
SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF THE SCHOOL NURSE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NURSING PROFESSIONALS IN PEREIRA, RISARALDA 2024

LUZ ENITH VELÁSQUEZ RESTREPO

DOCENTE UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA DE PEREIRA DOCENTE FUNDACIÓN UNIVERSITARIA DEL ÁREA
ANDINA SECCIONAL PEREIRA

DORIS LEÓN MEJÍA

DOCENTE FUNDACIÓN UNIVERSITARIA DEL ÁREA ANDINA SECCIONAL PEREIRA

MARTA LUCÍA GALLÓN OCHOA

DOCENTE UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA DE PEREIRA

Abstract

Introduction: This study is part of the School Nursing Pilot Project of the National Association of Nurses of Colombia (ANEC) Risaralda section and explores the social representation of the school nurse from the perspective of nursing professionals in Pereira, Risaralda. Throughout history, the image of nurses has been shaped by the perception of society, paying special attention to professional recognition and the evolution of their public image. The study focuses on how the school nurse is perceived, especially in the educational environment, where her role goes beyond clinical care, encompassing the promotion of a safe and healthy environment. Objective To interpret the social representation of the school nurse from the perspective of nursing professionals in Pereira, Risaralda, in order to understand how they conceive their role, functions and challenges in the school context.

Methodology: Qualitative exploratory study through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with their corresponding analysis. The interview was structured according to the sociodemographic profile of the population under study and in five dimensions: 1. Direct experiences as school nurses, 2. Knowledge and beliefs about the role of the school nurse. 3. Social representations and stereotypes. 4. Importance of the school nurse in the educational community. 5. Expectations of nursing professionals. Results: The study included the participation of 11 professionals and 4 nursing students, divided into 3 groups: 6 teachers from the nursing program (two of them also in IPS), 4 social nurses from ANEC Risaralda and 4 third semester nursing students, all of different ages and work experience. The largest number (8) was between 36 and 45 years old, two people were between 59 and 65 years old and five people were between 20 and 25 years old.

Conclusions: School nurses talk about humanizing nursing practice, emphasizing the individualization of care, commitment, responsibility, and research in families and their sociocultural environment.

Keywords: Nursing, school nurse, illness, education, health promotion, detection and surveillance, care, social representation.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, the nursing profession has faced numerous challenges, including its image in society. This topic has aroused great interest both internationally and nationally. Prestige, credibility and social consideration are essential elements to maintain and advance the profession. In this way, the idea that society has is formed. The image of nursing has been studied and can be interpreted from a variety of points of view: by society, by nurses themselves, both collectively and individually, from the self-image and that which corresponds to their public image, promoted by nursing professionals.

Domínguez Alcón (1985) divided the image into five categories: the image of nurses and nursing students; the social image of nurses and users; the image reflected in literature, magazines or other media; the "official" image found in legal or institutional documents; and the ideal image that would be desired.

The picture of nursing is certainly dynamic and complex. Its evolution is constant and varies according to the cultural, socioeconomic and political group in which it is located. There are a variety of factors that influence

their formation, including media, gender, stereotypes, history, interprofessional relationships, self-image, and experiences (Varaei et al., 2012; Rezaei-Adaryani, Salsali, & Mohammadi, 2012). It is crucial to work to create a positive social image of nursing, as well as any other profession. The profession itself must manage society's trust in a professional group. If society recognizes the ability of a professional group, this group gains prestige and thus gains opportunities in all areas. In this way, professional councils and associations must understand and communicate to society the essence of each of the professions that bring together, carry out functions and contribute to society, projecting the profession to society and working to build a good social image.

Practical experience shows that nurses feel a lack of social and institutional recognition and recognize that the population and their co-workers are completely unaware of their responsibilities. The aim of this study is to examine the social perception of nursing and nurses, in particular their knowledge, perception and opinion in relation to the profession and its group. This research is part of the School Nursing Pilot Project, led by the National Association of Nurses of Colombia (ANEC) Risaralda section, through the School Nursing Committee and the articulation with Higher Education Institutions that have a Nursing program in the municipality of Pereira and allows to respond to one of its objectives, exploring the social image of the nursing professional in the school environment, since in educational institutions they play a fundamental role, not only in the health care of students, but also in the promotion of a safe and healthy school environment. However, the perception and social representation of this role can vary significantly among different actors, such as students, parents, teachers, and the community in general.

By understanding the social representations of the school nurse, it is possible to work to build a more accurate and valued image of this profession, thus contributing to improving the health and well-being of students and of course to the development of nursing professionals. This document addresses the following topics: framework, methodology, ethical issues, information collection and analysis of results. It is hoped that these issues will contribute to reinforcing the need for school nurses in training institutions.

Objective

To interpret the social representation of the school nurse from the perspective of nursing professionals in Pereira, Risaralda, in order to understand how they conceive their role, functions, and challenges in the school context.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative exploratory study using semi-structured interviews and focus groups with their corresponding analysis. The interview was structured in the sociodemographic profile of the population under study and in five dimensions: 1. Direct experiences as school nurses, 2. Knowledge and beliefs about the role of the school nurse. 3. Social representations and stereotypes. 4. Importance of the school nurse in the educational community. 5. Expectations of nursing professionals. Meetings were agreed with the different actors (teachers, ANEC affiliates and nursing students), in this space the research was presented, in which its objective and the importance of exploring the social image of the school nurse are socialized.

RESULTS

The study included the participation of 11 professionals and 4 nursing students from the city of Pereira, divided into 3 groups, as follows: 6 teachers of the nursing program (two of them also work at IPS), 4 nurse partners of ANEC Risaralda and 4 third-semester nursing students, all with different ages and work experience. All of them contributed significantly with the narratives in the revision and adjustment of the thematic guide used in the interviews. In addition, two participants who withdrew from the interview were excluded.

Regarding the age distribution of the participants, it was found that the minimum age was 20 and the maximum was 65 years, the largest number (8) was between 36 and 45 years old, two people were between 59 and 65 years old and five people were between 20 and 25 years old. The relevant contributions by age showed that the older they were, the greater the accumulated wisdom in the authentic expressions of their opinions. 13 people are women.

All reside in urban areas, three belong to socioeconomic stratum 2; six in stratum 3, four in stratum 4 and two live in stratum 6. As for occupation, 9 people are working, in the same way the affiliation to the General Social Security System in health is 13 in the contributory regime and only 2 in the subsidized regime.

The results were organized according to the specific objectives set, through interviews that address the analysis of the participants' responses. Each one recognizes their opinions and perspectives, highlighting their particularities and similarities that emerge from their experience in nursing, including the cultural and social context. These results are presented according to four dimensions:

Direct experiences with school nurses Knowledge and beliefs about the role of the school nurse Social representations and stereotypes Importance of the school nurse in the educational community In the same way, the Expectations of Nursing Professionals were explored Direct experiences with school nurses Most of them denied having had interaction with a school nurse, one nurse stated that in the school where her son studied there was a nursing assistant. Regarding the roles played by the school nurse, 9 of the participants indicate that they can be fully fulfilled with the nursing function, but 6 of them state that they do not understand what roles they would fulfill within a school. Likewise, it is important to have experience, especially in the care role, but also in community work and management. They must also have charisma and attitude to work with other sectors.

Knowledge and beliefs about the role of the school nurse All the participants state that they understand that the work of a school nurse is the one that is oriented in schools, but that she is not currently a recognized figure in nursing or in schools. In the same way, 11 people indicate that school nursing is part of community nursing, who is not clear is the students, perhaps because of their level of training.

When exploring beliefs about the role of the school nurse, 5 of the participants stated that "The school nurse only takes care of sick children", such as when they fall or have a need for treatment. It is also thought that the school nurse does not need specialized training and that it is important that the nurse is in an area where she does not have to change diapers.

3. Social representations and stereotypes

The school nurse was associated with the maternal figure, thinking of a woman, who takes care of small scratches and ailments, without recognizing the complexity of her work. A narrow focus on first aid is also identified, underestimating the importance of other school nurse roles, such as health promotion, health education, and management. In the same way, they express that the lack of supply in school nursing is related to the disregard for the need for training and of course for the competencies of school nurses, considering themselves as auxiliary personnel instead of health professionals.

Social representations of school nursing can have a significant impact on the perception and valuation of this profession. It is critical to work to challenge these stereotypes and promote a more realistic and valued image of the school nurse.

4. Importance of the school nurse in the educational community

They all inferred that they are a fundamental pillar in the Educational Community, since school nurses are key, playing a vital role in the promotion of health, the prevention of diseases and contributes to the integral well-being of students through intersectoral work. Their presence in schools brings multiple benefits for the entire educational community. For the nursing profession it is valuable because it opens paths for a new field of action and therefore, it will facilitate new jobs for nursing professionals.

Expectations of Nursing Professionals

The expectations of Nursing Professionals were also explored, which are influenced by factors such as academic training, work experience, sociocultural context and public policies in health and of course in education.

Here are the most common ones:

At the level of importance, professional development was described, since continuous growth is aspired, which includes opportunities to specialize, obtain advanced degrees and move up the institutional hierarchy.

a. Autonomy in decision-making is mentioned by the desire to have greater autonomy to make decisions based on evidence and in the best interest of the educational community.

b. Professional recognition, taking into account that at the level of health institutions it is low, they expect in this field a social and labor recognition that values their contribution to the health and well-being of the educational community. Continued growth is also expected, including opportunities to specialize, earn advanced degrees, and move up the institutional hierarchy.

c. Adequate working conditions, the aim is to work in safe and healthy environments, with reasonable hours and logically with fair remuneration. Continued growth is aspired to, including opportunities to specialize, earn advanced degrees, and move up the institutional hierarchy.

d. Satisfactory working relationships: They want to work in multidisciplinary teams, with a positive work environment and opportunities for collaboration.

e. Work-life balance, it is possible that with the schedules offered in educational institutions they can reconcile their work responsibilities with their family and personal life.

DISCUSSION

The way in which what is now defined as the nursing profession emerged is the factor that determined it throughout its history. There is a social representation of the school nurse that is still poorly defined and consolidated. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the recognition of their role and functions within the school context. Greater dissemination and awareness of the importance of school nursing is required.

The social representations of the school nurse are the shared images, beliefs and knowledge that society builds about this professional and their role within the educational field. These representations influence the perception that students, teachers, parents and the community in general have about the work carried out by the school nurse.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, this research reveals the need to make visible and better position the figure of the school nurse in the educational community. This would allow them to improve their integration and the use of their skills.

School nurses talk about humanizing the practice of nursing, highlighting the individualization of care, commitment, responsibility and research in families and in their sociocultural environment. This understanding leads them to propose ways of being and being in the profession from humility and realism, stripping themselves of large and small utopias, transmitting cordiality and respect in a model of positive influence. What is underlying all this professional practice, and they emphasize, is the search for "quality" and to be a guarantor of a certain "ethics" in daily practice. To think and act as a "model nurse" where her dispersed theory is combined and sometimes with her intersubjective and reflexive daily life to configure an approach to reality.

Social representations in school nursing are of vital importance, since they influence the perception of the role, limit the understanding of their role and can hinder collaboration with other education professionals.

Regarding barriers to professional development, these negative social representations can discourage school nurses from developing new competencies and assuming greater responsibilities and therefore affect the impact on the quality of care received by the educational community, by limiting the scope of school nurse interventions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of school nursing can be critical to promoting student health and well-being, which can begin with a thorough assessment of the health needs of students and the school community to determine needed services.

School nursing plays a crucial role in the well-being of students and in promoting healthy educational environments. Its effective implementation requires careful planning, collaboration, and a focus on the specific needs of the school community.

In the same way, research should continue on the health needs of the school population and the impact of the school nurse on the educational community and promote policies that recognize the role of the school nurse and guarantee the necessary resources for their work, thus disseminating information on the importance of the school nurse and its contribution to the health and well-being of students.

It is recommended to promote a more realistic image of school nursing, making its work visible: indicating the various functions and competencies of school nurses through dissemination and communication, publications and participation in events. Interprofessional collaboration should be encouraged, working transdisciplinarily and intersectorally with other education professionals to demonstrate the added value of their work.

It is imperative to promote research on the practice of school nursing by generating scientific evidence that supports the role of the school nurse in promoting the health and well-being of the educational community. Parents, teachers and students should be informed about the role of the school nurse and the advantages of having this professional in the school.

Limitations

This study was conducted with a limited number of participants in Pereira, Risaralda, so the results cannot be generalized to other populations.

Implications for practice

The results of this study have important implications for school nursing practice. By understanding the social representation of the school nurse, interventions and programs can be designed that improve the quality of care and promote student health.

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