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Quality of nursing care, promoting its implementation in hospitals: systematic review 2019–2025

Calidad de atención en enfermería, fomentando su aplicación en hospitales: revisión sistemática 2019– 2025

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Abstract

The present study aims to identify the quality of nursing care in public hospitals, promoting its application and strengthening during the period 2019–2025. The research was conducted using a mixed approach, employing a systematic review methodology, in which 668 scientific articles from databases such as Scopus, PubMed, and SciELO were consulted, applying previously established inclusion and exclusion criteria. Sixty-eight relevant studies published between 2019 and 2025 were identified, which allowed us to recognize the main dimensions evaluated in the quality of nursing care: reliability, responsiveness, and empathy. The results show that the articles reviewed tend to focus on patient satisfaction with processes, service quality, empathy, and a series of basic principles that nursing staff must possess, highlighting the importance of training, standardized protocols, and human resources in strengthening care. In conclusion, the evidence collected highlights that the quality of nursing care in public hospitals, both domestic and foreign, requires a solid foundation in terms of equipment, supplies, and tools for patient examinations or evaluations. Despite this, most studies agree on similar issues. This work provides relevant input for professional practice, hospital management, and future research in the area.

Keywords: public health, nursing service, socioeconomic indicators

Resumen

El presente estudio tiene como objetivo identificar la calidad de la atención en enfermería en hospitales públicos, fomentando su aplicación y fortalecimiento durante el período 2019–2025. La investigación se desarrolló bajo un enfoque mixto, empleando la metodología de revisión sistemática, en la cual se consultaron 668 artículos científicos de bases de datos como Scopus, PubMed y SciELO, aplicando criterios de inclusión y exclusión previamente establecidos. Se identificaron 68 estudios relevantes publicados entre 2019 y 2025, los cuales permitieron reconocer las principales dimensiones evaluadas en la calidad de la atención en enfermería: fiabilidad, capacidad de respuesta y empatía. Los resultados evidencian que los artículos revisados tienden a enfocarse en la satisfacción del paciente respecto a los procesos, la calidad del servicio, la empatía y una serie de principios básicos que el personal de enfermería debe poseer, destacando la importancia de la capacitación, los protocolos estandarizados y los recursos humanos en el fortalecimiento de la atención. En conclusión, la evidencia recopilada resalta que la calidad de la atención en enfermería en hospitales públicos, tanto nacionales como extranjeros, requiere bases sólidas en cuanto a implementos, insumos y herramientas para los exámenes o evaluaciones del paciente. A pesar de ello, la mayoría de las investigaciones coinciden en señalar problemáticas similares. Este trabajo aporta insumos relevantes para la práctica profesional, la gestión hospitalaria y futuras investigaciones en el área.

Palabras clave: salud pública, servicio de enfermería, indicadores socioeconómicos

Introduction

In contemporary healthcare systems, the quality of care is a key priority to ensure services that are humanized, effective, and patient-centered. Consequently, nursing staff play a crucial role as they represent the first direct contact with patients and are responsible for continuous and responsive care to human needs. However, structural challenges persist in Latin American public hospitals that limit nursing staff's ability to provide quality care, such as excessive workload, a shortage of human resources, and institutional disorganization.

Internationally, the Pan American Health Organization (OPS, 2020) has warned that public health is facing a healthcare workforce crisis, professional burnout, and declining quality of care. In Jordan, Khitam and Mohammad (2019) noted a sense of satisfaction among thalassemia units, attributing this to high evaluations of essential competencies. Furthermore, Al-Hammouri et al. (2024) argue that enhancing the quality of care necessitates prioritizing communication skills. Afridi et al. (2024) studied resilience among emergency nurses in educational hospitals in Iran. In Palestine, Smerat et al. (2025) reported that patients express satisfaction based on their lived experiences.

Regionally, the Inter-American Development Bank (BID, 2022) analyzed the planning, performance evaluation, motivation, and incentives for health personnel in Latin America. Similarly, the Ministry of Health (MINSA, 2023) assessed the system's capacity to provide efficient, timely, and patient-centered care based on the quality of services received. Rodríguez and Arévalo (2023) examined the correlation between nursing care and patient satisfaction in the emergency department of a national hospital in Lima, finding that 53.3% perceived high-quality care while 46.7% experienced moderate-quality care.

Locally in Comas, users complain about waiting times and the lack of medications. Velázquez (2019) indicated that these issues affect primary services and diminish perceived quality. Tenza et al. (2024) highlighted that these limitations hinder the achievement of solid and reliable outcomes. Hernández et al. (2020) stated that mixed-methods research represents a "third methodological movement," allowing for broader and deeper responses to research questions.

According to Salas and Gómez (2022), health services are delivered to individuals and populations by considering their structure, process, and outcomes, aspects that can be evaluated using the SERVQUAL model (Utkirov et al., 2025). Reliability, responsiveness, empathy (Muñoz and Calle, 2020), safety, and communication are foundational for assessing (Valle & Poma, 2022) the performance of nursing staff, aligning patient perception with institutional standards (Li et al., 2024).

For Ríos and Medina (2022), service quality does not meet clients' expectations or desires. Tigani (2020) analyzed service quality, while Valls et al. (2020) contend that added value must be created in care processes. Additionally, Prastyabudi and Latifah (2024) emphasized the importance of projecting a positive perception of empathy from nursing staff, which is associated with a high degree of patient satisfaction (Lozano & Sánchez, 2020). Castillo and Delgado (2023) underscore patient safety, as well as efficiency and warmth in recovery processes. Maryani et al. (2025) analyze the care provided by hospital staff, and González et al. (2024) propose strategies to minimize workload and the emotional strain on personnel.

Balseiro and Martínez (2020) assert that empathy is vital in hospitals. Milián and Sánchez (2023) indicate that excessive workload diminishes effectiveness. Burgueño (2021) highlights the importance of emotional support. Mora (2023) suggests improving care standards. Ulloa et al. (2021) note that patients attended by healthcare trainees experience a better overall experience. Girón and Mori (2023) mention that this generates a higher level of patient satisfaction.

Meléndez et al. (2020) advocate for the significance of infrastructure and equipment for users. Linares and Barrera (2019) reiterate this point. Vargas et al. (2020) claim that nursing helps reduce workplace stress. López (2021) observes a more favorable perception of services. Delgado and Poma (2020) emphasize the humanization of care. Torres (2021) focuses on strengthening therapeutic relationships, while Villanueva (2020) analyzes the emotional and professional aspects within nursing. Cueva and Leiva (2021) aim to enhance the quality of care delivered. Vera (2019) employed the SERVQUAL model and obtained positive results based on reliability.

Reyes (2019) posits that humanized care is key to effective hospital management. Yupanqui and Torres (2022) affirm enhancements in performance and quality of care. Silva and Carranza (2018) warn against the importance of avoiding user dissatisfaction. Zambrano and Torres (2021) analyze professional perceptions and standardized protocols. Sheela and Malarvizhi (2022) emphasize the dimension of reliability. Rodríguez and Figueroa (2021) focus on satisfaction, while Ramos and Quispe (2021) highlight empathetic elements and good treatment. Ferreira et al. (2025) concentrate on user care.

Alilyyani et al. (2022) indicate that applying psychometric tests serves as a reliable and valid tool to assess nursing staff perceptions. Rivera (2017) emphasizes humane treatment. Nakano et al. (2021) assert that emotional support improves the work climate. Calderón (2021) and Paredes (2020) underscore adherence to quality standards. Cuestas (2021) recognizes the value of knowledge in human resource management. Emmanuel and Wardhono (2024) link the work environment to nursing performance, while Moreno (2022) argues that higher quality corresponds with more positive user appreciation. González et al. (2019) recommend implementing internal nursing care processes, and Espinoza (2021) underscores the need to design and implement improvement plans.

Peña and Gómez (2020) applied the SERVQUAL model to evaluate care quality. Fernández and Alama (2020) complement this approach. On the other hand, Hernández and Sosa (2021) measured professional perceptions regarding nursing practice; Khan and Flinsi (2024) evaluated user experiences; and Ali et al. (2025) analyzed humanized care in hospitals. Morales and Zúñiga (2018) concluded that high levels of workplace stress significantly reduce care quality. Al-Refaei et al. (2024) demonstrated that knowledge enhances professional performance. Alfaro (2020) emphasized the importance of ensuring care that guarantees safety and satisfaction. Yusefi et al. (2022) integrate physical, psychosocial, and communicational dimensions.

González (2019) asserts that reliability consists of delivering the promised service. Alvarado (2022) proposes that responsiveness is a key initiative for promptly addressing client needs. Chiavenato (2021) defines empathy as the level of individualized attention, while Liquidano (2020) suggests that improving administrative management of personnel and the hospital as a whole is essential.

This research is justified by the need to synthesize evidence defining the quality of care in nursing services, considering both national and international scientific frameworks (Jara, 2019). The overarching aim is to conduct a systematic review of nursing care quality in public hospitals, focusing on the dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, and empathy, in order to strengthen practice and hospital management. Specific objectives include identifying in the scientific literature the aspects related to reliability in nursing care, the responsiveness of personnel in the public setting, and the role of empathy in nursing practice within public hospitals.

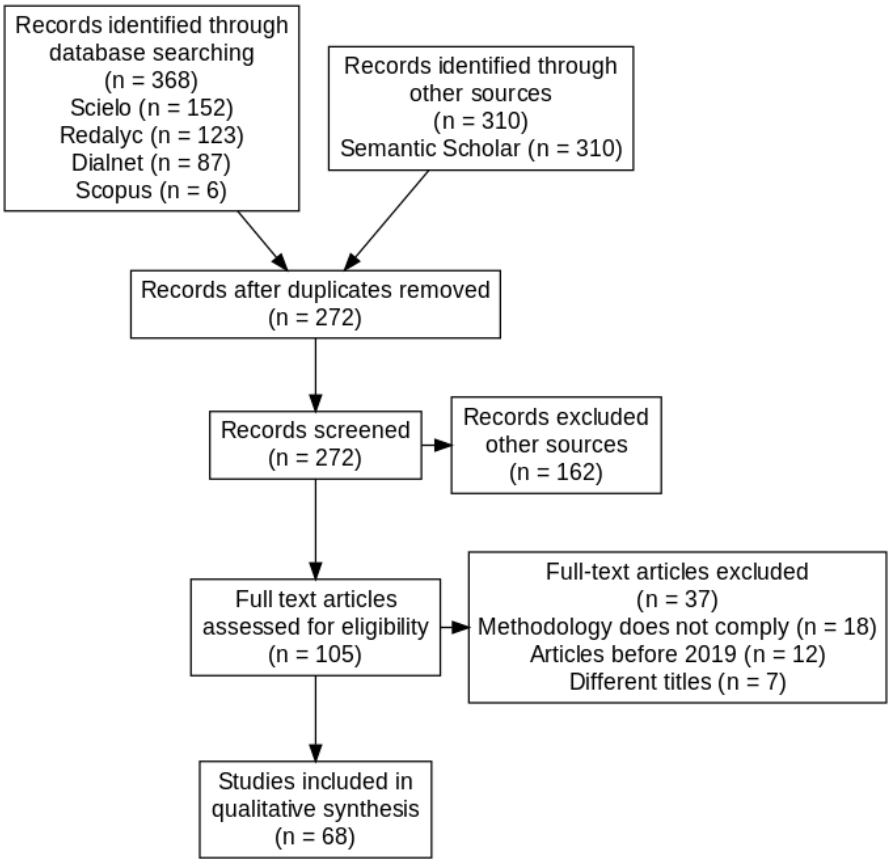
Methodology

The methodology employed for this study will utilize a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative (descriptive analysis of care quality) and qualitative (perceptions of staff and users) perspectives to foster a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. According to Creswell and Plano (2018), this strategy combines numerical and narrative data through structured designs that address the complexity of social phenomena.

A systematic review was conducted following the PRISMA methodology, analyzing 68 articles selected from a total of 678, based on eight inclusion criteria. Each article was evaluated against five key aspects related to the research question.

Guided by the question, “Quality of nursing care: key indicators and their application in public hospitals,” a search was conducted within the Semantic Scholar database, retrieving 310 relevant articles.

Figure 1
Article search process



The selected articles were based on criteria related to quality indicators, hospital settings, study designs, populations, methodologies, implementation approaches, empirical evidence, and the scope of the indicators. The search was carried out in the following databases: SciELO, Redalyc, Scopus, and Dialnet.

Inclusion criteria included: articles published in Spanish or English, open access, published between 2019 and 2025, and sourced from reputable journals. The keywords employed were: ("Calidad de atención de enfermería" OR "Quality of nursing care") AND ("hospital público" OR "public hospital") AND ("enfermería" OR "nursing") AND ("aplicación" OR "application"). Documents that were duplicates, lacked full access, were not directly relevant to the topic, or were published in other languages were excluded.

Table 1
Search strategy

Keywords	(Calidad de atención de enfermería OR Quality of nursing care) AND (hospital público estudiantes OR public hospital) AND (Enfermería OR Nursing) AND (aplicación OR aplication).
Language	Spanish and English
Boolean operators	AND, OR, NOT
Main search sources	SciELO, Redalyc, Dialnet

Table 2
Main variables and modifications

Variables	Modifications and implications
Quality of care	Care quality, service quality, humanized care, quality service, due attention, quality management
Key indicators	Management level, performance level
Hospitals	Clinics, health centers, medical facilities

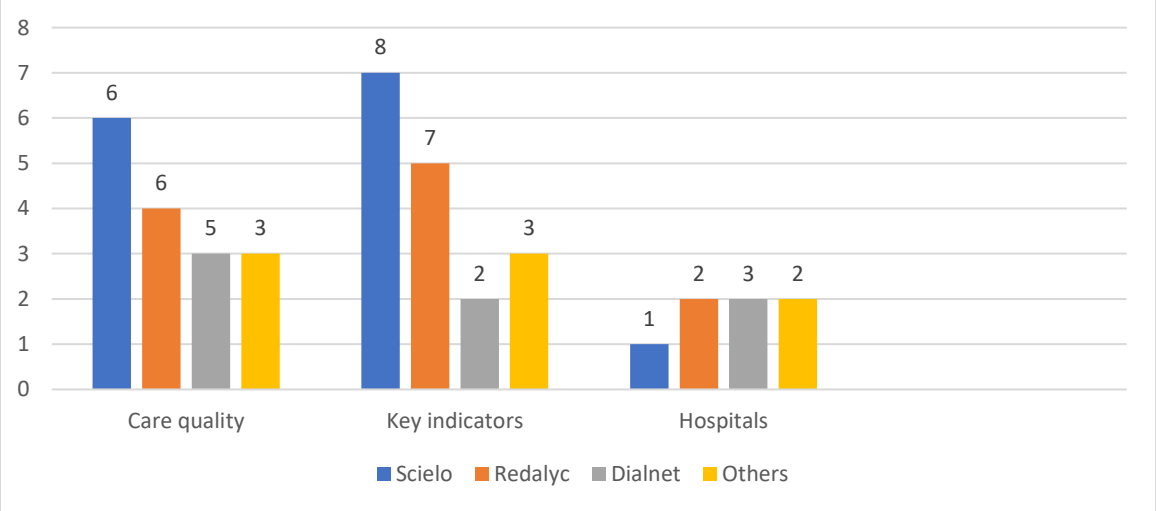
Note: The final search yielded a total of 678 articles.

Table 3
Summary of article search

Specialized search engines	Number of articles found	First filtering Duplicates	Second filtering by year	Third filtering full text	Fourth filtering methodology and others	Total selected articles
a) SciELO	152	68	56	36	20	16
b) Redalyc	130	68	42	8	7	15
c) Dialnet	91	47	28	20	13	12
d) Scopus	50	22	13	5	4	6
e) Other Sources	310	120	57	30	18	14
Total	734	326	197	100	63	60

Results

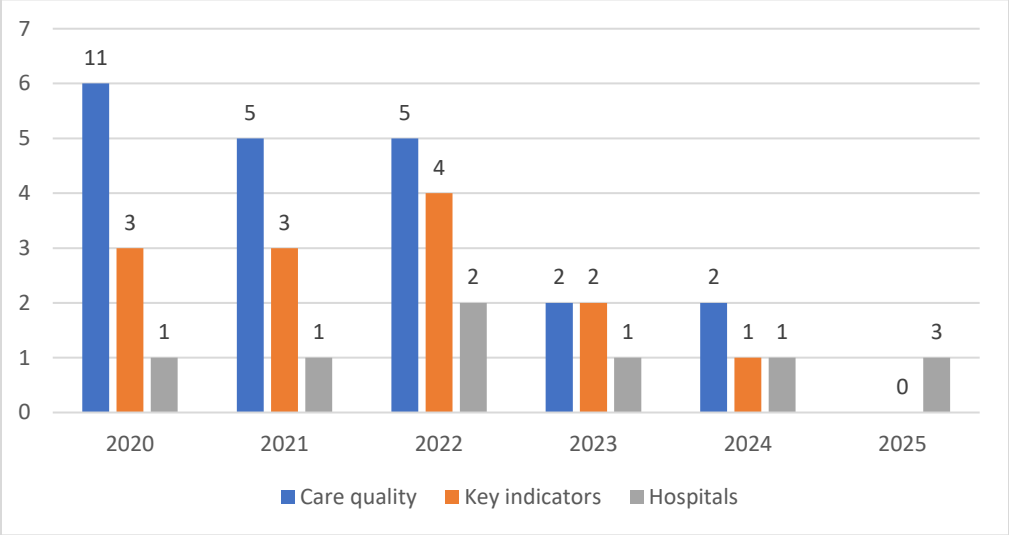
Figure 2
Number of articles by search engine



In the SciELO database, 16 articles were found, of which 7 pertained to care quality, 7 were related to key indicators, and 2 were focused on hospitals. In Redalyc, there were 15 articles—8 concerning care quality, 5 on key indicators, and 2 regarding hospitals. Dialnet yielded 10 articles, with 5 related to care quality, 2 to key indicators, and 3 focused on hospitals. Scopus provided 6 articles, and lastly, from other sources, 14 articles were found, 7 of which targeted care quality, 3 key indicators, and 4 hospitals.

Figure 3

Distribution of articles by year and category



In the category of care quality, the distribution of articles by year is as follows: 6 from 2020, 5 from 2021, 7 from 2022, 4 from 2023, 7 from 2024, and 6 from 2025. In the category of key indicators, 3 articles were from 2020, 3 from 2021, 2 from 2022, 8 from 2023, 3 from 2024, and none from 2025. In the hospital category, there was 1 article from 2020, 1 from 2021, 2 from 2022, 1 from 2023, 1 from 2024, and 5 from 2025, resulting in a total of 68 selected articles.

Table 4

Most relevant articles in the systematic review

Title	Author(s)	Objective	Conclusions
Perceived Quality of Nursing Care by Patients	Cuba Sancho, J. M. & Merino Lozano, A.	To evaluate the perception of care quality in postoperative patients	Good perception in empathy; deficiencies in infrastructure
Quality Management and Patient Safety	Castillo-Ayón, L. & Delgado-Choez, G.	To describe quality management in nursing	Highlights the role of nursing in quality recovery
Quality of Care in ICU	González-Nahuelquin, C.	To identify factors influencing quality in ICUs	Work overload and emotional exhaustion reduce quality
Perceived Quality at ISSSTE Mexico	Balseiro Almario, L. & Martínez Aguilera, P.	To measure satisfaction in ISSSTE regional hospital	Users satisfied with nursing care
Importance of Care in Institutions	Milián García, N. & Sánchez Pastor, S.	To analyze the impact of care quality	Work overload affects care quality
Perception in Oncology Patients	Burgueño Alcalde, F.	To determine perceptions in patients from southern Ecuador	Positive perception predominates
Management at Las Piñas Health Center	Mora Medina, A. A.	To describe quality management of care	Requires an institutional improvement plan
Care Provided by Nursing Students	Ulloa Sabogal, I. M. et al.	To measure experiences with student care	High satisfaction among users
Quality in Ozone Therapy Clinic	Girón, M. G. & Mori Castro, J. A.	To relate nursing quality and satisfaction	Good quality generates user satisfaction
Perception in Public Hospital Ecuador	Meléndez et al.	To evaluate perceived quality in Ecuadorian hospital	Tangible aspects received higher positive scores

Institutional Evaluation	Linares, P. & Barrera, C.	To institutionally evaluate care quality	Improvements in processes are proposed
Burnout-Quality Relationship	Vargas, A. et al.	To study the relationship between work stress and care	Burnout reduces quality of care
Organizational Climate and Quality	López, R.	To link work climate with service quality	Better climate improves quality perception
Patient-Centered Care	Delgado, M. & Poma, C.	To analyze a humanized approach	Patient-centered care enhances user experience
Perception of Professional Empathy	Torres, V.	To measure professional perception of empathy	More emotional training is required
Psychosocial Factors	Cueva, M. & Leiva, R.	To analyze psychosocial factors in quality	Direct relationship between environment and care
SERVQUAL Evaluation	Peña, C. & Gómez, F.	To apply the SERVQUAL model	Positive results in reliability dimension
Humanized Models	Reyes, M.	To explore care models	Humanized approach is key in hospitals
Competency Management	Yupanqui, G. & Torres, A.	To link competencies and quality	Competency management improves performance
Working Conditions	Silva, J. & Carranza, D.	To relate working conditions and care	Poor conditions reduce quality

Discussion

The systematic review conducted between 2019 and 2025 reveals that the quality of nursing care in public hospitals primarily revolves around three dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, and empathy. Authors such as Balseiro and Martínez (2020) highlight user satisfaction with nursing care in ISSSTE hospitals in Mexico, underscoring the importance of humanized empathy. Reyes (2019) and Delgado and Poma (2020) note that humanized and patient-centered models enhance user experience and trust in the service. However, structural factors, such as work overload (Milián & Sánchez, 2023; Vargas et al., 2020) and precarious working conditions (Silva & Carranza, 2018), hinder the establishment of comprehensive and sustained care over time.

Regarding reliability, it was found that this dimension largely depends on consistency in processes, safety of care, and resource availability. According to Linares and Barrera (2019), the institutional evaluation of care quality indicates a need to strengthen care delivery processes. Similarly, Peña and Gómez (2020) found positive results in the reliability dimension when applying the SERVQUAL model, confirming the importance of standardizing professional practice. Conversely, Meléndez et al. (2020) pointed out that although tangible aspects of infrastructure show improvement, gaps remain that affect the safe and accurate delivery of care.

Concerning responsiveness, findings consistently indicate that the promptness and availability of nursing staff are influenced by organizational conditions. González (2024) demonstrated that work overload and emotional exhaustion negatively impact this ability. Correspondingly, López (2021) asserts that a favorable organizational climate enhances quality perception, while Mora (2023) identified that quality management in health centers necessitates institutional improvement plans to optimize efficacy.

In regard to empathy, various studies emphasize its importance as a key dimension of care quality. Cuba et al. (2022) identified that empathy is positively valued by patients, although they acknowledged shortcomings in hospital infrastructure. Burgueño (2021) reported that cancer patients predominantly hold positive perceptions of empathy, which enhances communication and trust. On the other hand, Torres (2021) noted the need for increased emotional training for nursing professionals to strengthen therapeutic relationships. Ulloa Sabogal et al. (2021) demonstrated that even care provided by students can lead to high user satisfaction when emphasizing human interaction, reinforcing the significance of this dimension for the hospital experience.

Conclusions

With respect to the general objective, the systematic review of the literature (2019–2025) highlights that the quality of nursing care in public hospitals is fundamentally grounded in three key dimensions: reliability,

responsiveness, and empathy, which manifest heterogeneously according to institutional context and available resources.

Regarding reliability, the studies analyzed emphasize the importance of delivering safe, consistent, and precise nursing care, despite persistent limitations related to infrastructure, workload, and resource availability, which jeopardize the continuity of quality care.

Concerning responsiveness, it was identified that the promptness and effectiveness of nursing personnel are directly linked to institutional organization and the support of hospital management. However, work overload and human resource shortages hinder the provision of timely and effective care.

Regarding empathy, it concludes that this dimension is viewed positively by patients, serving as a factor that strengthens trust, communication, and satisfaction. However, there is a clear need to enhance training in emotional and relational competencies to ensure a humanized approach at all care levels.

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