and merely technical in a hospital or to experience a family health unit, but that they can experience, practice, accompany or monitor management processes performed by nursing professionals". D1*

However, the technical-care model that prevails in nursing practices, seen in the excerpts of the interviewees, makes it difficult for students to improve their knowledge of this area, revealing that integrating theory with practice is often not enough, especially if teams are not prepared to receive these students. It is believed that the use of independent and group work methods, in addition to the use of educational technologies, enables the student to develop these skills.<sup>12</sup>

It was also pointed out by the interviewees, the use of methodologies that are aimed at the student, which seek critical-reflective reasoning, teamwork and, consequently, the breaking of the anarchistic management model of nursing, placing the student as a subject of reality transformation.

*"The teaching strategy that we can use is situations. I think that by putting the situations that exist within management, we make the student think and reason how he could act in that particular situation, which can facilitate learning". D2*

*"First good teachers and second a more accessible lesson plan, more comprehensive for the student and a teacher who understands and knows how to pass the subject [...] a study plan focused on the student, with more facilities and with more accessible terms". P2*

In this way, the constant search for qualification by the teachers indicates a behavior that must be adopted by the educator in the search for practices that

envison and provide opportunities for the emancipation of the student, the insertion of individuals in the community through educational actions that allow the subject's autonomy, since teaching is constantly changing.<sup>13</sup>

#### TEACHING ABOUT MANAGEMENT AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN NURSING TRAINING AND NURSING ASSISTANCE

Here, excerpts from the interviews related to the interviewees' opinion on the importance of management related to direct or indirect assistance provided by Nursing are grouped.

When asked about how the teaching/internship fostered and enabled the encounter with these skills and abilities, teachers and preceptors claim that the use of active methodologies enables students to meet the problems seen in health services, when using problem situations and through teamwork, academics will be able to develop leadership and management. The preceptors point out the importance of students experiencing the practice outside the classroom, making them participate in activities that require the development of leadership.

*"In the development of teamwork and works that seek to change reality [...] the students will face problems that they identify in the health services. Based on this, they, together with other colleagues, can think about this problem, understand better and study better, think of hypotheses for a solution and finally make a practical intervention [...]". D1*

*"[...] our subjects inside the classroom and bringing up the problem situations, make the student create skills to be able to solve leadership and management issues, making them understand that both go together [...] we have to bring our nursing students to participate in the process. From the moment they*

*participate in the process, they will understand and know the importance of management and leadership". D2*

*"[...] to take a little of this practical part, because everyone arrives and wants the care practice right away [...]. In this part of taking it to the bureaucracy, how to manage, how the health unit works [...], the teacher who is with the students, working this part of them in the classroom, leadership, management [...], show them in the classroom that it is not just practice [...], that they leave the classroom with this understanding [...] and we combine theory with practice there, and then it works out [...]. P2*

When asked about the importance of management related to direct or indirect care provided by nursing, the professors point out that in addition to being a mandatory curricular component, it is essential for the future professional to be able to make decisions and know how to direct the work of the team he supervises/leads.

*"[...] where you have a team, you need management, you need to have the driver, the manager, right? [...] and it is no different in nursing where there are health agents in the health unit, we have nursing technicians, assistants and it is necessary to have management [...] to conduct the work, to guide them in relation to both internal and external activities". P2*

*"[...] it is part of the nurse's pedagogical political project, he has care, educational and management skills [...] what he does most, they are managerial processes of the technical team, managerial in the administrative scope with the bureaucratic issue, the environment*

*and the nursing systematization itself [...]”.* D1

*“[...] it is part of the nurse’s pedagogical political project, he has care, educational and management skills [...] what he does most, they are managerial processes of the technical team, managerial in the administrative scope with the bureaucratic issue, the environment and the nursing systematization itself [...]”.* D1

*“Because through this direct assistance the nurse will really know the user’s needs [...] in the indirect part, in health promotion, right? In terms of health education, which we do, we provide both direct and indirect assistance [...]”.* D2

*“[...] everything is up to the manager, everything has to be asked of him [...] he has to have a lot of momentum to manage several professionals. One agrees with something, the other disagrees, and everything goes to the manager to resolve [...]”.* P1

The researchers Mattia, Kleba and Prado, point out that the curricular structure of Nursing education must establish the interconnection of contents that go beyond the rhythm of clinical, individual and curative practice for a new model focused on the SUS,

the collectivity and the other faces of the system.<sup>14</sup>

As for the importance in the professional training of nurses, it appears in the opinion of professors that they need to develop the decision-making capacity to solve problems encountered in the health system in general. Management education should enable the development of the ability to plan and coordinate services.

*“[...] they need to leave college with this vision of managing, of admini-*

*nistering. [...] they need to deal with differences [...]”.* P2

*“[...] they have to have a plan [...] I talk about strategic planning, because for me it is very important where we go to work, because we work with human beings, and*

**When asked about the importance of management [...] the professors point out that in addition to being a mandatory curricular component, it is essential for the future professional to be able to make decisions and know how to direct the work of the team he supervises/leads**

*we have to have strategies [...]”.* D2

*“[...] we have to study management, especially in the health area, you have to pay attention [...]”.*P2

In turn, students point out that teaching management is important so that they can deal with the work routine, with the multidisciplinary team, knowing how to manage the team’s work process, in addition to ensuring the proper functioning of the services through the provision of the necessary materials. Let’s see the excerpts below:

*“[...] it’s really understanding how the work process works, and deciding as a team how the best way to work will be, because this directly influences patient care. A nurse manager is not just the one who is there, not as a manager of a unit, we are also the ones who are in the care, because we coordinate the technicians [...]”.* A15

*“[...] because you will manage, you will work with several people, and not only that, but you will also try to manage the administrative part, the educational part, schedule, organizational chart, in short, it is necessary to have a certain control of everything”.* A2

In view of the discussions, the importance of management within the scope of nursing care is evident. However, it is clear that the meaning of managerial work for students is related to a vision of bureaucratic work. In this sense, a reflection arises on the need for internship fields that make it possible to meet these skills and competences in a way that includes all the necessary knowledge about both competences.<sup>16,17</sup>

In this direction, Senna et al. state that the nurse’s managerial work enables the proper functioning of the work environment and the team, in addition to the importance in the development of quality care through the applicability of practices that transpose the resolutions of bureaucratic problems, in view of their leadership skills, ability to deal with numerous situations and competence with regard to health management.<sup>4,18</sup>

Students, professors and preceptors, when evaluating teaching, provide important elements for improving the quality of learning, making it possible to direct the HEI to which factors to intervene and consequently improve the qualification of professionals who will be in the job market.

## CONCLUSION

The study reveals a dissonance in the

understanding regarding the profile of leader and manager/administrator of nurses, showing that there are difficulties for students in describing these attributes. It also reveals little understanding of the role of nurses as managers in the health system, this is due to the lack of contact with practical activities in the field, insufficient contact with the primary care manager (their attributions) and the limited access to managerial issues of health services.

However, it is worth emphasizing the

importance of nursing management for the assistance provided to the client. Thus, it is evident the need to strengthen the methodologies so that they can fill the lack of knowledge about management and management during the training of nurses.

In this way, investing in the training of these professionals, with a focus also on management, is fundamental for the improvement of nursing services in health institutions and, consequently, influencing the quality of care offered to the user.

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