



## **PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK ASSOCIATED WITH THE WORKLOAD OF A NURSING SUPERVISOR.**

Marcelo Lopes Campos<sup>1</sup> – marceloess@outlook.com – Universidade Federal de Itajubá

Amanda Martins de Almeida<sup>2</sup> – amandamartins25@unifei.edu.br – Universidade Federal de Itajubá

### **Summary**

The descriptive-exploratory article will present some regulations of the nursing supervisory role, observed during an ergonomic work analysis (AET), associated with the variability of staff embezzlement from their team at Hospital Carlos Chagas, located in Itabira - Minas Gerais . This work will demonstrate and associate the high workload of your activity with the risk of psychosocial stress generated by this variability.

**Keywords: psychosocial risk, workload, ergonomics, nursing.**

### **Introduction**

This article will seek to work with an exploratory field of investigation, using Ergonomic Work Analysis (AET) with the aim of understanding the stress generated in the role of nursing supervisor in a hospital in the city of Itabira – Minas Gerais. It is through this investigation that the divergent functions performed by the analyzed professional will be identified and elements in the environment that contribute to an increase in cognitive load will be sought.

Nurses in general experience several stressful factors: related to factors intrinsic to work, pressure from superiors, individual relationships at work, stressful roles and the organizational structure.

According to Emílio (2011), the nursing area is identified as being one of the professions

where the high level of stress among professionals is identified, relating their responsibility to deal daily with human beings seeking to restore their health, through actions that provide an improvement in their quality of life.

Nursing has been ranked by the Health Education Authority as the fourth most stressful profession in the public sector. There are few studies that seek to investigate the problems associated with practicing the nursing profession in Brazil. The history of nursing reveals that since its implementation in Brazil it has been a marginalized category and thus, nurses have been trying to assert themselves professionally without counting on support and understanding from other professionals (STACCIARINI; TROCCOLI, 2001, p. 02).

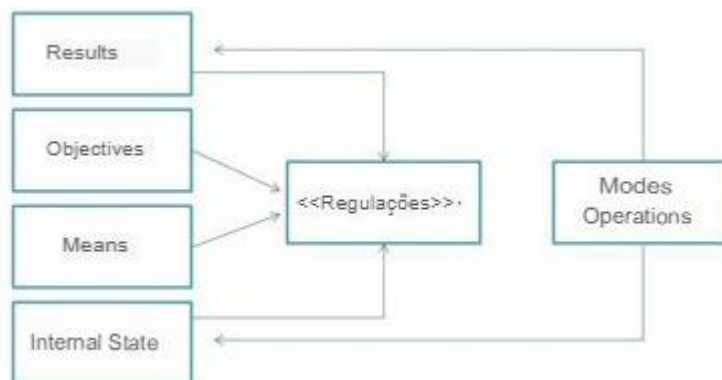
Therefore, as nursing can bring psychosocial risks, the regulations it adopts were identified to manage the variability that causes overload and associate this last aspect with the potential psychosocial risk.

### Theoretical Reference

Every work situation has defined characteristics within it (Figure 1): the operational mode - the results of a commitment that takes into account the required objectives, which is action planning, aimed at achieving results (GUÉRIN, 2001); means of work - resources used by the worker to carry out the activity; the results produced; and the internal state.

According to Simões et al. (2012), regulation is an internal process of reorienting action by establishing a commitment between the objectives set by the company, the organization (the means offered to achieve these objectives), the results achieved (or not) and the internal state itself. This last concept is defined by Guérin (2001) as the general properties of the human organism and the intrinsic characteristics (biophysical and mental) of the worker.

Figure 1: Characteristics of a work situation (Guérin, 2001).



Workers' regulations are directly related to the variability that occurs in their activity. These variabilities are defined by the difference between prescription and reality, and can be understood considering: the characteristics of the worker, highlighting the notion of inter and intra individual variability, and the organization of work, where the variability of equipment/materials stands out and procedures (ABRAHÃO, 2000).

When the worker has a greater variety of means and a flexible required objective, he has a greater margin of maneuver and a smaller workload, with the concept of workload being defined by Guérin (2001) as the interpretation of the understanding of the margin of maneuver of the worker. which disposes an operator at a given moment to develop operational methods, with a view to achieving the required objectives, without unfavorable effects on his own state.

The increase in workload translates into a decrease in the number of possible operative modes. This results in less possibility of reordering the conditions of the execution itself and changing the operating mode to one more favorable to the well-being of the operator, that is, it results in less room for maneuver (FLORES, 2003). Therefore, the greater the workload the operator is subjected to, the less room for maneuver there will be.

If the workload is high, the objectives are unachievable and the margin for maneuver is low or non-existent, the worker will be faced with a situation of work overload and psychosocial risk. In this study, the psychosocial risk identified was stress, defined by the Aurélio dictionary as a set of reactions of the body to physical, psychological, infectious, and other attacks, capable of disturbing its homeostasis.

## **Methodology**

This is a descriptive-exploratory study with a qualitative approach, to analyze the perception of occupational stress, experienced by the Nursing Supervisor of a hospital who works simultaneously in different sectors. 9 field visits were made, at Hospital Carlos Chagas, located in Itabira, Minas Gerais, lasting around 2 hours each, in the period between September and November 2015, when observations of the activity and interviews with a nursing supervisor were carried out, seeking identify its regulations, workload and the functions it performs.

To collect study data, the following research instruments were used:

1. Field observations by researchers, seeking to identify the invisible factors of work activity.
2. Bibliographical research that associates psychosocial risks with workload in the nursing sector.

## **Results and discussion**

Field visits revealed that the nursing supervisor performs several functions, in addition to her own, when there is variability in the absence of one or more employees. This situation generates a high workload, which must manage these absences efficiently. The nurse presents three types of regulations: for when embezzlement is expected, for when it is not anticipated and for both.

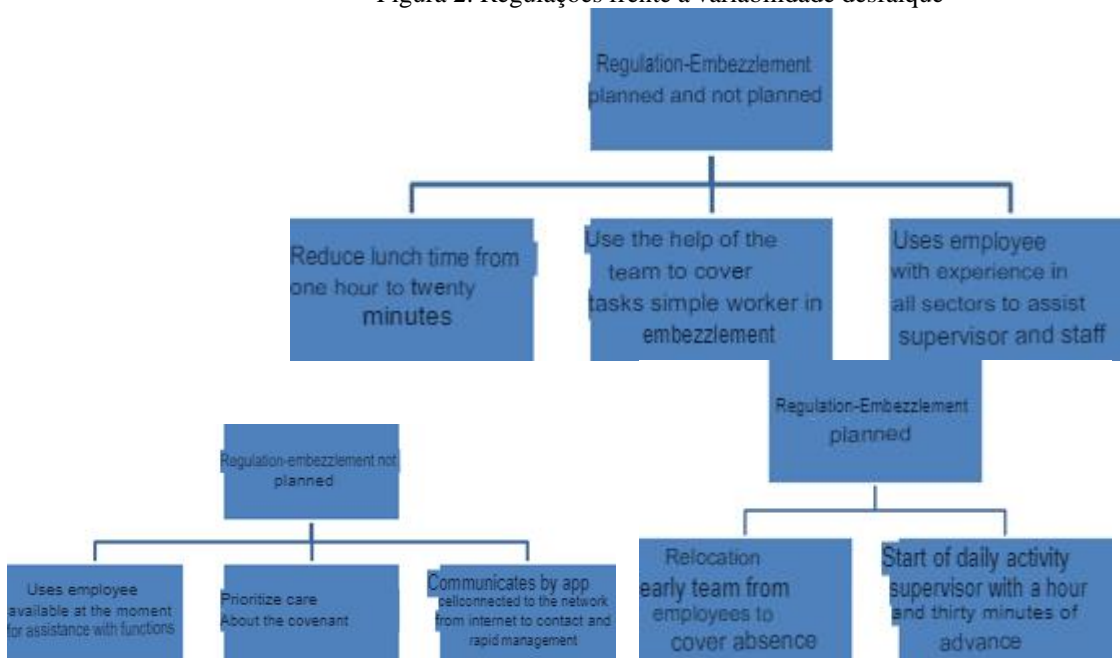
For a predicted embezzlement situation, the supervisor is able to relocate her employees in advance to the point of being able to carry out all functions at the expense of the internal state of her employees, but with a good margin of maneuver. She also requests permission from management to start work one hour and thirty minutes earlier than prescribed, so she can manage her team more easily. Even though she is able to get ahead, the situation proves to be stressful for the supervisor, who ends up being the main key to carrying out the absent worker's duties.

In an unforeseen embezzlement situation, the supervisor tries to attend to the worker's role with the help of an employee on her team who is available at the time. When there is no way to meet the diverted function, on the part of the supervisor and her team, she regulates the service to be given as a priority to those from the Unified Health System (SUS), and tries to reschedule those under an agreement. The supervisor also presents the use of a cell phone application as regulation. She, together with her team, manages unforeseen situations quickly by using internet messages to organize themselves. This method proves to be effective so that the workload on the supervisor does not increase more than it already is during this situation. However, even if she fulfills the role of the missing employee, she fails to carry out one of her tasks - which she carries out at home - and this creates a stressful impact on her day-to-day life as it does not leave a good margin maneuver for the supervisor.

In both cases of foreseen and unforeseen situations, the nurse often reduces the lunch hour from one hour to twenty minutes, with the aim of speeding up the work, or bringing it back to normal. She also uses other employees to cover simpler tasks for the absent worker. Furthermore, the supervisor uses the experience of an employee who knows all the functions in the sector to reduce her workload, while still making it possible to carry out the functions. This strategy is indicated by the supervisor as a very effective method for managing this variability. However,

even though the use of an assistant to carry out the activities is a good regulation, both - supervisor and assistant - demonstrate the tiredness and stress generated on those days when there is absence. This occurs because the assistant's role is different from what she performs during the assistance. So, what happens is the division of the worker's role into embezzlement, which reduces the workload imposed on the supervisor, but does not eliminate it.

Figura 2: Regulações frente a variabilidade desfalque



Thus, it is possible to see that regardless of regulation, the margin for maneuver varies, but the workload still remains high, and in the situations analyzed, it is accompanied by the risk of psychosocial stress, reported several times during the analysis of this activity.

### Final considerations

At the end of the application of the ergonomic method, two recommendations were proposed for transforming work. Encouraging versatility, knowledge obtained by the operator to perform functions other than their own, of employees so that they know all jobs and are all capable of covering any function, is the first of these.

A restructuring of functions was also carried out, reassigning an assistant to a 'wild card' role. The prescribed function of this would be to have knowledge of all the activities of the sectors. In other words, she will be tasked with helping where requested. Below is the model for the scope of the role of the 'joker' assistant:

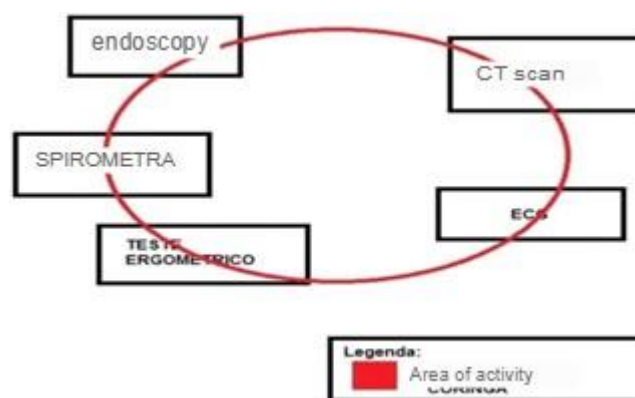


Figure 3: model of scope of the role of the 'joker' assistant.

The work involves several aspects of the organization. Managing it becomes a tacit and theoretical task over the passage of time. In the supervisor's activity, it is possible to observe that regulation techniques try to adapt what is prescribed to reality, however, the high workload can lead to negative consequences and influence the performance of work. The association between overload and psychosocial risks is often easy to identify. However, the internal state is harmed when this association is confirmed, as in the case described in this article. Thus, there is a need for those involved in this work to act, so that, with the confirmation of the existence of a link between factors, it is understood and transformed positively.

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