REPERCUSSION OF THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP IN UNDERGRADUATE NURSING EDUCATION

REPERCUSSÃO DA RELAÇÃO PROFESSOR-ALUNO NA FORMAÇÃO DE GRADUANDOS EM ENFERMAGEM

REPERCUSIÓN DE LA RELACIÓN PROFESOR-ALUMNO EN LA FORMACIÓN DE ESTUDIANTES DE ENFERMERÍA

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Objective: to analyze the repercussion of the teacher-student relationship in undergraduate nursing education. Method: a qualitative, exploratory and descriptive study, involving 27 undergraduate nursing students at a public university in Southern Brazil. Data were collected in July 2017. Discursive textual analysis was applied to the data. Results: three categories emerged from the data analysis: “Barriers in the teacher-student relationship”, “Facilitators of the teacher-student relationship” and “Ethics in the teacher-student relationships”. Conclusion: the repercussion of the teacher-student relationship in undergraduate nursing education is fraught with aspects involving not only the academic curriculum, but also relational aspects that determine the future professionals’ way of being and acting.


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objetivo: analizar la repercusión de la relación profesor-alumno en la formación de estudiantes de enfermería.

método: estudio cualitativo, exploratorio-descriptivo, con 27 estudiantes de enfermería de una universidad pública del sur del Brasil. Recolección de datos en julio de 2017. Datos analizados según el análisis textual discursivo. Resultados: del análisis de datos, surgieron tres categorías: barreras en la relación profesor-alumno, facilitadores de la relación profesor-alumno y ética en las relaciones profesor-alumno. Conclusión: la repercusión de la relación profesor-alumno en la formación de estudiantes de enfermería pasa por aspectos que contemplan no sólo el currículum académico, sino también aspectos relacionales que determinan la forma de ser y actuar de futuros profesionales.


introduction

as a result of the currently ongoing transformations at higher education institutions, mainly guided by the social changes that directly influence the job world, an important change is verified regarding the curricular matrix of undergraduate students. In nursing students' case, this change refers to the need to increase the practical workload and enhance the articulation between theory and practice. Thus, the teacher-student relationship is relevant when considering college education as a place of social interactions, where subjects jointly build vocational education based on principles, values, competencies and attitudes.

according to the national curricular guidelines (ncd) for undergraduate nursing programs, published in 2001, the objective is to prepare generalist, critical and reflexive nurses who are capable of identifying and intervening in the problems and health-disease situations in their place of work. in addition, nurses need to be prepared and trained to act in a socially accountable manner that is committed to citizenship, working towards the integral health promotion of human beings and complying with their ethical duty, in accordance with their professional ethics code. for the sake of mutual knowledge construction, the teacher needs to be eager to participate in the interaction, communication and experience exchange process with the students. the latter, in turn, need to participate with a view to contributing to the teachers and their fellow students, aiming for an effective teaching-learning process.

in that perspective, the bond between teacher and student should be able to link up the reality experienced within the university with the reality experienced in the world external to the university. this link turns the academic environment into a place that is intensely rich in knowledge. it is essential for the bonds to be based on trust, respect and affection, always seeking balance to allow the teacher to focus on the students with a view to supporting their personal and professional growth.

on the other hand, it is important to keep in mind that some of the teaching methods the teachers use in higher education are limited or outdated and can thus hamper the teacher-student relationship. hence, when experiencing an improper pedagogical practice, the students may feel inhibited to interact and exchange experiences with peers and teachers. this could negatively affect the significant improvements in the quality of teaching, as well as the students' critical and reflexive skills.

therefore, in an educational process, the teacher-student relationship needs to be based on confidence, affection and respect. the teacher's function is to instruct the students in their personal and professional growth, while the students' is to participate actively at all times during the dialogical interaction. this relationship is represented as a factor that influences the learning aspects, in which the pleasure to learn is evidenced in the commitment, knowledge construction and in the interest the student demonstrates.
The relevance of this study is justified by the importance of a good teacher-student relationship in nursing teaching, given the implications of this interaction in the quality of the future nurses involved, as well as by the need to confront the related challenges. In addition, there is a lack of research on the theme, whose implications arouse the need to gain a more in-depth and comprehensive view in the area.

The objective in this study is to analyze the repercussion of the teacher-student relationship in undergraduate nursing education.

Method

A qualitative, exploratory and descriptive study, developed in an undergraduate nursing program at a public university in Southern Brazil. Twenty-seven undergraduate nursing students, enrolled between the first and ninth semesters, answered the research. The inclusion criteria were: being an undergraduate nursing student, regularly enrolled in the semester in which the data collection took place. The exclusion criteria were being on leave during the data collection period.

The researchers collected the data by visiting the classrooms of the groups taking each course semester, at times pre-arranged with the teachers and with the consent of the Undergraduate Nursing Course Coordination of the higher education institution where the study was developed. On these occasions, the data collectors, with background training, presented themselves, informed on the study objectives and formally invited the students to participate. A minimum number of three students per semester was set, totaling 27 students, thus safeguarding the representativeness of each grade.

The semi structured interviews took place in July 2017. The interviews were recorded using audio equipment, took 25 minutes on average and were held in the classrooms of the investigated course, which had been booked for that purpose. The interview form consisted of closed questions to characterize the participants, such as age, sex, initial course year, current semester; and open questions, focused on the repercussion of the teacher-student relationship in the education of undergraduate nursing students, for example: What weaknesses and potentials do you perceive in the teacher's teaching? Do you consider that the interaction between the student and the teacher is important? Why? Have you witnessed any (good or bad) situation between a teacher and a student that attracted your attention? Which? According to you, do the teachers value, encourage your learning? Does the student understand the knowledge the teacher shares well? If not, does the teacher seek another didactic method to try and make the student understand?

The data were submitted to discursive textual analysis, a qualitative method that is intended to produce new understandings of phenomena and discourse. Thus, this type of analysis consists of three fundamental components: the unitarization of texts, the establishment of relationships and the capturing of the emerging new. During the analysis and categorization, different units of meaning were identified. These could be grouped based on the more approximate meanings to obtain the units of meaning and the final categories.

As shown in Chart 1, three categories emerged, in accordance with the study objective:
Repercussion of the teacher-student relationship in undergraduate nursing education

Chart 1 – Category structure model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absence of empathy</th>
<th>Robotization of teaching</th>
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<td>Absence of didactics</td>
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<td>Moral harassment</td>
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<td>Absence of ethical conduct</td>
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<th>Barriers in the teacher-student relationship</th>
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<td>Teacher-student Bond and affinity</td>
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<td>Empathy and comprehension</td>
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<td>Interaction</td>
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<tr>
<th>Units of meaning</th>
<th>Final categories</th>
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<td>Source: Created by the authors.</td>
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This study complied with the recommendations of National Research Ethics Committee Resolution No. 466/2012, Ministry of Health, on research involving human beings. Approval from the local ethics committee was obtained under opinion 63/2017. To guarantee the ethical principles, the students who accepted to participate in the research voluntarily signed two copies of the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF), one of which they kept. To preserve the students’ identity, they were identified using the letter S (Student), followed by the number indicating the interview order, the letter T (Term) and a number indicating the grade they were in (e.g.: S1T1, S2T1).

Results and Discussion

The characteristics of the 27 undergraduate nursing students who were interviewed showed that 25 were women, the ages ranged between 18 and 41 years, 21 were single, only 5 had children and 15 engaged in an extracurricular activity in their undergraduate program. Similar data were found in other studies, in which about 70% of the undergraduate nursing students were women. Hence, that fact that women are more concerned with health issues may be associated with their demand for the course.

In the data analysis, three categories emerged in relation to the study objective: “Barriers in the teacher-student relationship”, “Facilitators of the teacher-student relationship” and “Ethics in the teacher-student relationships”.

Barriers in the Teacher-Student Relationship

The following main weaknesses could be identified: the trivialization, the teaching routine and the power relationship of teachers over students. These barriers harm the teacher’s relationship with the students, as the lack of dynamic activities blocks the students’ actions towards the theoretical-practical activities, besides arousing conflicts, as described next:

Some students transmit an idea of centralized teaching. What he says is the rule and that’s it. He does not give much room for change; he doesn’t get that dynamic. So, sometimes, some teacher-student conflicts happen as a consequence. (S2T9).

There are teachers who are not open to anything. We raise anything, and they do not accept it. Things have to be done their way, in the practices as well as in the lectures, and that often makes the teacher-student relationship difficult. (S2T8).

In line with these findings, in an international study involving 16 nursing students, it was identified that the instability and lack of support identified in the teacher-student relationships can negatively influence the future professionals’ clinical training. In addition, the participating...
students believed that the lack of support and the educators' clear relationship of superiority reduced their desire to learn and to seek new knowledge.

The teaching career evidences the teacher's need to act in multiple functions, as an interlocutor, advisor and educator, serving as the main actor and direct means of communication with the student in teaching-learning. Therefore, for the sake of a change in the quality of teaching, the teachers need to reflect on their view towards education, understand the meaning and, consequently, work to improve the teaching process, analyzing all possibilities within their teaching practice. In addition, professional education needs to be understood as a construction and pedagogical organization process, articulating the didactics in a more creative and dynamic manner, in tune with the new realities.

Nevertheless, the activity burden under the teacher's responsibility can compromise or hamper the student's learning, due to the mechanization, which makes it easier to reduce the time needed for the teacher's daily commitments. Therefore, reflection, discussion and problematization are needed to enable the professionals to envisage their potential and limits and to promote an actual change in nursing care for their students. That will allow them to eliminate the practice and the robotized thinking of teaching, to facility the teacher-student interaction and, consequently, to reduce the negative impact this may entail.

The teachers' lack of empathy towards the students is also mentioned in the students' statements, as a factor that negatively affects the teaching-learning process and that even discourages the students in terms of their undergraduate objectives and targets. When they asked about the flexibility in teaching to enhance the student's learning, they answered:

The teacher simply came into the classroom and said that he had anticipated our seminar presentation by a month. We had to change everything we had planned; that was very bad. (S7T3)

They are only concerned with transmitting the contents. They do not try to find out what difficulties the students experience beyond the university, they think that the students live in that world only. What is missing is a bit of empathy to understand certain attitudes. (S7T5)

In that sense, the meaning of the importance of dedication, empathy and quality of care should be a part of academic discussions during the undergraduate program. This represents an advance towards improvements in the course subjects and can thus positively affect the quality of care for oneself and for others. The teaching team needs to be responsible for attending to each student's individuality, like to respond to the emergency needs that hamper the academic development. Thus, both the students and the teachers' commitment and respect are essential, for the sake of a successful teaching process, both need to participate and respect one another.

The students mention the teachers' lack of didactics at certain times as a factor that directly influences their learning and the impact it can cause in the relationship between both:

Some teachers act mechanically, they talk, talk, read the slides and ask: Does anyone have any doubt? Then you ask, he answers the same thing he said on the slides, without any practical explanation. (S9T4)

There are exceptions of course. You cannot generalize, because there are very good people teaching us, without practical experience but, first of all, they should spend at least some time in the care part, to see what the routine is like. Because sometimes, they finish their undergraduate program, get into the Master's, doctoral, post-doctoral courses and start teaching, offering us the possibility to accomplish perfect procedures, using any equipment you might dream of and, when you face the practical reality, there is nothing. I think they should at least establish a closer link with the reality, have more baggage. (S2T7)

Although each teacher has his way of teaching, the importance of further qualification and recycling should be emphasized, with a view to continuing renovation, taking new information to the students, also contributing to their own professional growth. The research participants emphasized some aspects, including: lack of theoretical background to support care education in the practical scenario; lack of effective nursing education methods; use of traditional methods like theory and lectures, which are considered outdated.
Therefore, broader reflections are needed on the teaching-learning process of teachers and students, also valuing the positive and negative aspects in their daily practices, with a view to promoting change and improvement processes. It is also fundamental for the teacher to improve in constant didactic recycling and in education (14-15).

**Facilitators of the Teacher-Student Relationship**

In this category, the teachers' bond and affinity with the students was observed, besides didactic methods that facilitate the interaction. In line with these findings, it was identified that, when a good teacher-student relationship was established, the students started to demonstrate greater interest in the subject, making the class calm and pleasant. At the same time, the students demonstrated trust and commitment towards the chosen profession. Hence, the ways of acting and relating with the students gradually changed, reducing the mutual distancing between teachers and students that had occurred for any reason (16).

As observed, when the relationships are created and maintained, a process of companionship takes place between teachers and students, strengthening the bond and suspending the character of the superior being the students create and dissipate throughout the teaching institution, establishing a link of knowledge exchange (16). When asked about the potentials identified in the teaching-learning process, the participants answered:

*I think that the teacher give you autonomy, and that he demonstrates that he trusts you, that they value your action and your initiative, they contribute to the student's development. Therefore, I think it's a potential, a facilitator.* (S23S9).

*No matter how silly the question seems, for a certain teacher there are no silly questions, even if you get to the end of the class and raise your hand to say: I haven’t understood anything. She’ll ask “what is it that you haven’t understood?” And she explains everything all over again. There is a desire to teach. So, that is a positive relationship and it is an interaction that motivates the person to proceed within a college course.* (S15S1).

The previous statement demonstrates a model teacher who makes the class more attractive, conducting teaching in a way more open to questions and answers, encouraging the students to learn dynamically, without repression when questioning the teacher. Similarly, in a study developed at a medical school in the interior of São Paulo State, the teacher-student relationship is highlighted as a pedagogical encounter that permits the subjective experience necessary to acquire professional competence. In this case, the students valued the bond with the teacher, particularly when they felt welcomed, feeling that these experiences were fundamental to their educational development (17).

In addition, when they enter a university, the students go through different change processes, with constant adaptations that, depending on how they are executed, can result in negative processes in their lives and in social isolation. These aspects can hamper the relationship with the teacher, in terms of affinity and bonding, as well as the relationship with the patients, as a result of the disinterest in professional training, which is the pillar and foundation of the undergraduate nursing program (18).

In a study on the determinants of academic satisfaction, involving undergraduate nursing students in the Southern tip of Brazil, it was identified that, when the students were satisfied with the relationship with the teachers and the teaching institution, they felt more motivate and engaged in the course activities, which interfered positively in the future professionals’ learning improvements and competence (19).

The bond between teacher and student is important when it establishes trust and respect in the teaching process, mitigating the impact of the experiences in hostile environments. Thus, teachers who attempt to understand the students’ difficulties globally offer better learning, facilitate the understanding and, consequently, interactions in the personal and professional spheres (20). The following statements illustrate this:

*This semester, the distribution of the practical care classes wasn’t working well and the teacher changed the system, to allow us to develop clinical reasoning, as we weren’t managing, due to the amount of technical procedures we had to perform, in line with the course objective. And,*
so, she tried to change it, that was very nice of her. She accepted our suggestions, because we said we were having difficulties, and she changed the method to enable us to develop this reasoning. (S8S6).

The affinity with the teacher influences the actual teaching practice, because you can ask the necessary questions in a calm manner. Sometimes, the student does not ask and makes a mistake, precisely because he's afraid of asking the teacher... precisely because he doesn't have a good relationship, that definitely affects the student’s daily reality. (S9S5).

The statements confirm that the relationship between teacher and student is valued when quenched with dialogue and mutual respect, as no one educates himself. The understanding that one side needs the other is manifest in health, mainly in education and academic training. The teacher’s valuation and the constant experience and knowledge exchanges is reflected during the classes and in teaching, turning the teacher into a learning facilitator (21).

In health, the professionals should employ not only the technique; they need to pay attention to the actions affecting the other and targeting the other, with ethical and critical responsibility. Hence, the essence of any and all practice the professional performs are the interaction and the communicative relationships, as the profession is related to empathy and all of its actions affect the persons nearby (22).

Furthermore, supervised training situations in hospitals occur in a period that is sometimes threatening to the students. These expect a more flexible attitude from the teachers when they cope with and know each of the students' potentials and limitations. If that does not happen, they feel dissatisfied and discouraged, starting to see the teacher as a threat. Therefore, the training area arouses insecurity and fear in the students, as the teachers often reprimands them in front of the patients. This circumstance does not differ either from the insecurity they established in the didactical and practical fields and during the training are evidenced. As identified, the students perceived that, in the undergraduate nursing program, not only the technical and theoretical knowledge needs to be addressed. The ethical development of each future professional’s character is another responsibility of the educator who, in this sense, plays a fundamental role (21). Hence, the knowledge of reflexive teaching needs to be disseminated, with a view to challenging and stimulating the students to construct skills and competences that strengthen each student’s professional commitment (23).

When asked about possible bad situations between teacher and student in the teaching activities, the following events were noteworthy:

I think it's bad, when the teacher calls the student out in front of the patient during practical care activities. I believe that, if the student will put the patient at risk, the teacher should call him to talk about the situation, but I think it’s horrible when the student is corrected in front of the patient, because the patient already demonstrates insecurity about us being students. Some allows us to perform procedures, others are more fearful and, then, when the teacher calls out in front of the patient, things get very complicated for the student. (S24T9).

Situations like, for example, when the teacher says we can count on him, but we should say what we feel, our insecurities in the practice area, the procedures we are afraid of performing and then find out that the teacher told another teacher, or another professional from the hospital service where we are serving as trainees, what are actually our weaknesses and inner fears we trusted the teacher with in search of support, and not the opposite, that the teacher embarrasses us or causes some constraint, without a grain of empathy. (S4T6).

I've already heard teachers telling other students that student “X” did that wrong, exposing the whole situation. It’s not ethical at all to expose a student like that; I felt really bad. (S3T4).

In a study involving 30 health professionals at inpatient services of a teaching hospital, as a result, the professionals themselves appointed
ethical problems. Thus, it was considered that hospital care has taken place through completely mechanized actions, without any kind of involvement and empathy. When the professionals are inserted in care practice, the attitude of concern, empathy, interaction with the team, with the other and the more subjective aspects of human relationships may remain hidden\(^{(21)}\). Thus, independently of the semester the students are taking, the insertion in the practice area, in a wide range of health scenarios, entails the accomplishment of techniques and procedures that by themselves arouse fear and insecurity, besides anti-ethical situations that may be entangled in these place, further intensifying the need for empathy by the teaching professional.

These perceptions support another Brazilian study involving the nursing team at a teaching hospital, which also evidenced that health professionals’ exposure of information has turned into an anti-ethical practice\(^{(21)}\).

Understanding one’s own attitudes in order to identify an ethical posture is essential to mirror teaching quality and professional quality. Hence, positive aspects need to be highlighted, while negative aspects need to be reprimanded and discussed, as the students the teachers are preparing may be the professionals in the job market. The latter, in turn, will reproduce the practices they have experienced in their academic education\(^{(19)}\).

It should be highlighted that ethics teaching in the professional education of undergraduate students is intended to reflect on human behavior, as well as to interpret, discuss, problematize and define values and principles. Most of the weaknesses nursing professionals or even students present serve as teaching for learning, as they permit observations and reflections on the ethical problems that exist in daily work, besides seeking change in order to achieve success and correct errors\(^{(15)}\).

Due to this problem, undergraduate nursing programs have gone through changes over time, instigated by the new Brazilian curricular guidelines. These emphasize the improvement of the pedagogical proposals, with a view to seeking out recent trends, leadership skills, knowledge for decision making based on ethics and the capacity to identify and solve problems. Using critical and reflexive reasoning, the goal is to achieve autonomy, communication and further approximation between theory and practice\(^{(15)}\).

Thus, nurses’ vocational education should focus not only on technical skills, but on the development of the knowledge gained, the range of ethics experiences and the stronger construction and consolidation of professional life\(^{(19)}\).

The study was developed in a specific population, which represents a limitation.

**Conclusion**

Different situations may determine students' global perception about the quality of an undergraduate program and their education, particularly when considering the relationship with the teachers of an undergraduate nursing program, the didactics they develop, the empathy, dynamics and pedagogical skill, in exchange for theoretical and practical experiences and knowledge that are essential to the future profession. The fear of questioning the teacher negatively affects the students' development and learning, as it limits their evolution in teaching and learning, independently of the semester they are taking.

It is fundamental for the teachers to uphold their ethical commitment in their actions towards students and peers, developing dynamic knowledge sharing activities to accomplish and favor the exchange with a view to enriching the experiences. This will permit strengthening the development and consolidation of the professional who is being prepared. In addition, identifying the problems and challenges of undergraduate nursing education, especially the relational factors, facilitates the future nurses' training process and enhances their professional quality.

In conclusion, the repercussion of the teacher-student relationship in undergraduate nursing
education is fraught with aspects involving not only the academic curriculum, but also relational aspects that determine the future professionals' way of being and acting. Further exploration of the theme is suggested in the undergraduate nursing programs of other Brazilian institutions and in other undergraduate programs.

Collaborations:

1. conception, design, analysis and interpretation of data: Larissa Merino de Mattos, Aline Marcelino Ramos, Edison Luiz Devos Barlem, Bárbara da Silva Gama, Alex Sandra Ávila Minasi and Caroline Bettanzos Amorim;
2. writing of the article and relevant critical review of the intellectual content: Larissa Merino de Mattos, Aline Marcelino Ramos and Edison Luiz Devos Barlem;
3. final approval of the version to be published: Aline Marcelino and Edison Luiz Devos Barlem.

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