

INTEGRATION OF NURSING STUDENTS IN INTERPROFESSIONAL TEAMS DURING THE TRAINING PRACTICE OF A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN COLOMBIA

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ABSTRACT

During nursing training practices, interprofessional integration favors the development of collaborative competencies that are fundamental for professional practice in health sciences. The objective of this study was to determine the perception of the degree of interprofessional integration of nursing students from a public university in Colombia during their training practices. In its methodology, it was a study with a quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional approach carried out in students from the third to ninth semester of nursing, where the degree of interprofessional integration was determined through 4 fundamental categories: participation in clinical activities, interprofessional communication and collaboration, decision-making and supervised responsibility, and institutional and pedagogical recognition and support. In the results, the students reported a global perception of high interprofessional integration, where the category with the highest score was participation in clinical activities, followed by institutional and pedagogical recognition and support, supervised decision-making and responsibilities and finally interprofessional communication and collaboration. In conclusion, the practice scenarios favor the interprofessional integration of nursing students, especially in the participation in clinical activities; however, opportunities for improvement in interprofessional communication and collaboration were identified, in order to consolidate comprehensive training experiences for students.

KEYWORDS - Interdisciplinary Practices, Clinical Practices, Nursing Students, Nursing Education, Nursing Practice Guidelines.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the growing complexity of health systems has evidenced the need to strengthen interprofessional work between the different disciplines involved in the care of users, therefore, interprofessional education has been recognized as a fundamental strategy to develop competencies related to communication, teamwork, and shared decision-making, favoring safer health care focused on the individual needs of each patient (Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2023; World Health Organization, 2010).

This interprofessional integration is a key element during academic training, in order for students to understand the roles of other disciplines, actively participate in care processes and develop the necessary skills for professional practice, which has been widely evidenced by the literature where it has been shown that interprofessional learning experiences strengthen collaborative competencies, improve relationships between members of health teams and contribute to better results in patient care (Reeves, et al., 2013).

It is important to note that in Nursing, practice scenarios represent privileged spaces for the consolidation of these competencies, because they allow direct interaction with other professionals and facilitate the progressive incorporation of the student into the dynamics of care and the world of work; however, the quality of integration may vary depending on the characteristics of the clinical environment and the opportunities for participation in clinical activities obtained during the training practice (Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2023).

Based on these premises, the objective of this study was to determine the perception of the degree of interprofessional integration of nursing students from a public university in Colombia, during their training practices in the periods 2025-2 and 2026-1, based on the categories of participation in clinical activities, communication and interprofessional collaboration, decision-making and supervised responsibility, and institutional and pedagogical recognition and support.

METHODOLOGY

For this research, a quantitative, descriptive approach was used, with a cross-sectional section corresponding to the academic periods 2025-2 and 2026-1. The target population of study were students in training practices of the Nursing program of the Popular University of Cesar, between the third and ninth semesters of the old and the new curricular plan, who freely agreed to participate in the research, with a total of 374 participants, since 5 of them decided to voluntarily withdraw from the study, which was respected as part of the ethical principle of autonomy. For the instrument, which was designed for this research, all the information reviewed in the current literature was contemplated, applying the questions through a Microsoft virtual form, which were shared digitally with the students, who had an estimated time of one week to carry out the voluntary completion.

The information obtained from the population under study was processed through a database in Excel Software, once it was purified and coded, the statistical analysis of the results was carried out, in order to reach the conclusions of the research work. The analysis was carried out taking into account the variables involved in the research and contrasting with the reviewed literature, to present it in tables where percentage terms and frequency distribution were detailed.

For this research, a structured self-perception instrument was designed that evaluated different categories related to the student's integration into the clinical and academic environment. The instrument evaluated the categories: 1. Participation in clinical activities, 2. Interprofessional communication and collaboration, 3. Decision-making and supervised responsibility, and 4. Institutional and pedagogical recognition and support. Each category was made up of 5 items assessed using a Likert-type scale with 5 response options (1. Never, 2. Rarely, 3. Sometimes, 4. Almost always, 5. Always) and whose maximum score per category was 25 points, for a maximum total of 100 points, where the criteria for final results were: Low integration (20-49 points), Moderate integration (50-74 points) and High integration (75 to 100 points). For the instrument, a pilot test was carried out with 20 participants to define its understanding and feasibility, in addition to a review by 3 experts in the area of Teaching-Service Relationship to validate content.

It should be noted that the ethical aspects taken into account for this research were taken from Resolution 08430 of 1993 (Ministry of Health of Colombia, 1993) which establishes the scientific, technical and administrative standards for health research. Taking into account that the human being is the subject of study, the criterion of respect for his dignity, the protection of his rights and his well-being prevailed, that is, the information was handled in a confidential and discreet manner, guaranteeing that the participants, with duly completed informed consent, kept their identity in complete reserve, ensuring that their personal information was not revealed, nor used in other research without any consent. The data presented are manifested only for academic purposes, without harmful pretensions towards the personnel and/or institution under study, without any intention other than to improve current procedures and encourage research production within our academic program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained allowed us to identify a high global perception of interprofessional integration during the training practices of the Nursing program, where the 4 categories evaluated achieved scores corresponding to the level of high integration, being Category 1: participation in clinical activities, which reached a higher mean of 22.90 ± 2.94 , followed by Category 4: Recognition and institutional support with 21.96 ± 3.57 , then Category 3: decision-making and supervised responsibility with 21.86 ± 3.49 and finally Category 2: interprofessional communication and collaboration with 21.84 ± 3.59 . This high perception of integration expressed by the participants can be understood as a positive indicator for the academic processes developed in the training practice scenarios of the UNICEF nursing program, especially when the World Health Organization (WHO) points out that interprofessional education favors the preparation of professionals capable of collaborating effectively, strengthening the quality of care and health outcomes (World Health Organization, 2010).

In relation to the personal profile of the participating students, a minimum age of 18 years and a maximum of 50 years was observed, with a mean of 22.32 ± 4.39 , reflecting a mostly young profile within Unicesar nursing students. Regarding biological sex, female predominated with 85.3%, consistent with Colombian nursing statistics, where around 80% of human talent in health are women and specifically in nursing, they represent 87% of the workforce (Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Colombia, 2022); while, globally, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that around 85% of nursing staff are women. (WHO, 2023). Regarding gender

identity, 85.3% identified as female, 14.4% as male, and 0.3% reported a different category, thus showing some diversity in this aspect within the population under study.

Regarding the academic profile of the subject of study, 58.8% are studying the old curricular plan (sixth to ninth semester), while 41.2% are going through the new curricular plan (third to fifth semester), which shows that the program updates content and learning outcomes to respond to the new demands of the health sector. Regarding the subjects studied, the distribution shows diversity in fundamental areas for nursing: Public Health (18.2%), Basic Care (7.0%), Mental Health (8.3%), Medical Surgery (10.7%), Perioperative (7.5%), Maternal and Child Health (9.4%), Reproductive Health (1.3%), Internal Medicine (27.0%), Health Education (0.3%) and Health Management (10.4%). The simultaneous existence of old and new plans in academic training reflects the curricular updating processes regulated by the Ministry of National Education, which guide universities towards standardization and quality accreditation of their programs, promoting the inclusion of emerging issues such as interculturality, health technologies, and the management of health services (Universidad de Antioquia, 2020; Borré, et. al., 2016).

On the other hand, in order to understand the integration achieved by each of the categories of the instrument, it is necessary to highlight:

🌱 **Category 1: Participation in clinical activities:** this category reached the highest score awarded by students with 93.3%, placing it in High integration, which indicates an active participation developed during the training practices, which suggests that students can access real opportunities for patient care and to assume care responsibilities in accordance with their level of training. The literature has shown that active participation in clinical practice scenarios favors meaningful learning and strengthens the competencies necessary for collaborative work in health services, since several systematic reviews have found that interprofessional experiences favor the development of collaborative skills and improve attitudes towards teamwork (Spaulding, et al., 2019).

🌱 **Category 2: Interprofessional communication and collaboration:** this category reached 82.6% of students who scored as High integration, where despite being a positive assessment, it was the category with the lowest percentage of students with this integration, compared to the others, which could indicate the existence of opportunities to strengthen strategies that favor much more effective communication between students and professionals from different disciplines. The interprofessional competencies proposed by the Interprofessional Education Collaborative, (2023) identify respectful, timely and patient-centered communication as one of the fundamental pillars of collaborative work in health.

🌱 **Category 3: Decision-making and supervised responsibility:** this category reached 83.2% of the participants located in high integration, reflecting that students perceive spaces where they can express opinions, participate in care planning, and assume progressive responsibilities under the guidance of expert teachers and complying with the progressive delegation plan of the technical annexes of each academic subject in practice according to the Quality Assessment Model for Training Practice Scenarios in the Teaching-Service Relationship of Higher Education Programs in the Health Area (2021). Evidence indicates that the inclusion of students in decision-making processes favors the development of professional identity, autonomy, and clinical confidence, which are essential for the work as future professional nurses, within interprofessional teams (World Health Organization, 2010).

🌱 **Category 4: Institutional and pedagogical recognition and support:** this last category reported that 85.0% of students perceived a high level of integration, suggesting learning environments characterized by welcome, accompaniment, and permanent guidance, which is relevant because the evidence indicates that training contexts that promote collaboration, mutual respect, and supervision favor the educational experience and teamwork skills (Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2023; World Health Organization, 2010).



Figure 1. Integration by category

Finally, the results found show that nursing students perceive high levels of interprofessional integration during their training practices, which coincides with the approaches of the World Health Organization and international interprofessional education frameworks, which highlight the importance of collaboration between professionals as an essential component for the training of competent professionals and for the strengthening of health systems (Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2023; World Health Organization, 2010).

CONCLUSIONS

This project showed that the students of the Nursing program of the Universidad Popular del Cesar perceived a high level of interprofessional integration during their training practices of the periods 2025-2 and 2026-1, evidencing positive scores in the 4 categories evaluated, which suggests that the practice scenarios that the program has, offer conditions that facilitate the active incorporation of students into the world of work, collaborative work and the progressive development of professional competencies.

Category 1 of participation in clinical activities presented the most favorable results, indicating that students perceived an active inclusion in the care processes; category 2 of interprofessional communication and collaboration showed the lowest values among the other categories, despite maintaining high integration, suggesting opportunities for improvement in interaction with other disciplines; in category 3 of decision-making and supervised responsibility, a favorable perception was found, strengthening the development of professional autonomy; while in category 4 of institutional and pedagogical recognition and support, a high integration was also perceived, highlighting the importance of the accompaniment of the nursing practice team and the care team in the construction of safe and favorable learning environments.

In conclusion, the findings obtained support the need to continue strengthening interprofessional education strategies in practice scenarios, because the early integration of students into collaborative teams is a key element for the training of future professionals who are competent, sensitive, prepared and capable of responding to the current demands of health systems.

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