






Original Article

Assessment of knowledge of the child handbook by nursing academics

Avaliação do conhecimento da caderneta da criança por acadêmicos de enfermagem
Evaluación del conocimiento de la libreta del niño por académicos de enfermería

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Abstract

Objective: evaluating the knowledge of nursing academics about the Child Handbook. **Method:** a cross-sectional study of quantitative nature conducted by means of an online questionnaire between June and July 2023. Fifty-seven academics from the 8th and 9th semester of the Undergraduate Nursing Course at a public university participated. The sample was for convenience and analysis of descriptive data, the two open questions were submitted to content analysis. **Results:** the audience was composed mostly by women (89.5%) aged between 21 and 24 years old. The majority (89.5%) were involved in extracurricular activities. Everyone knew the "Child Handbook", 82.5% used it in practical activities, but 59.6% indicated that teaching about its filling could be improved. **Conclusion:** the knowledge about the booklet was unanimous among the *nurses*, however, they feel partially prepared. It is suggested to invest in the theme since graduation, aiming at the effective use of the instrument.

Descriptors: Child Health; Education, Nursing; Knowledge; Students, Nursing; Child Care

Resumo

Objetivo: avaliar o conhecimento dos acadêmicos de enfermagem sobre a Caderneta da Criança. **Método:** estudo transversal, de natureza quantitativa, realizado por meio de questionário on-line entre junho e julho de 2023. Participaram 57 acadêmicos do 8^o e 9^o período do Curso de Graduação em Enfermagem de uma Universidade Pública. A amostra foi por conveniência e análise dos dados descritiva, as duas perguntas abertas foram submetidas à análise de conteúdo. **Resultados:** o público foi composto majoritariamente por mulheres (89,5%) com idades entre 21 e 24 anos. A maioria (89,5%) estava envolvida em atividades extracurriculares. Todos conheciam a "Caderneta da Criança", 82,5% a utilizaram em atividades práticas, mas 59,6% apontaram que o ensino sobre seu preenchimento poderia ser melhorado. **Conclusão:** o conhecimento sobre a caderneta foi

unânime entre os *enfermeirandos*, entretanto, eles sentem-se parcialmente preparados. Sugere-se investir na temática desde a graduação, visando o uso efetivo do instrumento.

Descritores: Saúde da Criança; Educação em Enfermagem; Conhecimento; Estudantes de Enfermagem; Cuidado da Criança

Resumen

Objetivo: evaluar el conocimiento de los académicos de enfermería sobre la Libreta del Niño.

Método: estudio transversal de naturaleza cuantitativa realizado mediante cuestionario on-line entre junio y julio de 2023. Participaron 57 académicos del 8º y 9º período del Curso de Licenciatura en Enfermería de una Universidad Pública. La muestra fue por conveniencia y análisis de los datos descriptivo, las dos preguntas abiertas fueron sometidas al análisis de contenido. **Resultados:** el público estaba compuesto mayoritariamente por mujeres (89,5%) con edades entre 21 y 24 años. La mayoría (89,5%) estaba involucrada en actividades extracurriculares. Todos conocían el "Cuaderno del Niño", 82,5% lo utilizaron en actividades prácticas, pero 59,6% señalaron que la enseñanza acerca de su cumplimentación podría ser mejorada. **Conclusión:** el conocimiento acerca de la libreta fue unánime entre los *enfermeros*, sin embargo, se sienten parcialmente preparados. Se sugiere invertir en la temática desde la graduación, con el fin de utilizar eficazmente el instrumento.

Descritores: Salud Infantil; Educación en Enfermería; Conocimiento; Estudiantes de Enfermería; Cuidado del Niño

Introduction

Child Health Care is based on Primary Health Care, which is guided by the Health Care Network (HCN). With the proposal to expand this line of care, the Ministry of Health has projected in the Commitment Agenda the Integral Child Health and Reduction of Infant Mortality,¹ with axes focused on assistance and monitoring of children. The Family Health Strategy presents alignment to the proposal and ease of guidance to the objectives by exercising health responsibility, mainly through the development of childcare consultations.²⁻³

The childcare is an activity of the nurse for the monitoring of child development and uses the Child Handbook as a support instrument. Over the years, policies that are directed to child health have undergone changes with the objective of improving the quality of life, preventing diseases prevalent in childhood, reducing mortality in this population, seeking to promote healthy growth and development according to the constant assistance provided in Family Health Units.⁴

Over the years, the Child Handbook has undergone modifications, being restructured and added information on growth and development, as well as guidance to parents and caregivers about the cognitive development of children, rights and duties of

parents and the same adequate feeding in childhood, and were added fields with purpose to fill in annotations of complications, medications and treatments in childhood, as well as was also added the vaccination calendar.⁴

In 2019, the Child Handbook is in its fifth edition. The instrument was reformulated, its layout and content were modified, becoming called "Child Handbook - Passport of Citizenship" . Its filling was also extended to professionals who live with the child and family more often, promoting actions of integral care for the health of the child, enabling, strengthening, Enhancing and implementing the activities of the axes of the National Policy for Comprehensive Child Health Care (PNAISC- *National Policy for Comprehensive Child Health Care*).⁵

Among the contents added to the new version, there is a section dedicated to social assistance, in which guidelines are found as support services; another that contemplates school life, aiming at strengthening ties between parents, health professionals and education; also for the first time has the attention focused on premature children; the 12 steps to a proper and healthy diet for children under 2 years old; specific topic for oral health; the updated vaccination schedule and activities to stimulate child development according to developmental milestones.⁶

It is possible to state that the Book is a multidisciplinary chart focusing on the monitoring of the integral development of the child and helps in planning actions for better living conditions during childhood.⁷ In this study, the are contained information that is recorded by different professionals providing integralization and greater information to families who have the document, allowing to follow the milestones of development periodically. For example, one study describes the actions performed by occupational therapists in primary care and cites health surveillance through the Child Record as the main activity carried out.⁸

In the Child Handbook, essential information in child care is recorded, allowing a facilitated integration of data, besides, it is a guiding tool for health assessment, as well as every instrument validated in Brazil must be part of courses in the health area. Such mechanisms influence decisions about treatment, care and health interventions.⁹ Similarly, they are used for the health evaluation of professionals, requiring a satisfactory use of the product, through the correct recording of data obtained during care and effective

communication between family and service.¹⁰ They seek to facilitate clinical evaluation, as well as to promote research in the health area and to screen for risks.^{2,8,11}

The study¹² sought to identify the motivations according to health professionals for their inappropriate use, highlighting the main points: the lack of training for the correct use of the Book, insufficient time to perform various activities, the lack of a health care card, the lack of use by other professionals on the team, the lack of knowledge and the devaluation of the resource by the family. In addition, due to the lack of training, the professionals also reported difficulty in handling the book and understanding the added concepts, feeling unable to offer quality health surveillance necessary for the child and thus underestimating the importance of the apparatus for child care.

The absence or failure to fill in the instrument may interrupt and/or hinder the integration of care at different levels of health.¹³ A lack of communication and explanation to family members and caregivers about the relevance of the Book for the child's life the instrument is given little importance in monitoring child development, leading to its poor conservation and improper use. With the understanding of the credit of this passport by the family, its use would be valued and the correct filling in, requested.^{10,14}

Through the above, it is observed the relevance of the use of the Child Handbook, which should be worked during the graduation of the nursing course, in order to enable the student to fill and use appropriate, for this, in an organizational way, the National Council of Education, through the curriculum guidelines, points out that undergraduate courses must have as a guide a Pedagogical Project of the course, which together will guide the appropriate training of the student through a curriculum appropriate to the academic and professional profile. In addition, the significance of linking teaching, research and extension to training is recognized, providing nurses with essential knowledge to be a critical, creative and reflective professional.¹⁵

The integration of research and extension to education provides an academic training, because from participation in these activities, the academic opens a range of possibilities in the production of scientific knowledge beyond the interaction with society, becoming a professional engaged and committed to the transformation of society.¹⁶

Considering the scope of the Child Handbook in the integral promotion of child care and the use of inadequate form by health professionals, as described in the literature, the relevance in evaluating the knowledge of future nurses before the instrument was observed. In addition, the results of research in this methodology may offer adaptations that reinforce knowledge and correct use in disciplines dealing with child monitoring and development. Thus, this study aimed to evaluate the knowledge of nursing academics about the Child Handbook.

Method

This is a cross-sectional, descriptive and quantitative study, conducted in the Department of Nursing of a Public University, between June and July 2023.

According to the 40 vacancies available per period for enrollment, the population was composed of 80 students regularly enrolled in the 8th and 9th semester of the Undergraduate Nursing Course. The sample included students who were enrolled for the first time in the discipline or had passed the compulsory subjects related to child health and/or attending the basic care curricular internship. Thus, the content of the curriculum on the Child Handbook would have already been considered in the teaching-learning process of these students.

The sample was for convenience, including 57 academics according to the availability of the students and accepted the invitation as a volunteer. The participants were invited during the undergraduate classes by the researchers, who were in person in the classroom informing the research objectives and requested the institutional e-mail for sending the electronic invitation. Students who were attending the subject for the second time and/or those who were in the condition of hearing students and/or who were taking the subject as an elective were excluded.

The data collection was carried out following the steps: sending of the virtual invitation, selection of the option to accept participation and the Informed Consent Form and receipt of the questionnaire guiding the study, entitled: Assessment of Knowledge of the Child Handbook by Nursing Academics.

The questionnaire was composed of 22 questions structured in closed and open that express to evaluate sociodemographic, individual and economic variables of the participants, as: sex, age, academic semester, participation in complementary academic activities and the receipt of financial incentive scholarship, in addition to those related to the knowledge of the Child Handbook, based on scientific work¹⁷ and analysis of the fifth version of the booklet published by the Ministry of Health.⁶

Some questions in the questionnaire allowed participants to select more than one alternative as a response, with the sum of the percentages exceeding 100%, such as: "what procedures are registered by academics?" and "what facilitated and/or hindered their use of the Child Handbook?". Most variables were investigated dichotomously (yes/no) and by multiple choice. The results of open questions were analyzed by means of thematic content analysis.

For data consolidation, we used the form of Google[®] that allows generating automatically a spreadsheet (Google sheets) for the storage of information. The spreadsheet was exported to the software in which a database was built in the program Epi Info version 3.5.4, and validation was performed (double typing with the objective of validating the questionnaire completion and subsequent comparison with electronically generated data), by means of which the descriptive analysis of the data was carried out. The variables were described in relative and absolute frequencies.

The study was conducted following the determinations of Resolution 466/2012 of the National Health Council. The research project was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Pernambuco under Opinion N 6.071.301 and CAAE: 68790223.4.0000.5208.

Results

Fifty-seven nursing students participated, 89.5% were female and 61.4% of them were aged 21 to 24 years old and enrolled in the eighth semester (52.6%). As for participation in extracurricular academic activities (League or Institutional Program of Scientific Initiation Scholarships or Extension or Monitoring), 89.5% acting, 42.1% being scholarship students, as described in Table 1.

Table 1 – Profile of nursing students from the 8th and 9th period at the Federal University of Pernambuco (n=57). Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil, 2023

| Variables | N | % |
|--|----|------|
| Gender | | |
| Female | 51 | 89.5 |
| Male | 06 | 10.5 |
| Age group | | |
| 21 to 24 years | 35 | 61.4 |
| 25 to 28 years | 15 | 26.3 |
| ≥ 29 years | 07 | 12.3 |
| Period | | |
| Eighth period (8 th) | 30 | 52.6 |
| Ninth period (9 th) | 27 | 47.4 |
| Participation in academic activity (League and/or Institutional Program for Scientific Initiation Scholarships and/or Extension and/or Monitoring) | | |
| Yes | 51 | 89.5 |
| No | 06 | 10.5 |
| Receives financial incentive with a scholarship linked to the Institutional Program for Scientific Initiation and/or Extension and/or Monitoring Scholarships | | |
| Yes | 24 | 42.1 |
| No | 33 | 57.9 |

Table 2 shows the data regarding knowledge about the Child Handbook by nursing academics. It was found that 50.9% reported having taken classes on the subject, allied to 82.5% who affirmed the use of this instrument by teachers, as well as the opportunity to fill in and use the notebook during the development of practical activities for graduation aimed at children.

Table 2 – Knowledge about the child handbook by nursing students from the 8th and 9th period at the Federal University of Pernambuco (n=57). Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil, 2023

| Variables | N | % |
|--|----|------|
| Do you know what the Child Handbook is? | | |
| Yes | 57 | 100 |
| During graduation, did you have a class on the Child Handbook? | | |
| Yes | 29 | 50.9 |
| Partially | 25 | 43.9 |
| No | 3 | 5.3 |
| During graduation, did the teacher use the Child Handbook? | | |
| Yes | 47 | 82.5 |
| No | 10 | 17.5 |
| During graduation, did you have the opportunity to fill out the Child Handbook? | | |
| Yes | 47 | 82.5 |
| No | 10 | 17.5 |

In the section of procedures recorded by the academics (Figure 1), it is observed that the use of the Book was directed to filling out the most common items, being they: growth (88%), development (84%) and vaccination (80%) which also reflects the reality of child health care services. However, there is low use of the instrument in terms of filling out information regarding neonatal screening (14%).

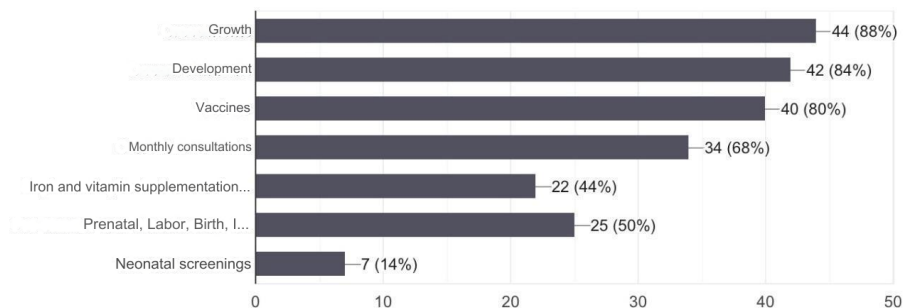


Figure 1 – Procedures recorded in the Child Handbook by nursing academicians of the 8th and 9th period of the Federal University of Pernambuco (n=57). Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil, 2023

The collection questionnaire sought to evaluate the ability of the academic as his skills for using the instrument. It was found that 54.4% of the students considered themselves partially qualified (Table 3). We also sought to know about facilitators and/or obstructers for the completion of the booklet, highlighting the need to improve the teaching strategies aimed at the notebook in classes taught in the child's health discipline, which is reinforced by the dissatisfaction with the education received and insecurity cited as the use of it.

Table 3 – Use of the child handbook by nursing students in the 8th and 9th period at the Federal University of Pernambuco (n-57), Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil, 2023

| Variables | N | % |
|---|----|------|
| Do you feel prepared to use the Child Handbook in a comprehensive way? | | |
| Yes | 19 | 33.3 |
| Partially | 31 | 54.4 |
| No | 07 | 12.3 |
| What facilitated and/or hindered its use in the Child Handbook? | | |
| I was well instructed about filling in the Child Handbook | 20 | 35.1 |
| I was not able to use the Child Handbook | 05 | 8.8 |
| They only taught me to fill the part of vaccines | 06 | 10.5 |
| Can fill the child's development part | 20 | 35.1 |
| I think it could improve the teaching on the Child Handbook | 34 | 59.6 |
| I am satisfied with the teaching I received about the Child Handbook | 08 | 14 |
| I'm unsure about the Child Hanbook | 10 | 17.5 |

Discussion

The Child Hanbook is a relevant document in child monitoring and its use by health professionals in an appropriate way can positively impact on the quality of child's health, besides being a validated instrument throughout the national territory. With this, it is evident the importance of health professionals, especially nurses, upon graduation

and leaving universities, are enabled to adequately follow up children through the correct use and completion of the instrument.¹⁸

The profile of participants is assimilated with the results presented in the study,¹⁹ that most nursing and medical academics are young, female and participate in extracurricular academic activities, which corroborates the findings of this work. It is noteworthy in the survey carried out that, during graduation, almost all of the interviewees said they had taken a class on the Child Handbook and the opportunity to fill it. A similar outcome was observed in research conducted at the undergraduate course in Nursing of the School of Nursing of the University of São Paulo, where 87% of students had previous contact with the instrument in classes. This handling is fundamental, because as the academic has greater interaction with the Book, more feel able to use it in their professional practice, compared to those who did not have this contact.¹⁷

In relation to the procedures most pointed out by academics in the Child Handbook, the items highlighted in the investigation were the monitoring of growth and development, and the registration of the application of vaccines from the national immunization calendar. Therefore, it is noticed that the attention to these axes are some of the main demands identified in the scope of Primary Health Care, culturally, because they were incorporated procedures since the first version of the instrument developed by the Ministry of Health for monitoring child health.²⁰

In contrast to the completion of these sections, there was a low citation regarding neonatal triage, also seen in the analysis of the Child Handbook,²¹ which identified that 73% of the study participants had no information from the neonatal tests recorded in the instrument. Neonatal screening data are relevant because they detect serious and treatable diseases early before the onset of symptoms, thus improving the quality of life of these children.²²

Nurses persist in delimiting the use of the Book in their professional practice for the vaccination of the child and the monitoring of growth and development, besides continuing to use the term "Child Handbook" to refer to the Child Handbook.²³ The filling in is usually performed incorrectly or only the information related to the child's immunization is recorded, while the other data are neglected.²⁴ Furthermore, the use of food consumption markers was observed in only nine consultations and advice on

nutrition in 51.4% of them. Guidelines on vaccination (64.0%) were more frequent than those related to supplementation (25.7%) and accident and violence prevention (2.9%).²⁵

At the end of data collection, it was questioned what facilitated and made difficult to fill the Child Handbook, 35.1% of the students said that they were well instructed about filling out the instrument, 59.6% of the scholars report that teaching on the subject could be improved to facilitate learning and, consequently, mastery of the material.

Study on methodologies used in teaching with students of four higher education institutions of Rio Grande do Sul describes that teachers use expository strategies for teaching-learning, with predominance in audiovisual resources, Among university professors, there is devaluation, resistance and difficulties in the use of active methodologies, which hinders learning, according to students.²⁶

In another research, it was observed that the use of active methodologies, clinical cases and simulated work during graduation, to carry out practical proposals for filling in the instrument, makes the *nurse* confident, because it helps in the development and formation of active, autonomous and reflective beings on their knowledges.²⁷⁻²⁸

In line with the result, students were observed to be insecure about the correct and complete filling of the notebook. It is possible to associate the lack of training or practice in relation to the use of the Child Handbook in graduation, as a deficit in being one of the main reasons related to inappropriate use and incorrect filling of the instrument by professionals working in child health care.¹¹

Regarding the insecurity about the handling of the Child Handbook, this study²⁹ warns that during the beginning of a nurse's professional life many challenges occur, caused by inexperience, anxiety, fear, stress and uncertainties, and that all this corroborates the feeling of insecurity.

The difficulty of nurses in handling the notebook was also perceived in a literature review.¹² The investigation identified that they do not put into practice in their daily professional life the new concepts that were introduced in the book, as the Body Mass Index graph and reference curves represented in z scores. Thus, these professionals are not prepared to provide care for the health of the child and, to transform their reality, it is necessary that they experience professional training.

During the academic training, the *nurse* must develop skills and competencies essential to the work process, which are generally: actions of health care, decision-making capacity in relation to needs, accessible communication, effective and empathetic, leadership with a view to the well-being of the community, the ability to manage and manage, and lifelong education, continuously exercising learning and updating their knowledge. In addition to the general skills and competencies, specific ones are required, with technical, scientific, ethical, political, socio-educational domain.³⁰ Therefore, it is important that the undergraduate nursing students obtain during training, competence and ability to use and fill in the information appropriately from the Child Handbook.¹¹

The results presented reflect the local reality, however, the data can allow reflections about the theme and possible changes in disciplines that address the child's health. Further research is recommended for the application of the questionnaire among students from other educational institutions to evaluate the knowledge of the child handbook.

Conclusion

This study shows that the knowledge of the Child Handbook was unanimous among nursing scholars. Students filled out and used the notebook in the items of Growth, Development and Immunization during the practical activities of graduation aimed at the child. However, they still feel partially prepared and only a minority is satisfied in the use of the instrument.

The results shown may be one of the reasons for the low filling and partial use of the instrument by nursing professionals. In this sense, it is essential that the contents of the registration booklet can be passed on from graduation, enhancing child health surveillance and contributing to the incorporation of the instrument as a guide to health practices.

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