

Assessing Nurses' Self-Perceived Competencies After University Education: A Cross-Sectional Study Using the Italian Nurse Competence Scale

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Introduction. Nurses face complex care demands requiring broad skills to ensure care quality. Evaluating nurses' self-perceived competencies after graduation helps assess education quality, align curricula with workplace needs and inform policy. This study aims to assess nurses' perception (graduated ≥1 year earlier) of competencies acquired during university education and applied in professional practice.

Methods. This multicentre cross-sectional study surveyed nurses registered with the Orders of Nursing Professions in Bologna, Ravenna, Forlì-Cesena and Rimini. An anonymous online questionnaire collected sociodemographic/professional data and the 73-item Italian Nurse Competence Scale. Analyses used descriptive statistics, ANOVA, Cronbach's α , KMO and correlations.

Results. 81 complete responses were analysed (84% female, 78% Bologna graduates, mean 14 years' seniority, 85% employed, 72% hospital-based). Overall perceived competence was high; highest scores were in Managing Situations, Work Role, Therapeutic Interventions and lowest in Ensuring Quality. Highest application was in Work Role. Perceived competencies varied by age, seniority and degree institution. High internal reliability and strong inter-domain correlations emerged.

Discussion. Clinical experience appears to shape nurses' confidence and competencies application, showing links between perceived competence and professional practice. This supports targeted education, ongoing training and stronger theory–practice integration. Further studies are warranted.

Keywords: Nursing Competencies, Self-Assessment, Nursing Education, Nurse Competence Scale

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