

COMPETÊNCIAS DE ENFERMAGEM NOS CUIDADOS À PESSOA TRANSGÉNERO:
PROTOCOLO DE REVISÃO DE ESCOPO

NURSING COMPETENCES IN TRANSGENDER CARE: PROTOCOL FOR A SCOPING
REVIEW

COMPETENCIAS DE ENFERMERÍA EN LA ATENCIÓN A TRANSEXUALES: UN
PROTOCOLO DEL ALCANCE

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RECEIVED: 23rd September, 2025

ACCEPTED: 24th April, 2026

PUBLISHED: 31st May, 2026

Servir, 2(15), e43357

DOI:10.48492/servir0215.43357

2026



RESUMO

Introdução: A Pessoa Transgénero enfrenta barreiras no acesso aos cuidados de saúde, muitas vezes devido à falta de formação e sensibilização por parte dos enfermeiros. Invisibilidade, preconceito e conhecimento limitado sobre diversidade de género contribuem para práticas discriminatórias. Dado o papel da Enfermagem na prestação de cuidados diretos e humanizados, é fundamental identificar as competências essenciais para desenvolver práticas inclusivas.

Objetivo: Identificar e mapear as competências que os enfermeiros devem priorizar no cuidado à Pessoa Transgénero.

Métodos: Esta Scoping Review segue as orientações do Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) e o checklist PRISMA-ScR. Serão incluídos estudos publicados a partir de 2018, em português, inglês ou espanhol, que abordem competências de enfermagem no cuidado à pessoa transgénero adulta. A pesquisa será realizada nas bases PubMed, LILACS, Web of Science, Scopus, CINAHL Complete e Cochrane Plus Collection (via EBSCOhost). Dois revisores independentes realizarão a seleção e extração dos dados; em caso de divergência, será consultado um terceiro revisor. Os dados serão apresentados de forma descritiva. O protocolo está registado na plataforma Open Science Framework (OSF).

Conclusão: Esta revisão pretende identificar competências-chave de Enfermagem, apoiando a criação de um guia de boas práticas e promovendo cuidados mais equitativos e humanizados à Pessoas Transgénero.

Palavras-chave: pessoa transgénero; cuidados de enfermagem; competência profissional; cuidados de saúde competentes.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Transgender people face barriers in accessing healthcare, often due to nurses' lack of training and awareness. Invisibility, prejudice, and limited knowledge about gender diversity contribute to discriminatory practices. Given nursing's role in providing direct and humanised care, identifying essential competencies is key to developing inclusive practices.

Objective: To identify and map the competencies nurses should prioritise when caring for transgender people.

Methods: This scoping review will follow Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) guidelines and PRISMA-ScR. It will include studies from 2018 onwards, in Portuguese, English or Spanish, focusing on nursing competencies in adult transgender care. The search will be conducted in PubMed, LILACS, Web of Science, Scopus, CINAHL Complete, and Cochrane Plus Collection (via EBSCOhost). Two independent reviewers will carry out the selection and extraction. Any disagreements will be resolved by a third reviewer. Data will be synthesised narratively. The protocol is registered on the Open Science Framework.

Conclusion: This review aims to identify key nursing competencies that support the creation of a good practice guide and foster equitable, humanised care for transgender individuals.

Keywords: transgender person, nursing care, professional competence, competent health care.

RESUMEN

Introducción: Las personas transgénero se enfrentan a barreras en el acceso a la atención sanitaria, a menudo debido a la falta de formación y concienciación del personal de enfermería. La invisibilidad, los prejuicios y los conocimientos limitados sobre la diversidad de género contribuyen a las prácticas discriminatorias. Dado el papel de la enfermería en la prestación de cuidados directos y humanizados, identificar las competencias esenciales es clave para desarrollar prácticas inclusivas.

Objetivos: Identificar y mapear las competencias que las enfermeras deben priorizar cuando atienden a personas transexuales.

Métodos: Esta Scoping Review sigue las directrices del Instituto Joanna Briggs (JBI) y PRISMA-ScR. Incluye estudios a partir de 2018, en portugués, inglés o español, centrados en las competencias de enfermería en la atención a personas transgénero adultas. La búsqueda se realizará en PubMed, LILACS, Web of Science, Scopus, CINAHL Complete y Cochrane Plus Collection (a través de EBSCOhost). Dos revisores independientes realizarán la selección y extracción. Cualquier desacuerdo será resuelto por un tercer revisor. Los datos se describirán narrativamente. El protocolo está registrado en el Open Science Framework.

Conclusión: Esta revisión pretende identificar las competencias clave de enfermería que apoyen la creación de una guía de buenas prácticas y fomenten una atención equitativa y humanizada a las personas transexuales.

Palabras Clave: persona transgénero; cuidados de enfermería; competencia profesional; atención sanitaria competente.

Introduction

Despite legislative progress on gender identity, there remain serious shortcomings in the response of health services to the needs of transgender people. The literature indicates that health professionals, including nurses, require specific competencies to deliver safe, ethical, and prejudice-free care. The stigma, prejudice, and discrimination experienced by transgender people largely stem from the non-acceptance of their gender identity, as well as from binary assumptions of being male or female, which restrict the quality and accessibility of the care provided (Gomes et al., 2023; Moraes et al., 2023; Moriarty & Willis, 2024).

The lack of adequate training, combined with the persistence of stereotypes, contributes to the marginalisation of this population within health systems (Moraes et al., 2023; Zwickl et al., 2024). Recent studies indicate that the absence of specific skills in caring for transgender people hinders the implementation of person-centred care, which is often reduced to bodily transition, thereby overlooking other fundamental dimensions of care (Cutillas-Fernández et al., 2024; Domene et al., 2022; McNair & Hegarty, 2010).

The insecurity experienced by professionals when using inclusive language and combined with the absence of specific protocols, exposes both training and institutional weaknesses. Even among professionals with an interest in the topic, hesitation in using appropriate terminology, resistance to implementing person-centred approaches, and limited awareness of international guidelines such as the WPATH Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender-Diverse People are common (Coleman et al., 2022).

In this study, the term “transgender person”, widely recognised by institutions and governments, is adopted to inclusively describe individuals whose gender identity differs from the gender assigned at birth, with or without bodily modifications. This designation encompasses binary and non-binary trans individuals, as well as identities such as transvestite, transsexual, queer, and two-spirit, represented by the letters T and Q in the LGBTQ+ acronym (Ahmad et al., 2024; Medina-Martínez et al., 2021; Zwickl et al., 2024).

The concept of competence, although widely employed, remains complex and multidimensional in its definition. Within the healthcare context, and particularly within Nursing, the clarification of this concept is strongly shaped by professional regulatory bodies, which determine the standards required for safe and effective practice (Witt et al., 2023).

Witt et al. (2023) further highlight substantial international variation in the disciplinary development and operationalisation of nursing competencies, reflecting diverse educational structures and professional regulatory frameworks. The literature consistently recognises that competence derives from a cumulative process of learning and experience, encompassing not only the acquisition of knowledge and skills but also the professional’s motivation and willingness to apply these resources in clinical practice (Fukada, 2018). Competence therefore emerges from the interaction between behaviour, interests, prior experience, motivation, and attitude.

International frameworks, such as those of the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the World Health Organization (WHO), emphasise that professional competence results from the integration of cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains. This integration enables nurses to deliver safe, person-centred, and culturally responsive care. In the context of caring for transgender people, essential competencies include specialised clinical skills, inclusive and affirming communication, cultural humility, ethical advocacy, and the ability to address stigma and structural barriers that limit access to healthcare (ICN, 2025; WHO, n.d.).

Despite the growing academic interest in the subject, no scoping review has been identified that focuses on defining and mapping nurses’ competencies for providing care to this population. Although studies evaluating training programmes on this topic exist, the literature remains fragmented, making it difficult to systematise guidance for delivering competent care. The absence of a comprehensive mapping of nurses’ competencies jeopardises the quality and safety of the care provided, thereby perpetuating inequalities in access to healthcare.



Given this gap, this study aims to identify and map the competencies that nurses should prioritise when providing care to adult transgender people. By synthesising and organising existing evidence, it will establish a solid foundation for training professionals, promoting inclusive, person-centred practices that address the specific needs of this population.

1. Methods

The scoping review will follow the guidelines established by the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) (Peters et al., 2022) and the reporting checklist for this type of study, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) (Tricco et al., 2018). The protocol has been registered on the Open Science Framework (OSF) platform, under the registration number OSF.IO/A85CR.

The research question was: **What are nurses' specific competences for caring for transgender people?**

1.1 Inclusion criteria

Participants

Studies will be included if they focus exclusively on nurses who, in their professional practice, have provided care to transgender or gender-diverse individuals. This choice is justified by the central role that nurses play in delivering direct, ethical and person-centred care, including the promotion of equity and human rights, as highlighted by international organisations such as the International Council of Nurses (ICN, 2025), the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), and national associations like the American Nurses Association (ANA, 2018).

Concept

Studies addressing the competencies required for providing competent care to transgender individuals will be considered. Competencies are understood as the integration of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that support the effective and efficient performance of professional roles (Parry, 1996). Nursing competencies are therefore viewed as a set of behaviours that integrate theoretical knowledge (knowing), practical ability and/or skill (knowing how to do), critical thinking (Skirton et al., 2012) and the experience acquired in providing care (Laserna Jimenez et al., 2021) and a personal willingness to care (wanting to do) (Parry, 1996). The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2022) framework will be used as the basis for the analysis, encompassing both technical skills (hard skills) and interpersonal skills (soft skills), such as person-centredness, decision-making, communication, collaboration, evidence-informed practice, and personal conduct (WHO, 2022).

Context

All contexts in which nursing professionals work, regardless of the level of care or nature of the service.

Types of sources

Published and unpublished studies will be considered, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method systematic reviews, as well as guidelines from international organisations (official documents, consensus statements, institutional manuals) and institutions specialising in the care of transgender people. Studies must be available in English, Portuguese, or Spanish. Only studies published between January 2018 and July 2025 will be included, as this period reflects the timeframe following the reclassification of transgender identities in the ICD-11 by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019).

The following will be excluded: i) studies involving minors under the age of 18, given that there are some legal requirements for affirming gender identity, which is only validated after the age of 18; ii) studies focused on professional groups other than nurses; iii) opinion studies; iv) studies whose focus does not directly involve nursing practice; v) studies outside the 2018 to 2025 time frame.

1.2 Research Strategy

The search strategy will be structured according to the three stages recommended in JBI reviews (Peters et al., 2020). The first stage involves an initial search of PubMed and CINAHL, followed by an analysis of the terms used in the titles, abstracts, and descriptors of the articles.

In the second stage, a new search will be conducted in the PubMed, LILACS, Web of Science, Scopus, CINAHL Complete, and Cochrane Plus Collection databases (via the EBSCOhost platform), using the keywords and descriptors identified. Boolean operators (AND, OR) and, where necessary, truncations and appropriate filters were applied.

The third stage will involve reviewing the reference lists of the included studies to identify additional potentially relevant sources. In addition, a targeted search for grey literature will be conducted using Google Scholar and the Portuguese Open Access Scientific Repository (RCAAP), considering documents such as academic dissertations, technical reports, and institutional publications.

All results will be exported to Rayyan software, allowing duplicates to be identified and removed. Studies will then be selected, analysed, and deemed eligible according to criteria.

If any doubts arise regarding interpretation, clarification will be requested from the corresponding author.

Data will be extracted independently by two reviewers, and a third reviewer will be consulted in the event of disagreement.

1.3 Presentation of data

The analysis of the results extracted from the included articles will be presented in an organised and descriptive manner by completing a table created for this purpose, which will include, for each article, the authors, country, year of publication, objective, methodology, and main results. This working tool follows the JBI methodology (Peters et al., 2022).

Table 1 – data extraction

Title	Authors	Country, Year Published	Target	Population	Methodology	Results and conclusions
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2.3 Research Strategy

Table 2 – Research Strategy

(PubMed)

S1	"gender-nonconforming persons"[MeSH Terms] OR "gender-nonconforming persons"[Title/Abstract] OR "gender nonconforming population*" [Title/Abstract] OR "gender nonconforming respondents"[Title/Abstract] OR "gender nonconforming students"[Title/Abstract] OR "gender nonconforming transgender"[Title/Abstract] OR "gender nonconforming survivors"[Title/Abstract] OR "gender nonconforming transgender adults"[Title/Abstract] OR "gender non conforming"[Title/Abstract] OR "gender non-conforming"[Title/Abstract] OR "non binary person*" [Title/Abstract] OR "non binary population*" [Title/Abstract] OR "non-binary" [Title/Abstract] OR "intersex persons" [MeSH Terms] OR "intersex persons"[Title/Abstract] OR "transgender persons"[MeSH Terms] OR "transgender persons"[Title/Abstract] OR "trans feminine"[Title/Abstract] OR "trans masculine"[Title/Abstract] OR "transfeminine"[Title/Abstract] OR "transmasculine"[Title/Abstract] OR "transsexual*" [Title/Abstract] OR "transsexual*" [Title/Abstract] OR "transgender*" [Title/Abstract] OR "two spirit"[Title/Abstract] OR "gender identity"[MeSH Terms] OR "gender identity"[Title/Abstract] OR "lgbt*" [Title/Abstract] OR "gender diverse" [Title/Abstract] OR "gender expansive" [Title/Abstract]					47 360
S2	"health services for transgender persons"[MeSH Terms] OR "health services for transgender persons"[Title/Abstract] OR "nursing care"[MeSH Terms] OR "nursing care"[Title/Abstract] OR "nursing practice"[Title/Abstract] OR "nurses"[MeSH Terms] OR "nurse"[Title/Abstract] OR "nurses"[Title/Abstract] OR "nursing staff"[MeSH Terms] OR "nursing staff"[Title/Abstract] OR "health services"[MeSH Terms] OR "health services"[Title/Abstract] OR "nursing services"[Title/Abstract] OR "nursing services"[MeSH Terms] OR "healthcare access"[Title/Abstract] OR "access to health services"[Title/Abstract]					2 884 612



S3	“cultural competency”[MeSH Terms] OR “cultural competency”[Title/Abstract] OR “clinical competence”[Title/Abstract] OR “clinical competence”[MeSH Terms] OR “social skills”[MeSH Terms] OR “social skills”[Title/Abstract] OR “attitude”[Title/Abstract] OR “attitude”[MeSH Terms] OR “attitude of health personnel”[MeSH Terms] OR “attitude of health personnel”[Title/Abstract] OR “health knowledge attitudes practice”[Title/Abstract] OR “health knowledge, attitudes, practice”[MeSH Terms] OR (“practices”[Title/Abstract] OR “skills”[Title/Abstract] OR “knowledge”[Title/Abstract] OR “competency”[Title/Abstract] OR “competencies”[Title/Abstract] OR “health knowledge, attitudes, practice”[MeSH Terms]) AND “nurs*”[Title/Abstract]	963 211
S4	#1 AND #2 AND #3	2 726
	Timeframe applied: 2018–2025	1 071
	Applied language PT, ENG, ESP	1067

Conclusion

It is expected that this review will provide a solid foundation for mapping the evidence on nursing care for transgender people. By identifying the primary competencies and knowledge necessary to provide care for transgender individuals, the aim is to inform the development of a good practice guide for nurses, with a focus on promoting inclusive, competent, and evidence-based care. This contribution may strengthen professional training, guide institutional policies and support continuous improvement in the quality of care in this area.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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