

Cultural Competence: promoting quality care and supportive nursing work environments in multicultural units

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Abstract

Introduction

The increasing cultural diversity in Portugal challenges healthcare organizations to create positive work environments that both support multicultural teams and address the needs of patients from diverse cultural backgrounds. Evidence suggests that cultural competence is a key factor for promoting supportive nursing work environments and for guiding the planning and delivery of culturally congruent care.

Objective

To analyse the impact of cultural competence on the nursing work environment and its relationship with the delivery of culturally congruent care in a multicultural healthcare organization in Portugal.

Methods

A quantitative, cross-sectional, and descriptive-correlational study was conducted with 155 nurses from a Local Health Unit in the Lisbon region, between February and June 2024. Data were collected using the Cultural Competence Questionnaire for Health Professionals, the NWI-R-PT Nursing Work Index – Revised (Portuguese version), and a single item assessing nurses' perceptions of the adequacy of the culturally congruent care they provide. Data analysis was performed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS Statistics version 27.

Results

The “Organizational Support” dimension of cultural competence was a significant predictor of a more favourable nursing work environment ($\beta = 0.202$; $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, higher scores in the “Cultural Knowledge” dimension was associated with more positive perceptions of the adequacy of culturally congruent care provided to patients from diverse cultural backgrounds ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion

Cultural competence demonstrated a significant impact on the nursing work environment, with the “Organizational Support” dimension emerging as a predictor of more favourable work contexts. A positive relationship was also found between “Cultural Knowledge” and the perceived adequacy of culturally congruent care. These findings indicate that the development of cultural competence, particularly at the organizational and educational levels, constitutes a strategic factor in promoting more positive practice environments and care that is better aligned with patients' cultural needs.

Keywords

Cultural Competence; Nursing; Nursing Administration Research; Work Environment.

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