

# Artículos

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# Stressors and Clinical Performance in Nursing Students, Huánuco - Peru

Estresores y desempeño clínico en estudiantes de enfermería, Huánuco - Perú

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### **ABSTRACT**

The objective was to determine the relationship between stressors and clinical performance. Correlational study, with 58 nursing students from the National University Hermilio Valdizán, Peru. The KEZKAK and clinical performance questionnaire was applied. Pearson's r coefficient was used. 44.8% showed high stressor factor and 96.6% had poor performance. Likewise, a significant relationship was found between these variables, and also for the dimensions of stress such as interpersonal, emotional and cognitive relationships, with p≤0.000. It is concluded that there is a relationship between stressors and performance in clinical practices in nursing students.

**Keywords:** nursing students, stress, clinical practices, interpersonal relationships.

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### RESUMEN

El objetivo fue determinar la relación entre los factores estresantes y el desempeño clínico. Estudio correlacional, con 58 estudiantes de enfermería de la Universidad Nacional Hermilio Valdizán, Perú. Se aplicó el cuestionario KEZKAK y de desempeño clínico. Se empleó el coeficiente de r de Pearson. El 44,8% han mostrado un alto factor estresante y el 96,6% tuvieron desempeño deficiente. Asimismo, se encontro relación significativa entre estas variables y, también para las dimensiones de los factores estresantes como relaciones interpersonales, emocionales y cognitivas, con p≤0,000. Se concluye que existe relación entre los factores estresantes y el desempeño en prácticas clínicas en estudiantes de enfermería.

Palabras clave: estudiantes de enfermería, estrés pr icticas clínicas, relaciones interpersonales.



#### INTRODUCTION

Evidence-based practice has gained singular relevance in the training of nursing students, because it makes it possible to guide flexible learning, and also favors the integration of theoretical knowledge into practice. Similarly, it encourages critical thinking and improves decision-making in health care; current requirements of nursing (Baracaldo, 2020). Clinical practices correspond to an essential element in the training of nursing students, since they empower them to execute theoretical knowledge and deploy skills to provide patient care (López-Medina & Sánchez-Criado, 2005). Clinical practices have an enormous educational impact because the knowledge obtained in them allows the development of the skills and attitudes of each student that are essential for the acquisition of skills and allow them to join as professionals in the health context (Juanola, Blanco, Consul & Zapico, 1998).

For their part, the student body must achieve a battery of competencies during their training; which not only involves the appropriate knowledge (knowing) and skills (knowing how to do), but it is expected that they will be able to use this knowledge in solving problems and in the correct handling of real scenarios. Therefore, it carries an attitudinal and evaluative dimension (knowing how to be) that affects their know-how in the environment. These competences are those that seem insufficient for students when facing their clinical practices (Llanes Betancourt, 2015; Salazar, 1996; Urbina Laza & Otero Ceballos, 2003).

However, Martínez-Momblán, Colina-Torralva, De la Cueva-Ariza, Guix-Comellas, Romero-García and Delgado-Hito (2020) report that the academic findings of students in the clinical practice environment maintain high academic averages, with a low failure rate, both in Clinical Placements I and Clinical Placements II of the School of Nursing of a university in Spain. In the same sense, Ruzafa-Martínez, Molina-Salas and Ramos-Morcillo (2016) reported favorable information on attitudes, skills and knowledge from the combination of research methodologies and evidence-based practice in the study plan and its use in teaching nursing students. In contrast, Martínez (2003) presented the barriers to evidence-based practice in nursing, the main limitations being organizational class, concluding that leadership is fundamental in the nursing profession and that organizational institutions must embrace personnel policies by supporting, financing and encouraging research.

In Peru, Pacheco (2019) affirms that the relationships that the nursing student shows with the teacher, fellow students, health personnel, family is key for their development in clinical practice and the existence of different factors that affect the student. For example, Pari (2019) concludes that the social perception of nursing students, regarding the treatment of the teacher during clinical practices, it is regular in most of them. On the other hand, during the university stage, students and specifically those who carry out clinical practices such as nursing students, they are exposed to the effects of a symptomatology called stress (Pades & Homar, 2006).

Stress is considered a serious public health problem, due to the implications it has generated; it is valued as one of the diseases of the present century, according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2004) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO, 2002). This can be seen in all environments and environments, including education. Then, the teaching-learning process is not strange to this, it is subject to numerous reforms, entailing unequivocal and rapid impacts, with long-term implications that are difficult to foresee. In this context, the professional training process of the university student corresponds to a learning experience, which is generally accompanied by academic stress due to inadequate skills development (Villalobos and Ramírez, 2018; Quiliano & Quiliano, 2020).

Additionally, college students are increasingly experiencing mental health issues that affect their performance, well-being, and lives in general. Academic requirements, ostensibly more accentuated than those faced in school life, could be among the most stressful factors. In addition to the academic pressure typical of university life, it arises from a considerable change in association with the school education system, in which young people are much less autonomous (Chunga, et al, 2020; Pellerone, 2020; Harvey, 2020; Bocheliuk, 2020).

Specifically, health science students, in the workplace, report the highest levels of stress among all careers, and various investigations (Álvarez, Gallegos & Herrera, 2018; Fernández, González & Trianes, 2015; Evaristo, 2012) report that specifically nursing students experience high academic stress, anxiety, as well as sleep problems, than the rest of university students. Likewise, multiple studies have revealed the main sources of stress in nursing students; linking them with the clinical and academic field, without leaving aside the other obvious areas such as the social and interpersonal (Sánchez, 1992; Ramírez et al, 2019; Ramírez et al, 2020).

Among the situations experienced with greater intensity by nursing students during clinical practices are: the death of the patient, contact with terminally ill patients, suffering, coping with death, critical illness situations, cardiorespiratory arrest, patient and family interrelation and the discrepancy between theory and practice. However, the interrelationships with health personnel, feelings of helplessness, and lack of knowledge and skills in the techniques are the elements that most concern nursing students (López & Sánchez, 2005). Timmins and Kaliszer (2002) have shown that the main sources of stress in the last nursing course are: academic stress, relationships in clinical practices, relationships with teachers and the death of patients.

Román and Hernández (2011) state that the negative character of a high level of stress (distress) has implications in the response system of the person at the cognitive, motor and physiological level. The alteration in these degrees of responses has a negative influence on academic unemployment; however, other scholars indicate the importance of certain degrees of stress as a necessity to achieve adequate alertness and to be able to correctly execute the tasks and demands of the university (euters).

In this perspective, clinical practices imply experiencing academic stress, due to the nature of the practice of care supported by scientific knowledge and application of health and nursing technologies; Evidenced during the development of the practice, important stressors such as excessive assigned work, caring for patients with a high degree of dependency, filling in the records required by the administrative system of the service, execution of works and the preparation of the thesis, among others (Obando & Ruíz, 2020). Finally, in the training of nursing students, it is essential to recognize the sources of stress related to the role they play during clinical practices to establish which skills to enhance and thus support the occupational health of future professionals and, indirectly, to a better care of patients (Cano, 2002). In this context, this study aims to determine the relationship between stressors and performance in clinical practices of nursing students at the National University Hermilio Valdizán, Huánuco - Peru, during the period 2019.

#### DEVELOPMENT

#### Stressors

Stressors correspond to a situation that stimulates a stress response. It is an automatic response of the body to any change in the environment, external or internal, through which the organism is conditioned to face the possible demands that originate as an implication of the new situation (Labrador, 1992). According to Olvera, Domínguez and Cruz (2000) argue that they are harmful or threatening stimuli that can originate a response to stress, these generate greater adaptive demands of people in their environment and it can be real or potential.

For Good and Brophy (1996) indicate that these stressful conditions are shown in the individual through a series of factors, which can be classified as: a) interpersonal relationships, which come to make a reciprocal interaction between two or more individuals, that is in other words, it is about social relations that, as such, are regulated by the laws and institutions of social interaction (Herrico, 1999); b) emotional relationships, which is a complex state of feelings that results in physical and psychological transformations that influence thinking and behavior (Dansie, 1998); and c) cognitive relationships, which refers to the optimal functioning of

intelligence, this means, each problem we face corresponds to an opportunity to develop intelligence (Dansie, 1998).

# Performance in clinical practices

They are evident behaviors and skills that the subject contributes in a job to fulfill their responsibilities effectively and satisfactorily (Benavides, 2002). Another definition is described by Chiavenato (1994) who states that performance defines work performance, that is, the ability of an individual to do, elaborate, finish in less time, with less effort and higher quality, which reflects their development. For his part, Bernabé (2001) reports that it is the way in which a subject executes the activities that correspond to care in hospitalization services, which welcomes the execution of skills, knowledge, responsibility and attitudes in order to achieve the proposed goals.

Among the components of this variable, we consider: a) cooperative attitude, which is any action that occurs in the individual at the time of carrying out various activities, selflessly supporting others, in order to have a good development (Bernabé, 2001); d) responsibility, which corresponds to the obligation that the person has to assume roles and achieve sufficient self-confidence to make decisions about the tasks of their profession and assume the consequences that they imply (Borda et al., 2007); and c) knowledge, which is the set of accumulated information that the person possesses through acquired learning that allows them to face the different situations in their environment and also allows them to support the care processes with a scientific basis (Bernabé, 2001).

#### **METHODOLOGY**

# Design and participants

Correlational type study, non-experimental design, cross-sectional with a quantitative approach. The population was made up of 58 nursing students from the third cycle of the basic nursing course of the National University Hermilio Valdizán de Huánuco, enrolled in the academic period 2019-II. The students had the characteristic that in this cycle they began their clinical practice in the hospital for the first time.

#### Instrument

Two questionnaires were used, one was the KEZKAK questionnaire prepared by Cobo et al. (2010), modified by Camacho (2015), with 33 items that measured the stressors in clinical practices: 1. Interpersonal relationships, 2. Emotional relationships and 3. Cognitive relationships, had as response alternatives of nothing, something, quite and a lot, whose numerical value was 0, 1, 2, 3; respectively. An acceptable instrument reliability of 0.905 was obtained through Cronbach's alpha. The other questionnaire was the performance questionnaire (Bernabé, 2001) which was made up of 29 items whose responses were rated according to the following scores, a) always: (2), b) sometimes (1), c) never (0), establishing two levels: efficient performance, poor performance. This instrument yielded a reliability value of 0.871 using Cronbach's alpha.

## **Procedures**

Timely coordination and training was carried out for data collection. Subsequently, data collection was carried out through the application of questionnaires in scheduled meetings. The KEZKAK questionnaire was applied to all students on the last day of the theoretical class schedule. In order to collect information related to performance, we counted on the collaboration of a head nurse of practices from the Hermilio Valdizán Medrano hospital of Huánuco at the end of the rotation of clinical practices.

# Analysis of data

The SPSS 22.0 software was used to carry out the statistical analysis, and the Pearson r correlation test was applied with a significance level of p < 0.05.

# **RESULTS**

# **Descriptive characteristics**

Table I shows the general characteristics of the study participants, where 41.4% (24 students) had ages between 19 to 20 years, 67.2% (39 students) were female, 100, 0% (58 students) were single and 74.1% (43 students) obtained the money for their studies from their parents.

Tabla I. Description of students under study

General characteristics	Frequency (n=58)	%
Age in years		
17 to 18	19	32,8
19 to 20	24	41,4
21 to 22	15	25,9
Gender		
Male	19	32,8
Female	39	67,2
Civil status		
Single	58	100,0
Cohabiting	0	0,0
Getting money		
Job	13	22,4
Parents	43	74,1
Others	2	3,4

Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding the dimensions of stressors, they had some stress-generating situations for the interpersonal relationships dimension (48.3%), quite referred to stress-generating situations in the emotional relationships dimensions (50.0%) and cognitive relationships. (37.9%), in each one (see Table II). In general, the perception of stressors was quite level in 44.8% (26 students), while 43.1% valued something, 6.9% a lot and 5.2% nothing.

Table II. Dimensions of stressors in nursing students

Dimensions	Frequency (n=58)	%	
Relationships			
Much	1	1,7	
Quite	22	37,9	
Something	28	48,3	
Nothing	7	12,1	
Emotional relationships			
Much	1	1,7	
Quite	29	50,0	
Something	21	36,2	
Nothing	7	12,1	
Cognitive relationships			
Much	18	31,0	
Quite	22	37,9	
Something	16	27,6	
Nothing	2	3,4	
		J, <del>1</del>	

Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding the performance dimensions in clinical practices, poor performance was evidenced for the cooperative attitude (94.8%), responsibility (96.6%) and knowledge (93.1%) dimensions (see Table III). Overall, regarding performance, the highest frequency of nursing students 96.6% (56 students) had efficient performance and 3.4% efficient performance.

Table III. Performance dimensions in clinical practices of nursing students

Dimensions	Frequency (n=58)	%
Cooperative attitude		
Efficient performance	3	5,2
Poor performance	55	94,8
Responsibility		
Efficient performance	2	3,4
Poor performance	56	96,6
Knowledge		
Efficient performance	4	6,9
Poor performance	54	93,1
2 2	1.1 (*)	

Source: Own elaboration.

# Inferential analysis

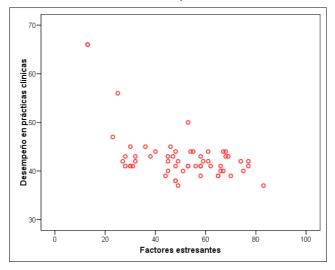
Regarding the relationship between stressors and performance in clinical practices, a Pearson r coefficient of -0.49 and a p $\leq$ 0.000 were found, being statistically significant. Likewise, there was a significant relationship between performance in clinical practices and the dimensions of stressors such as interpersonal relationships (p $\leq$ 0.000), emotional relationships (p $\leq$ 0.001) and cognitive relationships (p $\leq$ 0.000) (see Table IV). In addition, our results show that the points have a negative correlation, so we can assume that the higher the stressor, the lower the performance, or vice versa (see Figure I).

Table IV. Relationship between the dimensions of stressors and performance in clinical practices of nursing students under study.

Variable / dimensions	Performance in clinical practices		
Variable / dimensions	Pearson's R	Significance	
Stressors	-0,49	0,000	
Relationships	-0,51	0,000	
Emotional relationships	-0,43	0,001	
Cognitive relationships	-0,53	0,000	

Source: Own elaboration.

Figure I. Dispersion of points between stressors and performance in clinical practices of students under study.



Source: Own elaboration.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, there is a negative and significant relationship between stressors and performance in clinical practices of students from the Faculty of Nursing of the National University Hermilio Valdizán de Huánuco. Finally, the findings provide an idea of what aspects should be improved in the training of future health professionals. Nursing students must not only acquire knowledge about curricular subjects, procedures and

techniques; but also on the development of social skills and coping strategies to face high levels of stress, especially at the beginning of clinical practices.

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