

Recognition and Reward At Work: Impacts on Mental Health and the Role of the Nurse

Recognition and Reward At Work: Impacts on Mental Health and the Role of the Nurse
Reconocimiento y Recompensa en el Trabajo: Impactos en la Salud Mental y el Papel del Enfermero

RESUMO

Objetivo: Analisar a percepção de trabalhadores acerca do reconhecimento e da recompensa no ambiente de trabalho e seus impactos na saúde mental. **Método:** Estudo descritivo, quantitativo, realizado entre julho e agosto de 2025, em Minas Gerais, com 66 trabalhadores de uma instituição de ensino superior. Os dados foram coletados por questionário eletrônico, contemplando variáveis sociodemográficas e questões em escala Likert relacionadas a reconhecimento, recompensa e saúde mental. A análise foi conduzida por estatística descritiva. **Resultados:** Os participantes relataram percepção insuficiente de reconhecimento e recompensas associada à estresse, ansiedade, insônia e desmotivação, além do desejo de afastamento ou mudança de setor devido ao desgaste emocional. **Conclusão:** Evidencia-se a necessidade de políticas institucionais que promovam valorização profissional e favoreçam a saúde mental dos trabalhadores.

DESCRIPTORES: Saúde Mental; Valorização Profissional; Reconhecimento; Recompensa; Bem-Estar Psicológico.

ABSTRACT

Objective: To analyze workers' perceptions of recognition and reward in the workplace and their impacts on mental health. **Method:** Descriptive, quantitative study conducted between July and August 2025, in Minas Gerais, Brazil, with 66 workers from a higher education institution. Data were collected through an electronic questionnaire addressing sociodemographic variables and Likert scale questions related to recognition, reward, and mental health. Descriptive statistics were used for analysis. **Results:** Participants reported insufficient perception of recognition and rewards, associated with stress, anxiety, insomnia, and demotivation, as well as a desire for job transfer or sector change due to emotional strain. **Conclusion:** The study highlights the need for institutional policies that promote professional appreciation and support workers' mental health.

DESCRIPTORS: Mental Health; Employment; Reward; Employment; Psychological Well-Being.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Analizar la percepción de los trabajadores sobre el reconocimiento y la recompensa en el entorno laboral y sus impactos en la salud mental. **Método:** Estudio descriptivo, cuantitativo, realizado entre julio y agosto de 2025, en Minas Gerais, Brasil, con 66 trabajadores de una institución de educación superior. Los datos se recopilaron mediante cuestionario electrónico que incluyó variables sociodemográficas y preguntas en escala Likert sobre reconocimiento, recompensa y salud mental. El análisis se realizó mediante estadística descriptiva. **Resultados:** Los participantes informaron percepción insuficiente de reconocimiento y recompensas, asociada a estrés, ansiedad, insomnio y desmotivación, además del deseo de traslado o cambio de sector debido al desgaste emocional. **Conclusión:** Se evidencia la necesidad de políticas institucionales orientadas a la valorización profesional y a la promoción de la salud mental de los trabajadores.

DESCRIPTORES: Salud Mental; Empleo; Recompensa; Empleo; Bienestar Psicológico.

Maria Eduarda Couto Reis de Paula

Nursing graduate student at UninCor University Center (UninCor).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3669-8430>

Susinaira Vilela Avelar

Master's Degree in Public Health from the University of Vale do Sapucaí (Univás)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9665-3134>

Alessandra Mara de Oliveira

Master's Degree in Nursing from the Federal University of Alfenas (Unifal)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2157-5631>

João Paulo Soares Fonseca

Master's Degree in Education from the University of Vale do Sapucaí (Univás)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4886-1718>

Guilherme Luis Nascimento Quintiliano

Master's Degree in Nursing from the Federal University of Alfenas (Unifal)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2470-7943>

Juliana Resende Maciel

Undergraduate student in Nursing at UninCor University Center (UninCor)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-5673-0825>

José Alfredo do Nascimento Júnior

Undergraduate student in Nursing at UninCor University Center (UninCor)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-6984-1740>

Hudson Fliegner Enout Nadur

Undergraduate student in Nursing at UninCor University Center (UninCor).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5768-0689>

Received: 10/23/2025

Approved: 11/03/2025



INTRODUCTION

Work is a central element in human life, influencing not only subsistence but also physical, psychological, and social balance. In this context, recognition and reward for performance play a fundamental role in the motivation, engagement, and satisfaction of workers. The absence of these elements has been associated with increased stress, anxiety, sleep disorders, and other manifestations that compromise mental health and quality of life in the workplace^(1,2).

Professional recognition is directly related to productivity and well-being, making it a relevant people management strategy. However, in various institutional contexts, recognition practices are often weak, which contributes to demotivation and favors occupational illness^(3,4).

Occupational nursing, by linking health and organizational management, plays a strategic role in preventing psychological distress, promoting healthy work environments, and strengthening professional recognition. Nevertheless, there are still gaps in research on how recognition and reward impact mental health in different institutional settings^(5,6).

Given this scenario, the objective of this study was to analyze workers' perceptions of recognition and reward at work and their effects on mental health, contributing to reflections and practices aimed at strengthening worker health.

METHOD

This is a descriptive study with a quantitative approach, developed at a higher education institution located in southern Minas Gerais, Brazil. Data collection took place between July and August 2025, using a structured questionnaire made available electronically

ly on the *Google Forms* platform.

The study population consisted of workers from different sectors of the institution, covering administrative, operational, and academic functions. The final sample consisted of 66 participants who met the inclusion criteria: being active in the institution during the collection period, being 18 years of age or older, and agreeing to participate voluntarily. Incomplete or inconsistent questionnaires were excluded from the analysis. The research was conducted only after the signing of the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF).

The data collection instrument included sociodemographic variables, such as gender, age group, sector of activity, length of service, and work shift. In addition, questions related to recognition, reward, and mental health in the work context were included, totaling eight objective questions. To measure perceptions, a five-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 1 to 5 (Never = 1; Rarely = 2; Sometimes = 3; Often = 4; Always = 5). In addition, an optional essay question was included to record suggestions about professional development and the organizational environment.

During the presentation of the qualitative results, emphasis was placed on the participants' statements that contributed strategic information for the interpretation of the findings. The subjects were identified using codes (P1, P2, P3...), ensuring anonymity. The interpretive comments made by the researchers were inserted in brackets in order to preserve the distinction between the participants' statements and the analysis performed. The analysis of the discursive question was conducted based on the relevance of the responses, prioritizing those that had the greatest impact in the context of the study.

The collection procedure ensured

the confidentiality of the information, without individual identification of the respondents. The data were organized in a spreadsheet, structured in a database, and submitted to descriptive statistical analysis, including the calculation of absolute and relative frequencies. The open-ended responses were analyzed qualitatively using the Collective Subject Discourse (CSD) technique and grouped by thematic similarity. This process allowed for the systematization of emerging content and the construction of representative discourses, facilitating interpretation and broader understanding of the participants' perceptions.

The research was conducted in accordance with Law No. 14,874, of May 28, 2024, which establishes the National System of Ethics in Research with Human Beings, as well as with the ethical guidelines established by CNS Resolution No. 466/2012, applicable to research in the health area, and by CNS Resolution No. 510/2016, intended for the humanities and social sciences, while they remain in force.

The study fully complied with the ethical principles set forth in the aforementioned regulations and was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) of UninCor for review, having been approved in accordance with Opinion No. 7,693,715 and CAAE 89969325.9.0000.0295.

RESULTS

Sixty-six workers from different sectors of a higher education institution located in southern Minas Gerais, Brazil, participated in the study. The sample consisted mainly of women, predominantly aged between 26 and 35 years, with up to three years of employment and working mainly in the administrative and teaching sectors. Most respondents worked the morning shift (Table 1).

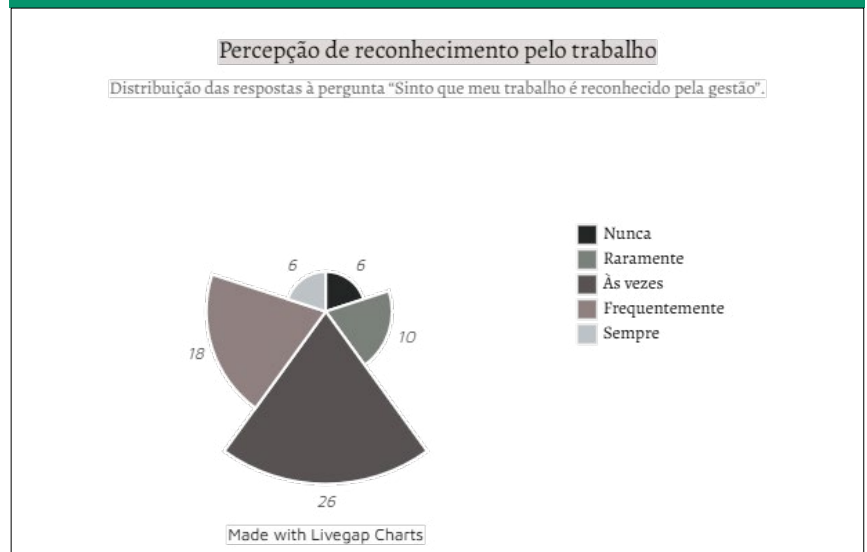
Table 1 – Sociodemographic profile of participating workers. Minas Gerais, Brazil, 2025.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS (n=66)		
VARIABLE	n	%
SEX		
Male	26	40
Female	40	60
AGE GROUP		
18–25 years	15	23
26–35 years	28	42
36–45 years	12	18
46–55 years	8	12
56 years or older	3	5
SECTOR		
Administrative	25	38
Academic (faculty)	18	27
Clinical	12	18
Infrastructure	7	11
Others	4	6
SHIFT		
Morning	28	42
Afternoon	15	23
Night	10	15
Full-time	13	2

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

Regarding the perception of recognition, many workers reported not feeling that their performance is valued by management. This dissatisfaction was also reflected in the responses about rewards (Graph 1).

Graph 1 – Frequency of responses to the statement “I feel that my work is recognized by management.” Minas Gerais, Brazil, 2025.



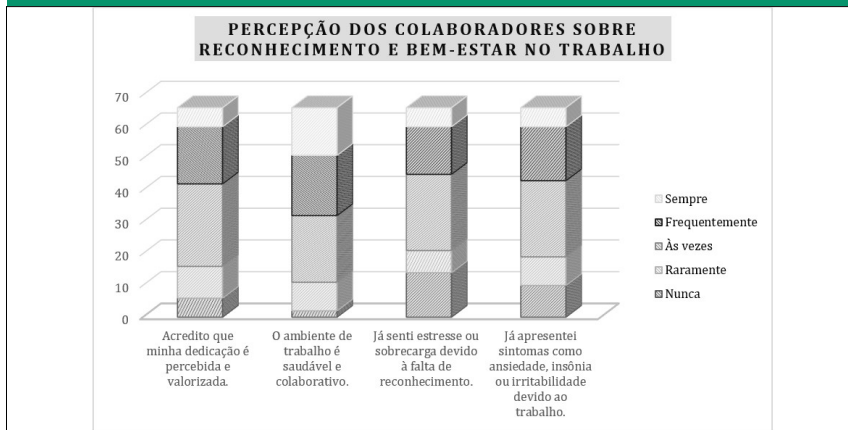
Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

With regard to mental health, most participants reported having experienced stress, anxiety, insomnia, or irritability, often associated with lack of recognition and work overload. Some

workers mentioned considering taking leave or changing sectors due to emotional exhaustion. Graph 2 below illustrates these findings.

Responses to the question "What changes in organizational culture do you believe would help strengthen employee recognition and mental health?"

Graph 2 – Frequency of responses regarding emotional symptoms resulting from work. Minas Gerais, Brazil, 2025.



Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

When asked about institutional support, most respondents said they perceived a lack of formal support to deal with emotional issues. This result reinforces the relationship between lack of

recognition, fragile professional appreciation, and negative impacts on mental health. Figure 3 shows the frequency of responses regarding institutional support.

In the qualitative analysis process, 56 responses to the discursive question were analyzed, considering that participation was optional and, therefore, did not include all respondents. Among them, four main categories emerged.

The need for institutional recognition was mentioned by 18 participants, illustrated by the following statement:

It is important for management to publicly recognize the efforts and achievements of employees. (P1)

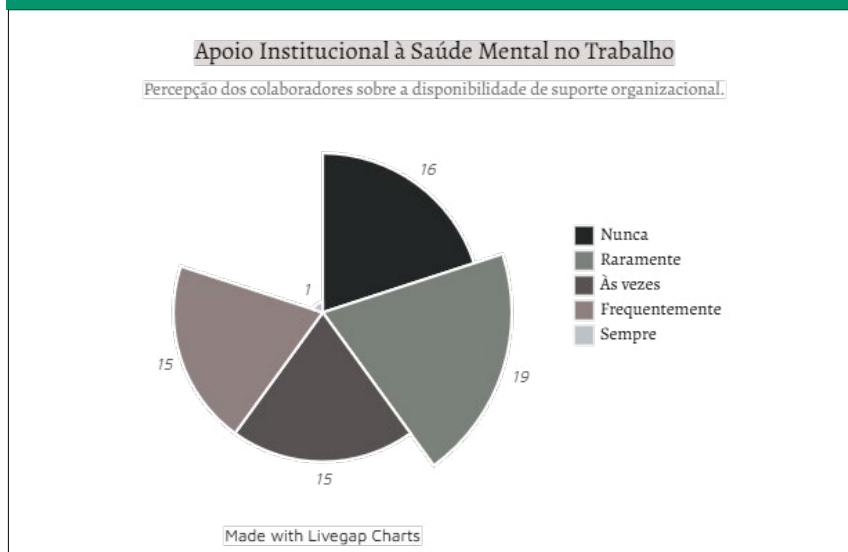
[This statement highlights the search for professional recognition, even if symbolic.]

Appreciation through rewards appeared in 15 responses, with emphasis on the one mentioned by P27:

There is a lack of recognition; we feel that we work hard and do not receive adequate return. (P27)

[This statement highlights the perception of a mismatch between dedication and reward.]

Graph 3 – Frequency of responses regarding institutional support for mental health. Minas Gerais, Brazil, 2025.



Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

Mental health support was mentioned by 12 participants, as described by P12:

It would be essential to create a listening channel so that workers can report their emotional difficulties. (P12)

[This statement reinforces the importance of psychological support in the workplace.]

Finally, improvement in the workplace was highlighted in 10 responses, summarized in the report:

It would be important to improve the distribution of activities to avoid an accumulation of tasks. (P34)

[This statement points to work

overload and the need for management adjustments.]

Overall, the results reveal that promoting institutional strategies focused on recognition, appreciation, and mental health care is essential to strengthening well-being in the workplace, in line with global guidelines on mental health at work. ⁽⁴⁾

DISCUSSION

The sociodemographic analysis (Table 1) showed a predominance of females (60%), in line with studies that point to a greater presence of women in administrative, educational, and care roles ^(1,2). The 26-35 age group (42%) was the most frequent, followed by 18-25 (23%), characterizing young adults in the active phase of their careers, in which appreciation and recognition directly influence motivation and mental health.

In terms of sector, there was a higher participation of administrative workers (38%) and teachers (27%), reflecting the composition of the institution and allowing for a broader analysis of recognition and mental health.

In terms of shifts, the morning shift predominated (42%), followed by the afternoon shift (23%) and full-time (20%). This variation suggests that work organization impacts quality of life, stress, and mental health in different ways ^(10,11,18).

The data show that lack of recognition and reward is associated with emotional exhaustion, such as stress, anxiety, insomnia, and demotivation, in line with the literature that points to professional appreciation as central to occupational mental health ⁽¹⁻³⁾.

The prevalence of these symptoms shows that work management affects productivity and quality of life, and that the lack of recognition favors absenteeism, turnover and the risk of mental illness-

Qualitative evidence points to the need for participatory management, with channels for listening, positive feedback, and public recognition of efforts, in line with studies that advocate humanized leadership and workplace wellness policies-

The lack of institutional support highlights the importance of mental health promotion programs associated with recognition and reward strategies, capable of reducing stress and increasing engagement ⁽⁸⁻¹⁰⁾.

The role of occupational nursing is strategic, proposing preventive interventions, monitoring indicators, and coordinating actions with management, promoting healthier environments. However, there are still gaps to be overcome for greater professional recognition and mental health support ^(11,12,19).

Among the limitations, we highlight the small number of participants and the focus on a single institution, which restricts the generalization of the findings, as pointed out by previous studies-

The optional nature of the qualitative questions may also have reduced the depth of the analyses, a limitation already described by authors who discuss the challenges of research in work environments, subject to overload and low adherence ^(2,6).

Nevertheless, the results provide support for institutional policies on recognition and mental health, as well as indicating the need for future studies with larger samples and in different contexts.

CONCLUSION

Recognition in the workplace transcends praise, constituting a vital element for mental health and for the construction of healthy and productive work environments. It was found that the absence of recognition and rewards is associated with increased

stress, anxiety, insomnia, demotivation, and desire to leave, which reinforces professional appreciation as a protective factor for occupational mental health.

The participants' perceptions highlighted the need for management strategies that promote dialogue, positive feedback from leadership, public recognition, and institutional support. Such measures demonstrate that structured organizational policies can contribute to greater motivation, engagement, and well-being, while reducing the risks of occupational illness.

The study had limitations due to the number of participants, with 66 respondents in total, of whom only 56 chose to answer the open-ended questions, in addition to the fact that it was conducted in a single institution. Nevertheless, the results offer consistent support for the formulation of policies that prioritize recognition and mental health at work, as well as indicating promising avenues for future research with larger samples and in different organizational contexts.

Thus, this research reinforces the importance of work environments that value their professionals, demonstrating that structured recognition is not only desirable but essential for individual well-being and the sustainability of organizations.

References

1. Silva RM, Pereira ER, Oliveira ACS, Souza NVDO, Cunha LC. Saúde mental e trabalho: relações e intervenções necessárias. *Rev Bras Enferm.* 2021;74(1):e20200123. doi:10.1590/0034-7167-2020-0123
2. Santos JLG, Menegon FHA, Erdmann AL. Saúde do trabalhador e reconhecimento no trabalho em saúde. *Saúde Soc.* 2020;29(3):e190386. doi:10.1590/S0104-12902020190386
3. Dejours C. Psicodinâmica do trabalho: contribuições da escola dejouriana à análise da relação prazer, sofrimento e trabalho. São Paulo: Atlas; 2019.
4. Organização Mundial da Saúde. Saúde mental no trabalho: diretrizes globais. Genebra: OMS; 2022. Disponível em: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240053052>
5. Paschoal T, Torres CV, Porto JB. Felicidade no trabalho: relações com suporte organizacional e valores pessoais. *RevAdm Contemp.* 2020;24(4):405-21. doi:10.1590/1982-7849rac2020190388
6. Mendes AM, Facas EP. Sofrimento psíquico no trabalho e gestão. *Rev Bras Saúde Ocup.* 2019;44:e25. doi:10.1590/2317-6369000016818
7. Ferreira MC, Mendonça H. Reconhecimento no trabalho: impacto sobre o bem-estar e engajamento. *RevPsicol Organ Trab.* 2021;21(3):1501-10. doi:10.5935/rpot/2021.3.21802
8. Deci EL, Ryan RM. Self-determination theory: basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness. New York: Guilford Press; 2017.
9. Herzberg F, Mausner B, Snyderman BB. The motivation to work. New Brunswick: Transaction; 2011.
10. Oliveira JL, Sanches RS, Nicola AL, Monteiro MI. Estresse ocupacional e fatores associados entre trabalhadores de enfermagem. *Rev Gaúcha Enferm.* 2019;40:e20180228. doi:10.1590/1983-1447.2019.20180228
11. Ribeiro HKP, Assunção AA. Sofrimento mental relacionado ao trabalho: revisão sistemática. *Ciênc Saúde Coletiva.* 2020;25(7):2721-32. doi:10.1590/1413-81232020257.23202018
12. Costa SS, Souza NVDO, Cunha LC, Santos DM, Correia LMS. Saúde mental no ambiente laboral: revisão integrativa. *RevEnferm Cen-*
t-Oeste Min. 2022;12:e4521. doi:10.19175/recom.v12i0.4521
13. Borges LO, Tamayo A. Estrutura de valores organizacionais. *RevAdm Contemp.* 2001;5(3):111-36. doi:10.1590/S1415-65552001000300007
14. Vroom VH. *Workandmotivation.* New York: Wiley; 1964.
15. Lazarus RS, Folkman S. *Stress, appraisalandcoping.* New York: Springer; 1984.
16. Skinner BF. *Science andhumanbehavior.* New York: Free Press; 1953.
17. Adams JS. Towardanunderstandingofinequity. *J AbnormSocPsychol.* 1963;67(5):422-36. doi:10.1037/h0040968
18. Souza NVDO, Santos DM, Pires AS, Oliveira EB, Cunha LC. Absenteísmo por transtornos mentais em trabalhadores da saúde. *RevEscEnferm USP.* 2020;54:e03541. doi:10.1590/S1980-220X2018040403541
19. Mendes AM, Merlo ARC. *Psicodinâmica do trabalho: teoria, método e pesquisas.* Curitiba: Juruá; 2017.
20. American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnosticandstatistical manual of mental disorders.* 5th ed. Washington: APA; 2013.
21. Brasil. Casa Civil. Lei nº 14.874, de 28 de maio de 2024. Dispõe sobre a constituição do Sistema Nacional de Ética em Pesquisa com Seres Humanos e sobre as condições para a realização de pesquisas envolvendo seres humanos. Secretaria Especial para Assuntos Jurídicos. Diário Oficial da União. 2024 maio 29; Seção 1. Disponível em: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2023-2026/2024/lei/14874.htm
22. Brasil. Ministério da Saúde. Conselho Nacional de Saúde. Resolução nº 466, de 12 de dezembro de 2012. Aprova as diretrizes e normas regulamentadoras de pesquisas envolvendo seres humanos. Diário Oficial da União. 2013 jun 13. Disponível em: https://bvsms.saude.gov.br/bvs/saudelegis/cns/2013/res0466_12_12_2012.html
23. Brasil. Ministério da Saúde. Conselho Nacional de Saúde. Resolução nº 510, de 7 de abril de 2016. Dispõe sobre as normas aplicáveis a pesquisas em Ciências Humanas e Sociais. Diário Oficial da União. 2016 maio 24. Disponível em: https://bvsms.saude.gov.br/bvs/saudelegis/cns/2016/res0510_07_04_2016.html

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the educational institution for its partnership in the research process and the employees who voluntarily participated in the study.

FINANCIAL OR TECHNICAL SUPPORT

There was no specific funding or technical support for this study.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest, whether financial, academic, or personal, that could have influenced the results of this study.