

## COMPETENCE IN NURSING: A CONCEPT ANALYSIS

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*Key Words:* nursing, competence, competency

### Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to: a) clearly describe the concept of competence and b) describe the application of the findings to education and practice.

**Method:** Competence is examined using the eight-step model of concept analysis proposed by Walker and Avant (1995), which includes selection of the concept; determination of the aims of the analysis; identification of the uses of the concept; determination of the defining attributes; model case construction; contrary case construction; identification of antecedents and consequences; and definition of empirical referents.

**Findings:** The concept of competence is important not only in nursing, but also in business, industry, education, and management for assuring quality and safety standards. Defining attributes include knowledge, skill, experience, performance, personal attributes, outcomes, and capacity. Antecedents of competency are subject knowledge and contextual skill, while consequences are confidence, credibility, institutional accreditation, and safe, effective outcomes. Empirical referents are nursing expertise and positive patient outcomes.

**Discussion:** Defining competence is important to the education of nurses and the continuing validation of the efficacy of the practicing nurse. Clear definition of nursing competence can assist in the development of reliable tools for competency assessment. Further, clarification of the concept suggests further research initiatives to identify teaching methodologies and measurement methods leading to the expertise of both beginning and experienced nursing practitioners.