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The professionalism of Wanda Horta in guiding the professional development of Brazilian Nursing

A profissionalidade de Wanda Horta na orientação profissional da enfermagem brasileira

La profesionalidad de Wanda Horta en la orientación profesional de la enfermería brasileña

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How to cite this article (Vancouver):

Souza Campos PF, Montanari PM, Polubriaginof C, Bazani CS, Azevedo EBL. The professionalism of Wanda Horta in guiding the professional development of Brazilian Nursing. Hist Enferm Rev Eletr. 2026;17:e001. <https://doi.org/10.51234/here.2026.v17.514>.

ABSTRACT

Objective: To examine Wanda Horta's career using Claude Dubar's theory of professionalism, and to link nursing history with feminist epistemology, advancing research on women's roles in Brazilian nursing after 1930. **Methods:** structured documentary research in the category of analysis professionalism applied in four articles published in the Special Issue of the "*Revista da Escola de Enfermagem da USP*", dedicated to the scientific event entitled I "Wanda de Aguiar Horta" academic Week, in 1987. **Results:** the theorist reshaped the training and professional guidance of nursing, instituting the process of humanizing care, legitimizing female trajectories in the field of health and medical practices in a unique context of Brazilian political and social history. **Final considerations:** Wanda Horta's biography allowed us to consider that her legacy contributed decisively to the institutionalization of feminine culture in the art and science of care, in the management of education and health work in Brazil, both dimensions materialized in the publication of the book "*Processo de Enfermagem*". **Descriptors:** Nursing; History of Nursing; Vocational Professional; Nursing Process; Education, Nursing.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Realizar uma análise documental sobre a trajetória profissional de Wanda Horta à luz do arcabouço teórico de Claude Dubar, fundamentalmente, em relação à sua profissionalidade, alinhando a história da enfermagem à perspectiva epistemológica feminista, colaborando com estudos de mulheres que atuaram na enfermagem brasileira nos anos pós-1930. **Métodos:** pesquisa documental estruturada na categoria de análise profissionalidade aplicada em quatro artigos publicados em Número Especial da "*Revista da Escola de Enfermagem da USP*", dedicado ao evento científico intitulado "I Semana Wanda de Aguiar Horta", em 1987. **Resultados:** a teórica redimensionou a formação e a orientação profissional da enfermagem, instituindo o processo de humanização da assistência, legitimando trajetórias femininas no campo da saúde e das práticas médicas em um contexto singular da história política e social brasileira. **Considerações finais:** a biografia de Wanda Horta permitiu considerar que sua profissionalidade colaborou decisivamente com a institucionalização da cultura feminina na arte e ciência do cuidado, na gestão da educação e do trabalho em saúde no Brasil, ambas as dimensões materializadas na publicação do livro "*Processo de Enfermagem*". **Descritores:** Enfermagem; História da Enfermagem; Orientação Vocacional; Processo de Enfermagem; Educação em Enfermagem.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Analizar la trayectoria profesional de Wanda Horta a la luz del marco teórico de Claude Dubar, con énfasis en el concepto de profesionalidad, articulando la historia de la enfermería con la perspectiva epistemológica feminista y contribuyendo a estudios sobre la actuación de las mujeres en la enfermería brasileña en el período posterior a 1930. **Métodos:** investigación documental estructurada en la categoría de análisis profesionalidad aplicada en cuatro artículos publicados en el Número Especial de la "*Revista da Escola de Enfermagem da USP*", dedicado al evento científico intitulado I Semana "Wanda de Aguiar Horta", en 1987. **Resultados:** la teórica reformuló la formación y la orientación profesional de la enfermería, instituyendo el proceso de humanización del cuidado, legitimando las trayectorias femeninas en el campo de la salud y de las prácticas médicas en un contexto singular de la historia política y social brasileña. **Consideraciones finales:** La biografía de Wanda Horta permitió considerar que su legado contribuyó decisivamente a la institucionalización de la cultura femenina en el arte y en la ciencia del cuidado, en la gestión del trabajo educativo y en salud en Brasil, ambas dimensiones materializadas en la publicación del libro "*Processo de Enfermagem*". **Descritores:** Enfermería; Historia de la Enfermería; Orientación Vocacional; Proceso de Enfermería; Educación em Enfermería.

INTRODUCTION

Studies on women's trajectories in the field of health mark a growing area within nursing history research in Brazil⁽¹⁾. However, this approach refers back to longstanding historiographical practices, constituting not something new, ready, or finished, but rather a field that is continually shaped by historical theories which, in turn, overflow into other areas of knowledge through scientific research grounded in interdisciplinarity⁽²⁻⁵⁾.

Research on women in nursing evokes trajectories that demystify the notion of a docile and subservient femininity, revealing biographies of those who dared to resist the imperatives of patriarchy, as in this article, which examines the academic and professional experiences of Wanda de Aguiar Horta (1926–1981). Although she married and fulfilled the social protocol imposed on women of her time, studies portray her as distant from the traditional standards attributed to femininity - such as the woman-wife-mother ideal - primarily because of her dedication to intellectual work. Her trajectory reverberated through the spaces occupied by women in the training of Brazilian nurses after the 1930s, particularly through the School of Nursing of the Faculty of Medicine of the *Universidade de São Paulo* (USP, University of São Paulo) – *EEFMUSP* - so named because it was attached to the Faculty of Medicine from 1942 to 1963. This educational institution reshaped

Brazilian nursing, transforming the existing model of professional training established by the Special Public Health Service (SESP)^(6–10).

In this context, the research problem asked: in what ways does Wanda Horta's trajectory help unveil femininity in the management of education and health work? How did her legacy overflow into a form of professionalism for her successors?

Given this scenario, it can be considered that Wanda Horta's historical experience not only contributed to establishing a professionally administered field led by women but also marked a place of prominence for women in the world of work - specifically as intellectuals within the scientific-university environment, acting diplomatically in international health organizations^(5,11). Author of the most significant national publication in the field of Brazilian nursing - certainly up to the early twenty-first century - her biography highlights the value of caring for basic human needs within a singular historical context, since at the height of her professional career, between 1964 and 1985, Brazilian society was immersed in the civil-military dictatorship.

In this sense, the article examines Wanda Horta's trajectory through new interpretations of the biographical genre, which distance themselves from laudatory, hagiographic, or totalizing approaches. This reinterpretation is grounded in documentary research mediated by the concept of professionalism proposed by Claude Dubar⁽¹²⁾, adopted here as a theoretical premise. By articulating this concept, the author addresses both the construction and recognition of oneself as a professional, asserting that work activities "are not reduced to the economic exchange of an expenditure of energy for a salary, but possess a symbolic dimension in terms of self-realization and social recognition"^(12:355), thus involving the sharing of a 'culture of professional work'.

The justification and relevance of this study intersect with the debate on the professional training and identity of Brazilian nursing^(5,13), a field composed predominantly of women. For this reason, it becomes essential to consider Wanda Horta's professionalism and the pathways of femininity in the management of education and health work on a local-global scale - reaching not only Portuguese - speaking countries but also encompassing diverse spaces and temporalities shaped by the rupture introduced through the training offered at EEFMUSP. Her biography left a mark on the history of women in health, resonating with the roles played by women throughout the long historical process that professionalized care, as indicated in the history of women organized by Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot⁽¹⁴⁾, even if presented in a chronological and colonial framework.

OBJECTIVE

To carry out a documentary analysis of Wanda Horta's professional trajectory in light of Claude Dubar's theoretical framework⁽¹²⁾, focusing fundamentally on her professionalism, aligning the history of nursing with a feminist epistemological perspective, and contributing to studies on women who worked in Brazilian nursing in the post-1930 period.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive study is based on a historical and qualitative approach centered on the Special Issue of the *Revista da Escola de Enfermagem da USP* (USP's Nursing School Magazine), dedicated to the scientific event entitled 'First Wanda de Aguiar Horta Week,' held in 1987, and treated here as a documentary source. Essential to historical analysis, this technique involves the use of written, oral, audio, or three-dimensional documents as primary sources, which are analyzed to understand historical, social, cultural, and institutional contexts, as they serve as evidence of the past, allowing access to the information preserved within them. By emphasizing a critical and reflective approach, the method considers procedures such as identifying authorship, production context, and the purpose of the record, becoming indispensable to historical investigation and to the preservation of memory - in this case, a memory institutionally shaped by women^(5,11,15).

The organization of the corpus allows for the formulation of hypotheses—that is, explanations and arguments that may be validated or discarded. In the present study, the documentary material refers to a scientific event focused on the historical memory of Wanda Horta and her professional legacy, explored through Content Analysis guided by the category of professionalism⁽¹⁶⁾, applied to the defined units of analysis. These consist of four articles: "Influência da Doutora Wanda de Aguiar Horta na EEUSP", written by Nara Senna de Paula⁽¹⁷⁾; "Participação da Doutora Wanda de Aguiar Horta na Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem – ABEn (1949–1977)", authored by Maria Jacyr de Campos Nogueira⁽¹⁸⁾; "Apresentação de documentos referentes ao pensar, agir e fazer de Wanda Aguiar Horta", by

Kazuko Uchikawa Graziano in co-authorship with Junia Vilela Gonçalves⁽¹⁹⁾; and the article “*Teoria das Necessidades Humanas Básicas – um marco indelével na enfermagem brasileira*”, by Tamara Iwanov Cianciarullo⁽²⁰⁾.

As an initial procedure, Content Analysis⁽¹⁶⁾ required floating readings of the research sources, or a first contact with the documents, allowing for the construction of a complete collection of information defined by the category of analysis - here, as highlighted, centered on the concept of professionalism. The methodology made it possible to identify how the ‘culture of professional work’ proposed by Claude Dubar⁽¹²⁾ permeated Wanda Horta’s trajectory, by identifying and interpreting the arguments and expressions used by the authors of the articles - treated here as historical testimonies by women, feminist in nature, which nonetheless allow the unveiling of a past institutionally shaped by women.

The excerpts result from the categorization of the analysis and the exploration of the content systematized from the documentary set, the treatment of the corpus, and the interpretation of the findings⁽¹⁶⁾. Thus, the qualitative expressions describing Wanda Horta’s profile marked her ‘place of speech’⁽²¹⁾, the impacts of her professional practice on the management of education and health work, as well as the institutional historical legacy of the school that decisively reshaped the professional orientation of Brazilian nursing in the post-1930 period, beginning in São Paulo⁽¹¹⁾.

Regarding the definition of ethical implications, this is a documentary study of a historical nature, based exclusively on publicly accessible sources, without the involvement of human participants or the use of primary data. Therefore, in accordance with Resolution No. 510/2016 of the *Conselho Nacional de Saúde* (National Health Council), the study is exempt from review by a Research Ethics Committee. Nevertheless, the ethical principles of scientific research were rigorously observed, including respect for authorship, the integrity of sources, interpretive fidelity, and the historical contextualization of the documents analyzed.

RESULTS

Professionalism as a culture of professional practice

The Special Issue of the *Revista da Escola de Enfermagem da USP* (REEUSP) stems from an edition that brings together articles derived from presentations delivered during the “First Wanda de Aguiar Horta Week,” organized by the *EEUSP* (USP’s Nursing School). The publication comprises 107 pages with 12 articles that explore the intellectual legacy of Wanda Horta, whose themes - although diverse - quantitatively and qualitatively recover the impacts of her intellectual production on nursing education and professional guidance (Table 1)⁽¹⁷⁻²⁰⁾.

Edited during Yoriko Kamyama’s tenure as Editor-in-Chief, with support from the Publications Committee, the special issue brought together faculty and students from EEUSP, as well as professionals affiliated with the São Paulo State Department of Health (SSESP), including Marli Alves Rolim, Silvio Augusto Margarido, Adélia Maya Chida, Ilza Marlene Kuae Fukuda, Leila Conceição Rosa dos Santos, and Maria Madalena Januário Leite. It was likewise supported by the Editorial Board, composed of EEUSP faculty members and nurses linked to renowned hospital institutions in the city of São Paulo—among them the *Hospital das Clínicas* and the *Sírio-Libanês Hospital* - as well as to prominent academic institutions such as the *Universidade de Campinas* (UNICAMP, University of Campinas) and the Department of Nursing at the *Escola Paulista de Medicina* (Paulista School of Medicine), that is to say, predominantly women.

The commemorative edition marked a singular moment among the numerous tributes that Wanda Horta received posthumously. Among the authors who published articles are nurses who stood out in the landscape of Brazilian and São Paulo nursing. The names that historically emerge as university professors, colleagues, mentees, and former students of Wanda Horta achieved significant progress in their academic careers, which reaffirms the high level of female intelligence in her circle and, above all, the legacy derived from her professionalism. Her work influenced the management of education and healthcare labor, reshaping the “culture of professional work”^(12:355), as well as the orientation and training of Brazilian nursing from the University of São Paulo School of Nursing. She did not center her actions on the monetization of her efforts, but rather on the consolidation of nursing as an art, a science, and an ideal.

The selected articles reiterate Wanda Horta’s professionalism by highlighting how she transmitted her knowledge to her successors, who, in turn, gained prominence in the academic and scientific spheres of Brazilian nursing. Her intellectual legacy revealed the articulations of the feminine within the health sciences and the actions of women who influenced the organization of the social world as intellectual professional nurses

Table 1 – Wanda Horta’s Professionalism in Four Articles Published in the REEUSP (1987)

Authorship / Academic Title	Article’s Title	Results
Nara Senna de Paula ⁽¹⁷⁾ Assistant Professor, PhD of the EEUSP.	<i>“Influência da Doutora Wanda de Aguiar Horta na EEUSP”</i>	Because she was an idealist, a pioneer, and a scientist, Dr. Wanda needed to believe in her own proposals, since her theoretical knowledge - often applied in practice and in teaching - required time to be tested, absorbed, and experienced by the nursing community^(17:3). A teacher by innate quality and continuously refined day after day - whether through self-directed or formal study, specialized readings or general culture, classes or courses, and through contact with students at all levels, from laypersons and in-service trainees to graduate students, in classrooms, discussion groups, or clinical placements - her work as an exceptional educator was always present. For these reasons, if for no others, we regret that today our undergraduate students do not have the privilege we once had of having her as a professor^(17:3). During the dark years of the dictatorships, when ideological persecution in the universities created an extremely difficult situation and few were willing to show sympathy for anyone who might, even remotely, be identified as having “leftist” ideas, Dr. Wanda went as far as visiting prisons to personally support students from this School who had been detained—risking her own life and that of her family^(17:4). She was the professor who welcomed first-year students and became responsible for them throughout the entire year. She did so not merely out of duty, but with the vocation that made her our role model. She was the nurse we wanted to become; she was the professor from whom we had something to learn; she was the woman who became our friend [...]. Each student felt like an important person because Dr. Wanda treated them as such. She always had time to listen; she never forgot their birthdays, their problems, or their talents^(17:4).
Maria Jacyra de Campos Nogueira ⁽¹⁸⁾ Full Professor at EEUSP. Collaborating Professor at Universidade Federal da Paraíba – UFPB.	<i>“Participação da Doutora Wanda de Aguiar Horta na Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem – ABEn (1949-1977)”</i>	In 1970, at the Congress held in São Paulo, she made an important contribution to Brazilian nursing by participating in the panel on ‘Nursing Diagnosis’ and presenting a free paper on her ‘Nursing Theory’ ^(18:11) .

To be continued

Table 1 (concluded)

Authorship / Academic Title	Article's Title	Results
Kazuko Uchikawa Graziano PhD, Professor at EEUSP, with postdoctoral training in Leicester, England. Junia Vilela Gonçalves ⁽¹⁹⁾ Nurse at the São Paulo State Department of Health.	<i>"Apresentação de documentos referentes ao pensar, agir e fazer de Wanda Aguiar Horta",</i>	The large body of literature on the theoretical and philosophical foundations of nursing that she read, translated, published, and organized into reference materials—along with her own scientific output—undoubtedly helped to anticipate the dissemination, interest, and debate on the subject within Brazilian Schools of Nursing ^(19:14) . She studied the modern theories as soon as they were published, becoming a true pioneer in the study of nursing theories in Brazil ^(19:17) .
Tamara Iwanov Cianciarullo ⁽²⁰⁾ Associate Professor. Principal at EEUSP. Full Professor at <i>Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina – UFSC</i> .	<i>"Teoria das Necessidades Humanas Básicas – um marco indelével na enfermagem brasileira"</i>	Horta never concealed the complexity of the study she undertook, always hoping that others would join her in this challenge by examining the manifestations of alterations in basic human needs, with the aim of building the science of nursing ^(20:103) .

Source: Authors (2025).

DISCUSSION

Humanization as a feminine intellectual legacy

The dialogue between history and nursing made it possible to revisit the trajectory of one of the most important and distinguished nurses in Brazil. Her biography identifies her as a pioneer in the humanization of nursing care, whose studies established professional practice protocols based on what was considered essential to the nurse's work. In this sense, she became one of the most widely read authors in Brazilian nursing, both in Brazil and abroad, and is also recognized for the phrase that became a well-known motto: "nurses are people who care for people"^(6,10,22).

Regarding Wanda Horta's biography (Figure 1), historical studies - conducted not only by nurses - indicate that, while still an adolescent, she felt drawn to the humanities and, by age 16, in the early 1940s, had developed an interest in the health sciences, influenced by discourses circulating during the Second World War (1939–1945), particularly concerning the place of women in that context. Born in Belém, Pará, in 1926, and descended from a Portuguese lineage considered noble, Wanda Horta moved to Ponta Grossa, Paraná, in the 1930's. She began her professional life in Curitiba, working at the Childcare Center of the Brazilian Assistance League^(6,10). At that time, through recommendation, she received a scholarship from the Special Public Health Service and enrolled in the São Paulo School of Nursing, then affiliated with the University of São Paulo's School of Medicine. In this process, memoirists described her as "a studious young woman, somewhat introspective, sensitive, distinguished in music (an accomplished pianist) and as a poet"^(23:165).

Wanda Horta's academic life revealed her prominence among the students of what was then the newest and most important undergraduate nursing program. She continued her teaching career at the very school where she had been trained, supported by Maria Rosa Sousa Pinheiro (1908–2002), the associate director, though not before gaining professional experience in hospitals in São Paulo. In 1974, she earned the title of Associate Professor and, in 1975, founded the journal *"Enfermagem em Novas Dimensões"* (REND), through which she published her poems and articulated her influential reflections on the humanization of nursing care^(6,7,10,23). As the consulted references reiterate, her interest in knowledge production and in disseminating the scientific work of nursing faculty and students motivated the creation of the new journal. Through it, she promoted what she considered new dimensions of the profession, making the publication an important vehicle for intellectualization, internationalization, and the circulation of ideas within Brazilian nursing — and also a space of resistance.



Figure 1 – Wanda de Aguiar Horta (1926–1981)
Source: Ibero-American Historical and Cultural Center of Nursing.

Essential to the qualification and training of nurses, Wanda Horta's historical trajectory contributed to the creation of the first two master's programs in nursing in Brazil and the first doctoral program in Latin America. These initiatives took shape both at the *Escola de Enfermagem Ana Nery* (EEAN, Ana Nery School of Nursing), now part of the *Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro* (UFRJ, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro), in Rio de Janeiro, and at the University of São Paulo School of Nursing, later extending, within the same institution, to the Ribeirão Preto School of Nursing, organized by her former professor, Glete de Alcântara.

Wanda Horta achieved recognition not only locally but across the Ibero-American world^(7,24). Internationally acknowledged, she traveled as an invited guest to every continent, accumulating extensive knowledge about professional training on a local-global scale and disseminating her humanizing, holistic, and process-oriented perspective on nursing care. Known for developing what she termed the "nursing process," her work frames nursing as a "science independent of medicine"^(6,23). Her interdisciplinary academic stance and the holistic view of the health-illness process shaped by her education guided her academic path, reaffirming her intellectual commitment to dialogue between fields of knowledge traditionally treated as separate:

A self-taught researcher, she earned the title of Associate Professor in the Department of Fundamentals of Nursing at the Anna Nery School of Nursing, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, in October 1968, with the thesis "Systematized observation in the identification of nursing problems in their physical aspects." Her work unfolded in the context of the establishment of the first master's programs in nursing in Brazil, a development that followed the 1968 University Reform. At EEAN, she taught in the first cohorts of the master's program, created in 1972; later, she contributed to planning the master's program at EEUUSP, which welcomed its first students in 1973. At this School, she would go on to hold the position of Associate Professor (1974) and, subsequently, Full Professor (1977)^(24:535).

Wanda Horta contributed decisively to elevating Brazilian nursing on the local-global stage by participating in scientific events in different countries⁽⁶⁾. Her life story allows us to regard her as a theorist who transcended the Brazilian context, proposing an approach that considered the human being in their totality and encouraging comprehensive care, grounded in what she termed the "nursing process," the title of her most important book. She dedicated her life to scientific publications and to supervising academic work, shaping a generation of nurses and becoming, in this sense, a mandatory reference in undergraduate nursing programs offered at various higher education institutions in Brazil and in Portuguese-speaking countries, especially Portugal — clear signs of the reach and impact of her professional legacy.

The historiography addressing the professional development of Brazilian nursing after the 1930s states that, on October 31, 1942, the EEFMUSP was founded — better known as the São Paulo School of Nursing — whose organization and leadership were entrusted to Edith de Magalhães Fraenkel (1889–1969), through State Decree No. 13.040. Paraphrasing the consulted authors, one of the most important schools in shaping Brazilian nursing thought was thus born⁽²⁵⁾, supported, it must be emphasized, by Ella Hasenjaeger (1885–1977), a Rockefeller Foundation consultant between 1942 and 1954, during the institutionalization of EEFMUSP, as envisioned by the Nursing Program that originated it⁽¹¹⁾.

Separated from the School of Medicine in 1962, by decision of the University Council and through efforts sustained largely by women - especially Maria Rosa Sousa Pinheiro, associate director and one of its most important historical faculty members, and Glete de Alcântara - the School of Nursing became an autonomous unit of the University of São Paulo. It was formally recognized as a higher education institution by State Decree No. 42.809/63, thus becoming the University of São Paulo School of Nursing⁽⁸⁾.

The model of professional training that preceded the founding of EEFMUSP, known as “standard nursing,” derived from the Parsons Mission, which, in partnership with the National Department of Public Health, institutionalized the Anna Nery School of Nursing in Rio de Janeiro in 1923. This model established characteristics that shaped the professional profile through the rigorous selection of single, young women of “good conduct,” educated, from “good families,” and predominantly white. Such criteria excluded Black women and men from entering professional nursing training before 1930, even when they existed and sought access⁽²⁶⁾.

Although it initially sought to attract privileged young women or those from urban middle-class backgrounds, EEFMUSP - the epicenter of professional nursing education in the post-1930 period - broke with the earlier model of managing nursing education and labor by admitting women from diverse regions of the country and from different social classes, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds, as well as men, into nursing schools. This paradigm shift occurred through the establishment of the Rockefeller Foundation’s Nursing Program, which created EEFMUSP through a system of scholarships implemented during the “Good Neighbor Policy” by the Special Public Health Service in the Vargas Era^(5,11,27).

Edith de Magalhães Fraenkel, appointed by the São Paulo government as director of EEFMUSP and the first Brazilian nurse trained at the Philadelphia School of Nursing in the United States, became an instructor at EEFMUSP immediately upon her return to Brazil in the 1930s⁽²⁵⁾. She played a prominent role in redefining the professional identity of Brazilian nursing in the post-1930 period^(10,13,28). As director of the new school in the 1940s, supported by the American consultant Ella Hasenjaeger and by Maria Rosa Sousa Pinheiro, the associate director, her actions broke with the old professional model, dismantling - in both feminist and feminine terms - the image traditionally attributed to nurses in Brazil.

The academic status that EEFMUSP conferred upon the profession reshaped nursing education and professional identity, previously represented by self-sacrificing, charitable women, war nurses, or “nuns without habits,” whose training had not kept pace with the professionalization and modernization of medical practice following the Flexner Report⁽²⁹⁾. The new school in São Paulo elevated nursing to the level of an academically formalized profession, graduating a generation of women and men nurses in a modern, academic, intellectual environment oriented toward scientific research on the health-illness process^(9,11,28,30).

The EEFMUSP resumed the political and ideological organization of nursing from the post-1930s period, thereby dismantling the former professional training model known as the “Anna Nery standard,” a reference to one of the most important nursing schools in Brazil. Indeed, the images projected onto its main figure continued to portray predominantly white women, even though there were Black and Brown students who, after completing their professional training at EEFMUSP, went on to occupy prominent positions on the national stage⁽¹¹⁾. The new school’s goals regarding training and professional guidance reshaped the management of education and health work, as nursing reached positions of leadership, supervision, and service administration within hospital settings, redefining the management of education and labor in health^(9,13,31).

Wanda Horta pioneered a new paradigm for the professional practice of nursing by publishing, in 1979, the book *Nursing Process*. Her major work highlights the importance of planning care and, consequently, of the nurse as an autonomous professional, characterizing nursing as a science through the application of care methods grounded in academically accepted theories. For the intellectual, the nurse is the being oriented toward assisting and attending to the human being in their basic needs⁽²²⁾.

With the advancement of science, the need to legitimize nursing models and theories that reinforced the profession as autonomous and essential to the modern world became imperative. This led the care work

performed by nurses to become linked to a scientific dimension and grounded in theories, since previously it had been based on procedural or technical quality in acts demanded by physicians and carried out in charitable, religious, or wartime contexts. The biomedical model restricted nursing to actions directed at pathology, hindering holistic care based on methods neglected by medicine^(13,29). At this point, it is worth reiterating that nursing theories provided scientific foundations for new care practices, particularly regarding the values and essences of each individual within the health-disease process⁽³²⁾, strengthening the representation of Brazilian nursing in the international academic sphere.

Wanda Horta's trajectory legitimized the nurse as an independent, integral, active being, holder of specific knowledge, and a leader within the health team^(7,4). This understanding of the nurse being no longer as a subordinate executing actions determined by physicians, but as an autonomous professional—led Wanda Horta to develop her theory, treating the human being as indivisible, singular, and unique, anticipating principles that today underpin the *Sistema Único de Saúde* (SUS, Brazilian Unified Health System)^(10,31)

The Theory of Human Motivation, developed by the American psychologist Abraham Maslow (1908–1970), enabled the author to establish a connection with the theoretical propositions of Dorothea Elizabeth Orem (1914–2007), an American nurse and professor at the Providence Hospital School of Nursing in Washington, who, in the 1950s, developed the care model grounded in self-care^(8,30). Drawing on these intellectual inspirations, Wanda Horta proposed a care model that respected autonomy in the act of caring, publishing dozens of articles on basic human needs in which she detailed ways of planning nursing care in different settings - academic or clinical - since her work encompassed both education and practice.

Wanda Horta argued that care should be directed toward the patient and not the disease; that is, nursing care must be centered on basic human needs. The person under care must be understood in a holistic dimension, since illness affects them physically, mentally, socially, environmentally, and spiritually^(7,31). Humanization of care, in this sense, involves attending to the sick person in their entirety, in their multiple historical-social dimensions, throughout all stages of the life cycle, even though it is not always possible to apply such comprehensive care. For the nurse, identifying individual needs makes it possible to provide quality care and to promote self-care and health^(9,10,31).

According to the theorist, basic human needs are the objects of nursing, as they correspond to the most essential requirements for human survival. Nursing interventions are identified when there is an imbalance in these basic needs, which, in this sense, affect families, communities, and ethnic and cultural origins - issues still neglected today - reaffirming the importance of her studies as essential to professionals, as well as the interdisciplinary dimension her theory introduces^(12,22). Wanda Horta argued that there is no nurse-being, the one who cares, without the presence of the patient-being, the one who seeks help. In her words:

“Being-Nursing” means going beyond obligation, beyond “having something to do.” It is being committed, engaged in the profession; it is sharing with each human being under one's care the experience lived in each moment. It is using oneself therapeutically, offering human warmth, becoming involved (without neurotic attachment) with each person, and living every moment as the most important one in one's professional life. This transcendence takes on an even greater meaning within the life-death dyad. Helping a new being come into the world - seeing in them all the potential that will unfold, the mystery of life - is transcendental. Death, the inevitable end for all of us, is the unique occasion for the transcendence of Being-Nursing, at the exact moment when one helps another being to grow and self-transcend in the passage to another life, about which we know little or nothing, but which, with the help of the Nurse-Being, the human being can face without fear, in peace, with a sense of safety. Achieving this outcome elevates the Nurse-Being to the heights of the Transcendence of Being-Nursing. It is a unique experience, never repeated in the same way^(22,4).

The height of Wanda Horta's prominence as an intellectual occurred within a historical and political context marked by the civil-military dictatorship in Brazil (1964–1985). At the time, the spaces occupied by women in Brazilian society restricted femininely lived actions, further limiting women's professional participation in the broader social world. In nursing, the attribute assigned to the profession as inherently feminine reduced the direct impact of political repression on hospital routines, although these environments were still permeated by forms of oppression - especially toward women who deviated from the “feminine nature.”

The inclusion of women in schools and universities occurred slowly throughout Brazil's history. Only from 1927 onward were schools for girls created; thus, in the 1920s, the illiteracy rate among women was 77.4%, compared to 68.7% among men. Wanda Horta may be considered a privileged woman, given that most

women were confined to the domestic sphere. Indeed, her trajectory moved against the grain of the majority of women of her time. Without abandoning her studies or professional career, her life and work set her apart from the idealized feminine universe promoted during the period in which she lived^(6,31).

Wanda Horta's professionalism marked a militant engagement within the *Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem* (ABEn, Brazilian Nursing Association), in which she served as an elected and re-elected member of the board of the São Paulo section, coordinating and teaching courses and lectures promoted by that section and others - particularly during editions of the Brazilian Nursing Congress, where she participated as an active member, presenting keynote themes or serving on special committees representing ABEn on various occasions. In her activities as a member of the São Paulo section's board, she served on the fiscal council in 1967 and held the demanding position of treasurer from 1969 to 1980, through successive elections.

Wanda de Aguiar Horta took part in several editions of the Brazilian Nursing Congress, presenting lectures on "Nursing Diagnosis" and "Nursing Theory," as well as the works "Teaching Care Planning in Fundamentals of Nursing," delivered at the Brazilian Nursing Congress in Brasília in 1967 and in Recife in 1968. In this regard, it is also noteworthy that she presented "Renewal of Teaching Methods in Fundamentals of Nursing" in Porto Alegre in 1969, as well as "Teaching the Basic Instruments of Nursing" and "Methodology of the Nursing Process" in Manaus in 1971 - initiatives that placed at the center the interests of the Brazilian intellectual, reflecting her professionalism and her circulation across different regions of Brazil⁽¹⁰⁾.

Wanda Horta was honored by ABEn at the 30th Brazilian Nursing Congress in 1978, and again in 1980, at the 32nd Brazilian Nursing Congress, when she was awarded the Diploma of Honor of Merit for her services in promoting the humanization of nursing. In 1995, ABEn established the Wanda de Aguiar Horta Award; similarly, in January 2022, the Regional Nursing Council (COREN) of Pará created the Wanda de Aguiar Horta Award in tribute to its distinguished citizen, with the aim of valuing outstanding nursing professionals in the areas of care, management, teaching, and representation. Even in contexts continually reshaped by tributes or research on her work, as an idealist she faced many expectations, "contributing to the theoretical-methodological constructions concerning the nature, forms, and meanings of the relationships between nursing, and the social and cultural dimensions of Brazilian health"^(10:12).

Wanda Horta worked as an educator in training institutions in São Paulo, such as the Nursing Assistant Course at *Hospital Samaritano*, as well as in other professional training environments. She achieved the title of Livre-Docente in the Chair of Fundamentals of Nursing at EEAN-UFRJ on October 31, 1968. Her academic trajectory distinguished her as an Assistant Professor in the Chair of Fundamentals of Nursing from 1959 to 1968, during the transition from EEFMUSP to EEUSP⁽⁸⁾. From 1974 to 1977, she served as a full professor of the courses Introduction to Nursing and Fundamentals of Nursing. In 1981, after her passing, she was proclaimed *Emeritus Professor* by the Distinguished Congregation of the School of Nursing at the University of São Paulo, an institution composed exclusively of women^(6,28).

As highlighted, Wanda Horta played a fundamental role in the qualification of nurses, contributing to the creation of the first doctoral program in Nursing in Latin America, at the Ribeirão Preto School of Nursing at USP. She also contributed to the stricto sensu graduate program in nursing at the *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina* (UFSC, Federal University of Santa Catarina)⁽⁷⁾. Her professionalism significantly contributed to consolidating nursing as an autonomous profession in the provision of health care. Her theory, published as a book, became a classic bibliographic reference in Portuguese-speaking countries, demonstrating the reach of her contributions within the field⁽²⁸⁾.

Nursing, beyond technical and procedural knowledge, according to Wanda Horta, addresses the individual rather than the presented pathologies, treating the patient-being while considering their historical, social, and cultural specificities—dimensions that, at the time and still today, are often neglected due to distinctions between public and private, superior and inferior, health and disease, as well as values and feelings that have shaped medical practice. These distinctions have generated what is now termed health inequity, as they are embedded in prejudice, exclusion, and racism^(28,30). From a feminine standpoint, her trajectory reshaped the professional culture of nursing and the place of women within the field of medical sciences in Brazil. Her legacy challenges the perspective of the "universal male epistemological subject" and serves as a foundation for the historiographical movement that revisits the effects of feminine subjectivities and the diversity of femininities that inform feminist studies⁽³³⁾.

Given this context, it is important to note that the study presents limitations inherent to documentary and historical research, as it is based on a delimited set of sources - specifically, four articles published in a

Special Issue of the “*Revista da Escola de Enfermagem*” of the University of São Paulo in 1987 - which restricts the analyzed corpus. Nevertheless, the study offers relevant contributions to the field of nursing history by deepening the analysis of Wanda de Aguiar Horta’s professionalism through a critical historiographical approach articulated with a feminist epistemological perspective.

In this sense, the research expands the understanding of the roles occupied by women in the consolidation of Brazilian nursing in the post-1930 period, contributing to the debate on the training and professional orientation of nurses and other professions - that is, of women in health^(5,34). The study reaffirms the potential of documentary research as a methodological strategy for valuing women’s trajectories in nursing, in this case through records produced mostly by contemporary authors closely connected to Wanda de Aguiar Horta’s academic and professional path, reflecting both the context in which the sources were produced and what emanates from them, as they are femininely articulated and academically grounded.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The professionalism of Wanda Horta established nursing as an integral part of the healthcare team, positioning it as a profession that provides humanized care without romanticizing the interpersonal relationship between nurse-being and patient-being. She understood that an imbalance in one dimension affects the others, compromising the quality of care and disrupting professional identity. For Horta, when a professional demonstrates empathy, knows how to listen, respects, and perceives the other in their essence, they deliver care that is both professional and humanized — not technician or caricatured — thus blending the professional culture historically shaped and sustained by women who dared to fight.

Wanda Horta’s trajectory allows us to revisit the place of women in the history of health through nursing, including as a form of female resistance to the social imperatives that devalued their gender in the world of work, often labeling them as intellectually inferior. In this sense, Horta’s professional path helps dismantle the masculine figurations imposed on the feminine by establishing her own agenda within nursing — a field whose history is deeply intertwined with the history of women.

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Submission: 2025 Nov 13

Reformulation: 2026 Feb 06

Approval: 2026 Feb 09

Editor-in-Chief: Deybson Borba de Almeida

Associate editor: Maria Itayra Padilha

Ad hoc reviewers:

Fernanda Batista Oliveira Santos

Silvio Eder Dias da Silva

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Conception of the study: PFSC

Data collection: CSB

Data analysis: PFSC, CSB

Manuscript writing: PFSC, PMM

Critical revision for important intellectual content: PFSC, PMM, CP

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We thank the Collective Health Program of the Faculty of Medical Sciences of Santa Casa de São Paulo (FCMSCSP), especially the researchers of the Education and Health Work Management Research Group (GETS/CNPq), for their support during the resumption of the work that led to this article.