



REVIEW

Analysis of the concept of professionalism in nursing education

Análise do conceito de profissionalismo para o ensino de enfermagem
Análisis del concepto de profesionalismo para la enseñanza de enfermería

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To clarify the concept of professionalism in nursing education. **Methods:** Conceptual analysis, using the method of Walker and Avant, identifying the use of the concept in the bases Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE/PubMed®), Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), *Índice Bibliográfico Español en Ciencias de la Salud* (IBECS), Latin American and Caribbean Literature on Health Sciences (LILACS) and the Nursing Database (BDENF), using the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) terms "Professionalism", "Teaching", and "Nursing". **Results:** After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 18 articles were selected. The attributes were identified by the content analysis technique. Model and opposite cases were elaborated, with respective use and non-use of the concept. The antecedent elements, attributes, and consequents were identified. The following were identified as antecedents: experience, professional training, professional values, socialization, and positive education; as attributes: professional identity, professional attitude, competence, mastery, knowledge, ethics, autonomy, professional role, and professional behavior; and as consequents: professional quality, skilled professionals, skill acquisition, commitment, professional self-concept, and successful practical applications. **Conclusion:** Professionalism can be understood as a conjuncture of qualities that perpetuate the behavior and performance of the professional role for the scope of teaching, such as knowledge, ethics, attitude, mastery, autonomy, and competence.

Descriptors: Professionalism. Teaching. Nursing.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Clarificar o conceito de profissionalismo para o ensino de enfermagem. **Métodos:** Análise conceitual, por meio do método de Walker e Avant, identificando o uso do conceito nas bases *Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online* (MEDLINE/PubMed®), *Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature* (CINAHL), *Índice Bibliográfico Español en Ciencias de la Salud* (IBECS), Literatura Latino-Americana e do Caribe em Ciências da Saúde (LILACS) e Banco de Dados de Enfermagem (BDENF), utilizando termos *Medical Subject Headings* (MeSH) "Professionalism", "Teaching" e "Nursing". **Resultados:** Após aplicação dos critérios de inclusão e exclusão, selecionaram-se 18 artigos. Houve identificação dos atributos pela técnica de análise de conteúdo. Elaboraram-se casos modelo e contrário, com respectivo uso e não uso do conceito. Identificaram-se elementos antecedentes, atributos e consequentes. Como antecedentes: experiência, educação profissional, valores profissionais, socialização e formação positiva; como atributos: identidade profissional, atitude profissional, competência, domínio, ética, autonomia, papel profissional e comportamento profissional; e como consequentes: qualidade profissional, profissionais preparados, aquisição de habilidade, compromisso, autoconceito profissional e colocações práticas bem-sucedidas. **Conclusão:** Pode-se entender profissionalismo como conjuntura de qualidades que perpetuam o comportamento e o desempenho do papel profissional para o âmbito do ensino, como conhecimento, ética, atitude, domínio, autonomia e competência.

Descritores: Profissionalismo. Ensino. Enfermagem.

RESUMÉN

Objetivo: Esclarecer el concepto de profesionalismo para la formación de enfermería. **Métodos:** Análisis conceptual, utilizando el método de Walker y Avant, identificando el uso del concepto en el *Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online* (MEDLINE/PubMed®), *Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature* (CINAHL), *Índice Bibliográfico Español* (IBECS), Literatura Latinoamericana y del Caribe en Ciencias de la Salud (LILACS) y Base de Datos de Enfermería (BDENF), utilizando los *Medical Subject Headings* (MeSH) "Profesionalismo", "Enseñanza" y "Enfermería". **Resultados:** Después de aplicar los criterios de inclusión y exclusión, se seleccionaron 18 artículos. Los atributos fueron identificados mediante la análisis de contenido. Se elaboraron casos modelo y contrario, con el respectivo uso y no uso del concepto. Se identificaron antecedentes, atributos y consequentes. Como antecedentes: experiencia, formación profesional, valores profesionales, socialización y formación positiva; como atributos: identidad profesional, actitud profesional, competencia, dominio, ética, autonomía, rol profesional y conducta

profesional; y como consecuencias: calidad profesional, profesionales preparados, adquisición de competencias, compromiso, autoconcepto profesional y prácticas exitosas. **Conclusión:** El profesionalismo puede ser entendido como un conjunto de cualidades que perpetúan el comportamiento y desempeño del rol profesional en el campo de la enseñanza, tales como conocimiento, ética, actitud, dominio, autonomía y competencia.

Descriptores: Profesionalismo. Enseñanza. Enfermería.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of professionalism is considered variable and is not yet well defined, operating in the field of relationships between the student or professional and patient. Specifically, the evaluation of professionalism occurs with the analysis of attitudes, which is interpreted as professionalism.⁽¹⁾

Regarding the evaluation field of the teaching-learning process, it is emphasized that the purpose is not only to demonstrate the level of understanding but to articulate the evaluation of learning and make it a process of competence verification.⁽²⁾

In the evaluation of health competencies, the pyramid conceptual model stands out, idealized by the North American George Miller, proposes the evaluation of clinical skills/competence/performance.⁽³⁾ Given the need to guide a theoretical deepening, from the perspective of professional attitude evaluation, the concept of professionalism was introduced at the top of the pyramid.⁽⁴⁾

In nursing, one faces ethical and philosophical challenges regarding human care, which should be better explored during the training period. Thus, professionalism is required from the teacher, especially for teaching, which is characterized by complex conduct with multiple and specific proportions, requiring theorization.⁽⁵⁾

Thus, clarifying the concept of professionalism for nursing education is relevant because of its complexity and dynamics related to the profession. The concept is applicable to any field in nursing education, whether teaching, care, or research.

The present study aimed to clarify the concept of professionalism in nursing education.

METHODS

Concept analysis based on the method of Walker and Avant, whose steps include concept selection, determining the objectives of the concept analysis, identifying possible uses of the concept, determining critical or essential attributes, building a model case, developing another (contrary) case, identifying antecedents and consequents of the concept, and defining empirical references.⁽⁶⁾

The concept of "professionalism" was selected for nursing education, through the need to clarify it due to its influence on the teaching-learning process, in the expectation of unveiling intrinsic aspects of the training method.

This was followed by the stage of determining the objective, which was to analyze the concept of professionalism for nursing education, being able to unveil its complexity and dynamics, as well as its essential contributions to the formation of nursing as a science.

The third step was carried out through literature searches to identify articles with possible uses of the

concept. To obtain appropriate subject descriptors, we used the Population, Variables, and Outcomes (PVO) search strategy, with the Population being "Nursing", Variables "Teaching", and the Outcomes "Professionalism".

The searches were performed in a paired manner between the authors, in separate locations, in the period from May to August 2018, in the journals portal of the *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES)* in the databases Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE/PubMed®), Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), *Índice Bibliográfico Español em Ciências de la Salud (IBECS)*, Latin American and Caribbean Literature on Health Sciences (LILACS) and the Nursing Database (BDENF), using the terms Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and the Boolean operator "AND" in three distinct crossings, in the following sequence: crossing 1 - "Professionalism AND Teaching"; crossing 2 - "Professionalism AND Nursing", and crossing 3 - "Professionalism AND Teaching AND Nursing".

Studies available in full and published between 2012 and 2018 were filtered, and this period was delimited before publication that analyzed the concept of professionalism in nursing in the period 1980 to 2011, considering an evolutionary model.⁽⁵⁾ The inclusion criteria were: original articles, available in Portuguese, English, and Spanish; excluded were: review articles, editorials, documentaries, dissertations, theses, abstracts, and reports; repeated studies in different databases; studies that did not address the use of the concept in their structure; and those that did not fit the theme addressed. For the selection, the titles and abstracts were read; when the understanding was in doubt, the full text was read. With this, 18 articles were selected that comprised the sample.

For better consistency of the review report, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA)⁽⁷⁾ instrument was used, illustrated in Figure 1.

In the fourth step, the attributes were determined. This process was done manually, using the content analysis technique, in which it is necessary to identify words and expressions that define the concept, through the use of questions: How does the author define the concept? What characteristics or attributes of the concept does he or she point out? What ideas does the author discuss about the concept?. The same model was followed for the identification of antecedents and consequents, during the seventh stage, however, identifying elements that happen before and after the phenomenon.

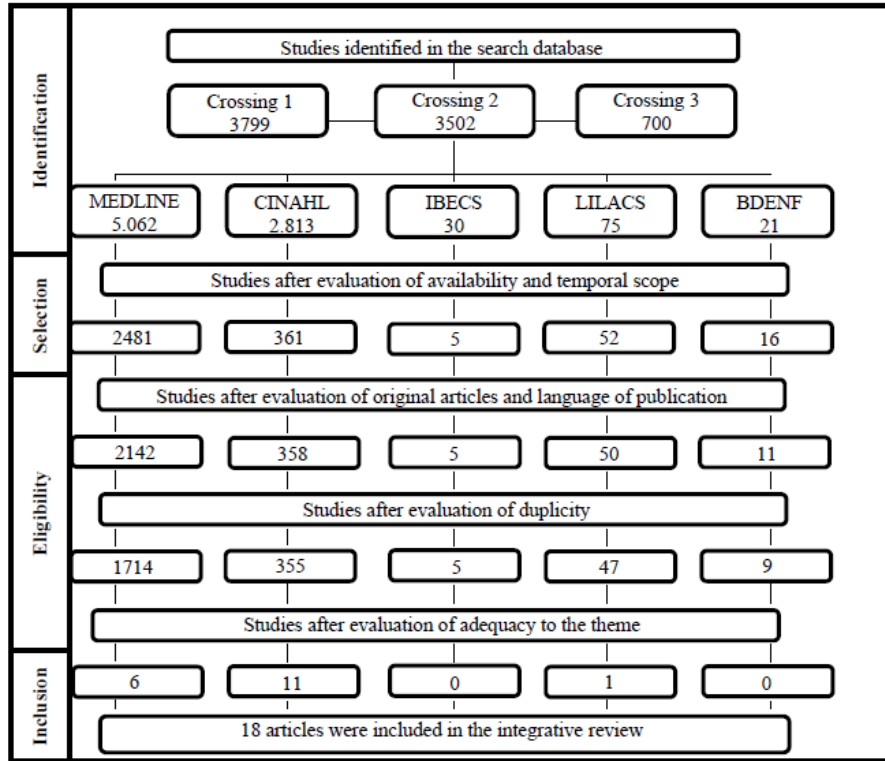
In the fifth stage, a model case was elaborated, in which essential attributes to the development of professionalism for nursing education were included, based on everyday academic life. The sixth step was contemplated by the development of a contrary

case, presenting the non-concept of professionalism for nursing education, based on professional dissatisfaction.

phenomena were captured, which are implicit in the text and, when present, demonstrate the occurrence of the attribute; reported phenomena, which indicate the possible occurrence of the attribute; and self-reported phenomena, which lead to the actual occurrence of the attribute.

The eighth stage defined the empirical references for the identified attributes, obtained by reading about the use of the concept, in which observable

Figure 1. Flowchart of the selection of included studies, from the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses protocol. Crato, Ceará, Brazil, 2018.



Source: authors (2022).

RESULTS

The objective of analyzing the concept of professionalism for nursing education was supported by its relevance and recent introduction in the emphasis on assessment. The analysis made it possible to identify the use of the concept in approaches related to teaching (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Example of the use of the concept of professionalism for nursing education from the selected studies. Crato, Ceará, Brazil, 2018.

Concept	Authors/country
It is a specialization in a field, knowledge, skill, and standard behavior	Ayla et al. ⁽⁸⁾ / Turkey
A multifaceted concept, difficult to evaluate and recently introduced into theoretical discussions and research in nursing education	Silva et al. ⁽⁹⁾ / Brazil
High-level critical thinking and decision-making skills	Power et al. ⁽¹⁰⁾ / United kingdom
It relates to the development of the professional identity of beginning academics. It is shaped by exposure to models of experiences in the professional sphere, particularly in the early stages of professional transformation ⁽¹¹⁻¹²⁾	Baldwin et al. ⁽¹³⁾ / Australia and United Kingdom
Professionalism in nursing, within the educational environment, is defined as a set of behaviors, practices, and communication styles consistent with the dimensions, vision, and values of the nursing program ⁽¹⁴⁻¹⁵⁾	Charania et al. ⁽¹⁶⁾ / U.S.A
Its attributes include knowledge, the spirit of inquiry, responsibility, autonomy, advocacy, innovation and vision, collaboration, collegiality, and ethics ⁽¹⁷⁾	Pareek et al. ⁽¹⁸⁾ / India
The development of a professional and professional identity occurs initially through education and is extended in the field ⁽¹⁹⁾	Mariet ⁽²⁰⁾ / India
The molding of professionalism in nursing is not fully known, although it is recognized that practical experience strongly shapes behavior	Felstead et al. ⁽²¹⁾ / United Kingdom
Professionalism is characterized by values ⁽²²⁾	Blevins et al. ⁽²³⁾ / U.S.A
Nursing faculty play an important role in building learning environments that foster the positive formation of future nurses	Mbewe et al. ⁽²⁴⁾ / U.S.A
The practice of questioning: feeling and making visible meanings can guide beginning students into reflective practice that calls out the ways in which they are being nurses	Williams et al. ⁽²⁵⁾ / U.S.A
Although students learn the principles of professional practice throughout their education, workplace learning commonly exposes the dilemmas of professionalism	Monrouxe et al. ⁽²⁶⁾ / England
Professionalism is defined as the consistent demonstration of core values ⁽¹⁵⁾	Fisher ⁽²⁷⁾ / U.S.A
Reconceptualizing professionalism is an enormously strenuous undertaking. Educators know intuitively that helping to form a professional identity is more than operationalizing the sociological view of professionalism	Crigger et al. ⁽²⁸⁾ / U.S.A

The concept emphasizes values and obligation in providing services to society	Karimi et al. ⁽²⁹⁾ / Iran
This professionalism regarding conduct, behavior, and attitude must be implicitly modeled through all interactions	Felstead ⁽³⁰⁾ / United Kingdom
Although there is no consensus on this definition of professionalism, some generally recognized descriptors include certain characteristics, such as knowledge, specialization, intellectual and individual responsibility, and well-developed group consciousness	Akhtar-Danesh et al. ⁽³¹⁾ / Canada
While the goal of producing professional nurses remains the central organizing principle of nursing education, the challenge is to find learner-centered ways to explore and reinforce the concepts of professionalism	Rhode et al. ⁽³²⁾ / U.S.A

Source: authors (2022).

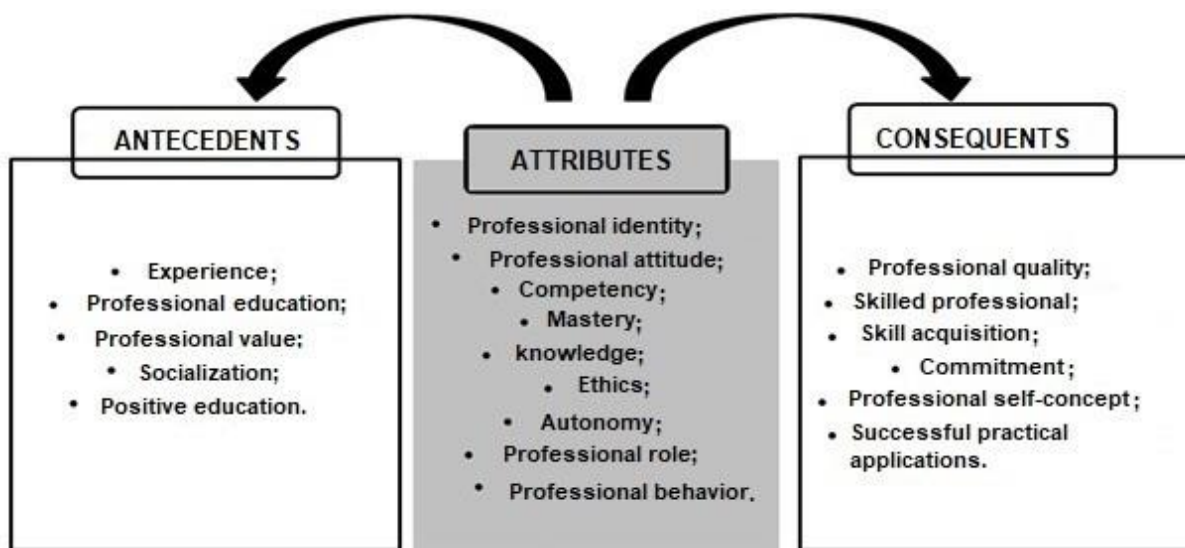
Professionalism was defined as a concept capable of forming a professional nursing identity, based on the assessment of attributes aimed at the formation of competencies.

The defining attributes, which gave essence to the concept, the antecedents, which were configured in the occurrences that preceded its applicability, and the consequents, which were the events

resulting from its use, are organized in a graphic scheme in order to didactically explain the analysis of the concept (Figure 2).

The analysis of the antecedents, attributes, and consequents subsidized the construction of a model case, with the purpose of demonstrating the use of the concept and illustrating its applicability (Chart 2).

Figure 2. Antecedents, attributes, and consequents of the concept of "professionalism". Crato, Ceará, Brazil, 2018.



Source: authors (2022).

Chart 2. Model case. Crato, Ceará, Brazil, 2018.

Teachers of nursing courses at a university are concerned about the lack of specific tools and methods to evaluate the competencies and skills of their students since they will be working directly with human life care. Thus, they decide to innovate, based on their experience, values, and socialization. They decided to start with positive education, assigning qualitative and quantitative indicators throughout the coexistence process. The result of this process was gratifying, being pointed out by the students the merit of the strong identity, mastery, ethics, and professional behavior that these teachers had toward their profession. In the end, the class evaluated the methodology used as a successful practical application, a result of the professional quality in question.

Source: authors (2022).

Furthermore, there is relevance in building a contrary case, with emphasis on broadening the level of understanding and eliminating inaccuracies as to the real essence of the use of the concept. The opposite case was as follows: professional unsuitability may be linked to non-satisfaction in the performance of activities, and it is possible to identify and clarify this factor by means of methods

that aim to quantify the performance of students in a given activity assigned to them, whether practical or theoretical.

To better understand the operational definition of the concept, it is necessary to describe the phenomena translated into empirical references, which indicate the occurrence of the listed attributes (Chart 3).

Chart 3. Attributes and empirical references of the concept of professionalism for nursing education. Crato, Ceará, Brazil, 2018.

Attributes	Empirical references
Professional identity	Reports and self-reports that the identity of the nursing faculty comes from conduct related to good education and the level at which there is exposure to the field
Professional attitude	Reports of implicit characteristic during nursing education that is demonstrated by the punctual manner of their interaction
Competence	Observations that competent nursing education is related to excellence in the feasibility of the act
Mastery	Observations that prompt reporting and the ability to contextualize the problem demonstrate the nursing faculty member's authority on the subject
Knowledge	Reports and observations that relate the presence of expertise and/or specialization

	in some knowledge jurisdiction
Ethics	Observations indicate that behaving appropriately, respecting individual and collective principles, being honest, and acting based on moral codes make the nursing teacher ethical in essence
Autonomy	Observations that having autonomy is related to freedom and capacity about how to conduct teaching, since there is knowledge about the content for nursing
Professional role	Observations show that performing the teaching duties as well as conducting the teaching well is related to the good performance of the role
Professional behavior	Reports, self-reports, and observations that practice consistent with the dimension, vision, collaboration, collegiality, and ethicality standard is related to professional behavior in teaching for nursing

Source: authors (2022).

DISCUSSION

The construct of professional education is the professional identity, which is the basis to awaken the essence and consolidate it as the behavior of a given class. The value of teaching is of extreme importance in the formation of nurses, demanding positive training from the teacher-student binomial, so that, through cognitive interaction and the use of science in its methodological aspect, the professional attitude is incorporated into being a nurse.

In general, professionalism was defined as "Consisting in doing what you do (whatever it is)". However, the conception of just performing an activity was not enough to elucidate this complex characteristic. Thus, it was reformulated and acquired a new perspective, being described as "Doing well what one is supposed to know and can do"⁽³³⁾

Based on this conception, it is observed that professionalism is directly related to attributes found as competence, mastery, and knowledge when taking into account excellence in the feasibility of an action. With regard to teaching, it is pertinent to highlight that such characteristics are fundamental for the training of professionals, especially in nursing, in which the teacher trains students capable of acting in the dimensions of teaching, care, and research.

This essence of the nursing teacher is understood as a factor of great impact on the construction of the student's professional identity, since the assimilation of knowledge and personal resourcefulness may be a reflection of the influence exerted during the teaching and learning process, in which the lack of understanding and the non-experience of essential stages may compromise the development of this identity, disfiguring, in a way, an entire class.⁽³⁴⁾

The understanding of the concept of professionalism for nursing education is guided by the need for clarification between what it is to merely have the profession and what it is to have professionalism in the profession. The difference can be seen in the opposite case example described in the study. The use of the word "professional" related to the teacher who does not achieve didactic success with his students, regardless of the evaluation sphere, implies that, during the process, failures occurred that were not remedied. The model case, on the other hand, explores the aspect of dynamism and innovation performed by professionals who care about their students' performance and provide them with better pedagogical experiences, showing what professionalism is and its importance in the teaching profession.

Nursing teachers should seek to stimulate their students to acquire virtues and characteristics that are primordial to the perpetuation of professionalism, such as the observance of moral and ethical standards; to seek excellence through the continuous acquisition of knowledge and skills; to demonstrate a continuous commitment to excellence; to know how to deal with complexities and uncertainties; to demonstrate humanistic values, care, altruism, honesty and integrity, loyalty and respect; and to reflect on decisions and actions.⁽³⁵⁾

As an active part in the process of building knowledge, behavior, and professional profile, higher education institutions are essential, because by designing their curricular matrix and opting for active and diversified teaching methodologies, capable of developing capacities and improving student skills, aligned with faculty training, it is possible to build a graduate profile that prioritizes the formation of professionalism transversally in the nursing education process.

Professionalism for the profession can be verified in the essential characteristics of its process, from its antecedent elements to its consequent ones, thus being defined by its attributes: competence, mastery, knowledge, ethics, autonomy, role, behavior, attitude, and professional identity.

Teaching practice is directly articulated with professionalism, which requires specific assessment strategies that enable continuous and consistent evaluation.⁽³⁶⁾

Other aspects of professionalism identified were mastery and knowledge, which cannot be absent during the didactic moment, because in nursing education, there are constant challenging situations, in which immersion in clinical contexts occurs. In these, the teacher's ability is often put to the test, and by offering resoluteness, the teacher ensures that the learner establishes confidence and thus builds, improves, and solidifies his learning.⁽²⁴⁾

Among the key attributes of professionalism for nursing education, professional ethics, compiled in its guiding principles, is one of the essential virtues for self-understanding of feeling and acting professionally, and should govern all teaching conduct, such morality implies on the student and the possibility of acquiring attitudes that may allow him to analyze, interpret and behave appropriately when facing situations of ethical nature.⁽³⁷⁾

Teaching autonomy constitutes one of the basic pillars of the teaching-learning process and invigorates the educator's action, aligned with the mastery of other pedagogical attributes. The teacher is able to fully develop his activity, and can directly contribute to self-judgment on the best ways to conduct didactic and pedagogical activities. The

reflection of this autonomous posture is to transmit to the nursing graduate student the security and confidence that he must demonstrate when facing the storms of his professional practice.⁽³⁸⁾

In this pedagogical environment, the performance of the teaching role, as well as the professional behavior, blazes over the teacher-student binomial in a relationship based on respect. In this perspective, the contemplation of the objectives outlined is always possible, because the participation of the students inserted in the professional academic environment presupposes the acquisition of virtues such as a creative and transforming attitude.⁽³⁹⁾

Among the attributes of professionalism in nursing, the professional identity stands out, which should be experienced and provided to the student, as an instrument to optimize teaching, which is directly related to the "doing", because in professional practice, the student should perform the activity with autonomy. Thus, it is believed that a more reliable indicator of competency acquisition would be to assess the achievement of the "E", incremented as the last step in the assessment process in Miller's pyramid⁽³⁾, which reflects the process of professional identity assessment and encompasses methods that assess this process.

The limitations of this study are related to the difficulties in identifying the concept of professionalism in the studies included in the literature review and the application of this concept in the area of teaching.

This study contributes to clarifying the concept of professionalism for nursing education, which is of great value in view of the possibility of revealing that the meaning of professionalism is intrinsic to the teaching profession. It is worth noting that the exploration of the concept allows for the instigation of nursing teachers to better perform their role, since the essential attributes of the concept are based on the perspective of "being a teacher" as fundamental to nursing education, contributing to qualitative changes in nursing practice, since, by identifying its antecedents, consequents, and attributes, there are greater possibilities of strengthening nursing practices in its various areas.

CONCLUSION

The conceptual analysis from the perspective of Walker and Avant enabled the identification of the various faces of the concept of professionalism for nursing education, which are presented in its broad and complex context for professional performance, both in terms of the aspects that precede interpersonal dynamics, and in what is emanated for the quality of the teaching work.

The essence of the concept is based on being professional and not only on doing. The analysis of the attributes substantiates that professionalism for nursing teaching is characterized by the conjunction of qualities that determine the behavior and performance of the professional role, in the context of teaching based on ethics, attitude, mastery, autonomy, and excellence.

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