The involvement in the work of nurses from different generations in a hospital

La implicación en el trabajo de enfermeras de diferentes generaciones en un hospital

O envolvimento no trabalho dos enfermeiros de diferentes gerações de um hospital

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Abstract

The possible differences between several generations of nurses working in teams can constitute a challenge for nurse managers, which justifies their assessment and their impact on work involvement. With this work we seek to analyze the generational differences of nurses in terms of their professional involvement. For this, a quantitative, observational and descriptive-cross-sectional study was developed. The Work Involvement Scale (UWES) was used, consisting of three dimensions (Vigor, Dedication and Absorption), applied to a sample of 385 nurses from a hospital in the Lisbon and Tagus Valley region. The results show that there are generational differences with regard to their involvement at work. The Baby Boomer Generation presents the highest results in the three dimensions of the scale, followed by Generation X and Generation Y. The Dedication dimension presents the highest averages in all generations. The generational differences were confirmed by demanding that nurse managers take this phenomenon into account and implement different approaches to nurses of each generation, strengthening the team as a whole, promoting the involvement of nurses in the organization and paving the way for the new generations.

Descriptors: Intergenerational Relations; Work Engagement; Nurse Administrators; Work.

Resumén

Las posibles diferencias entre varias generaciones de enfermeros que trabajan en equipos pueden constituir un desafío para los enfermeros gestores, lo que justifica su evaluación y su impacto en la participación en el trabajo. Con este trabajo buscamos analizar las diferencias generacionales de las enfermeras en cuanto a su implicación profesional. Para ello se desarrolló un estudio cuantitativo, observacional y descriptivo de corte transversal. Se utilizó la Escala de Implicación en el Trabajo (UWES), compuesta por tres dimensiones (Vigor, Dedicación y Absorción), aplicada a una muestra de 385 enfermeros de un hospital de la región de Lisboa y Valle del Tajo. Los resultados muestran que existen diferencias generacionales en cuanto a su implicación en el trabajo. La Generación Baby Boomer presenta los resultados más altos en las tres dimensiones de la escala, seguida por la Generación X y la Generación Y. La dimensión Dedicación presenta los promedios más altos en todas las generaciones. Las diferencias generacionales fueron confirmadas al exigir que los enfermeros gestores tomen en cuenta este fenómeno e implementen diferentes abordajes a los enfermeros de cada generación, fortaleciendo el equipo en su conjunto, promoviendo la participación de los enfermeros en la organización y allanando el camino para las nuevas generaciones.

Descriptores: Relaciones Intergeneracionales; Compromiso Laboral; Enfermeras Administradoras; Trabajo.

Resumo

As eventuais diferenças existentes entre várias gerações de enfermeiros a trabalharem em equipa podem constituir-se como um desafio para os enfermeiros gestores, razão que justifica a avaliação das mesmas e o seu impacto no envolvimento no trabalho. Com este trabalho procuramos analisar as diferenças geracionais dos enfermeiros no que respeita ao seu envolvimento profissional. Para tal foi desenvolvido um estudo quantitativo, observacional e descritivo-transversal. Utilizou-se a Escala de Envolvimento no Trabalho (UWES), constituída por três dimensões (Vigor, Dedicação e Absorção), aplicada a uma amostra de 385 enfermeiros de um hospital da região de Lisboa e Vale do Tejo. Os resultados evidenciam que existem diferenças geracionais no que diz respeito ao seu envolvimento no trabalho. A Geração Baby Boomer apresenta resultados mais elevados nas três dimensões da escala, seguida da Geração X e da Geração Y. A dimensão Dedicação apresenta as médias mais elevadas em todas as gerações. As diferenças geracionais foram confirmadas exigindo que os enfermeiros gestores tenham em consideração este fenómeno e implementem abordagens diferentes aos enfermeiros de cada geração, fortalecendo a equipa na sua globalidade, promovendo o envolvimento dos enfermeiros na organização e preparando o caminho para as novas gerações.

Descritores: Relação entre Gerações; Engajamento no Trabalho; Enfermeiras Administradoras; Trabalho.

Introduction

In the current context that health organizations live in, where enormous rigor is required in their financial management, compliance with contractualization, achievement of the expected quality and response to the expectations of their customers, it is necessary to look at their professionals and find ways to guarantee your dedication and dedication to work. This challenge becomes particularly difficult for nurse managers when they are faced with a diverse workforce, with different generational groups working side by side.[1]

The theme of generational differences in nursing in the work context has been developed in recent years in an attempt to justify the difficulties encountered in harmonizing the work of professionals of different ages, in order to promote a work environment favorable to personal and professional growth and to continuous improvement of health care provided to users.

Nurses constitute the largest group of health professionals in the institutions, being the one with the greatest contact with clients. It is nurses who, primarily, represent the organization to people and who deal with their feedback, positive or negative. However, there are personal characteristics that influence nurses' attitudes and behaviors, characteristics that tend to change with the passage of time and with social and technological advances. More experienced nurses are often heard to express the perception of differences between their attitudes towards work and the attitudes of their younger colleagues. And this perception may be at the origin of some prejudices that, in turn, can be translated into an unfavorable nursing practice environment, with communication failures and ineffective teamwork and with poor results for patients.[2, 3]

Understanding the perceptions of intergenerational differences and their origins is an important element for managing the diversity of teams and offers excellent learning potential, which is why it is extremely important to understand this phenomenon and, in particular, to analyze the level of involvement that professionals demonstrate in the various generations existing in health organizations.[4]

Generational Differences

The term generation was used by Mannheim to describe what he referred to as "a group that shares a common location in the social and historical process that exposes them to a specific range of potential experiences, predisposing them to a particular model of thought and practice characteristic , and a characteristic type of attitudes with historical relevance".[5] In this sense, each generation exhibits some typical characteristics, values, judgments, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors in order to reflect aspects of its time.[6]

With regard to nursing, the literature shows that there are significant differences between generations of nurses in many work-related factors. These differences between generations of nurses are important factors that need to be taken into account and managed optimally to create socially and psychologically healthy workplaces.[1, 7, 8]

Stanley uses the demarcation of generations by framing three generations in the current job market: the Baby Boomer generation - born between 1946 and 1964, the X generation - born between 1965 and 1980 and the Y generation or Millenials - born between 1981 and 2000. The next generation will be generation Z, made up of individuals born after 2000. This generation is not yet represented in nursing work contexts, but the characteristics of this more recent generation must be analyzed in order to prepare work contexts and make them attractive for these new professionals.[9]

The Baby Boomer generation was born between 1946 and 1964. Nurses of this generation are known for their intense focus on hard work and achievement. Work is important, not just as a source of income, but also as an expression of self-esteem and something to be appreciated by others. Professional ethics tend to be strong and they value flexibility.[10]

Generation X is made up of people who were born between 1965 and 1980. They are characterized by growing up in families in which both parents worked outside the home for the first time, leading their children to develop a sense of individualism and independence. Individuals of this generation focus on personal development and actively oppose authority, the status quo, and the idea that job security is taken for granted. They value global thinking, work/life balance, technological and communication literacy, and global diversity.[3]

Members of Generation Y (1981–2000) were born into a networked world, allowing them to connect with friends and communities at all times. They are good at multitasking and are willing to collaborate in decision making as much as possible. They like teamwork-oriented workplaces, expect to be treated with respect, and want to feel positive about themselves.[3]

The space that separates different generations in the workplace can be minimized through the leadership of nurse managers and the team's effort to understand and accept the differences that characterize each group and each individual.

Involvement at work

Involvement in work is considered a positive and satisfying state of mind in which a person, in the performance of a work activity, is fully immersed in that activity, feeling full of energy and enthusiasm.[11] This author characterizes it in three dimensions. The first, called vigor, refers to energy levels and mental resilience at work and the ability to invest effort and persistence in the face of difficulties. The second, dedication, concerns the worker's involvement, the notion of meaning, enthusiasm and inspiration for his work. Finally, absorption is related to concentration and involvement in activities, in such a way that the worker has the perception that time passes quickly.

Scientific evidence positively associates involvement in work with good results for teams and organizations. Gupta, Agarwal, & Khatri concluded that building a supportive work environment is an effective way to increase nurses' psychological bonding and improve

positive work-related outcomes, which in turn can improve organizational performance.[12]

The results of the work of Wan, Zhou, Li, Shang, & Yu support a positive relationship between work characteristics, the nursing practice environment and work engagement. These characteristics fall into three levels: organizational (leadership style, empowerment, fairness), professional (workload, autonomy) and personal (age, academic qualifications, work experience). All these factors that act on the involvement of nurses at work can be worked on in order to improve professional and personal results.[13]

Nursing managers thus face the challenge of making decisions to build and maintain engagement in the work of multiple generations by practicing side by side.[14] For Galuska, Hahn, Polifroni, & Crow, nurse managers who listen to nurses and users make decisions that defend the Nursing team helping decision-making bodies to understand their importance.[15]

The relevance of the problem of generational differences results from a cyclical change that is felt in health organizations and that cannot be explained without pointing out generational differences as the reason for the conflicts and for the identified communication gaps. Without further exploring this topic, there is a risk of continuing to feed prejudices in relation to professionals, whether older or younger, who may potentiate the problems of the teams and, consequently, the quality of the work carried out. Thus, the need to analyze the generational differences of nurses regarding their involvement in work emerges.

Methodology

It was defined as a guiding question: To what extent can the professional involvement of nurses be a generational issue?

A quantitative, observational and descriptive-cross-sectional study was carried out, for which a questionnaire was applied to nurses at a hospital in the Lisbon region.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts, a first with sociodemographic data and a second part with the Work Involvement Scale (UWES) scale. This is a self-completion questionnaire, developed and tested by Schaufeli & Bakker and adapted for the Portuguese population by Martins[17], consisting of a closed Likert-type response scale, between 0 (Never) and 6 (Always). It integrates the three dimensions of work involvement: vigor, dedication and absorption and consists of 17 items. The reliability test value was a Cronbach's alpha of 0.94 identical to that obtained in the study by Scheufeli & Bakker.[16, 17]

The target population was 430 nurses, of which 385 returned the completed questionnaires, thus defining our sample. Data collection took place in January 2020 and the questionnaires were delivered to the different units, with the collaboration of the respective head nurses and coordinators. The Informed Consent form was also delivered.

The statistical treatment of the data was performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics program, version 24.0 for Windows. Descriptive and comparative statistical measures were used, such as the t-Student (t) statistical test, because, according to Marôco, for large samples this test is quite robust even when the variable distribution is not of the normal type.[18] Regarding the rejection region, the significance level p = 0.05 was considered, with a confidence interval of 95%. Ethical and legal procedures were taken into account, namely, informed consent, confidentiality and data privacy. The questionnaires were delivered with a cover letter, containing the objectives of the study and the identification of the participants was not requested. Authorization was requested from the author to use the scale, which was granted. A positive opinion was obtained from the Ethics Committee and authorization from the Hospital's Board of Directors to carry out the study, as shown in document No. 47/2019.

Results

Study participants were aged between 22 and 65 years, with a mean age of 42 years ($\bar{x}$=41.85), with a mode (M_o) of 38 years and a standard deviation of 11.06 years.

According to the demarcation of generations described above, the sample was distributed according to the values in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample characterization in relation to generation. Lisbon, Portugal, 2019

GENERATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Generation Y	175	45,5
Generation X	160	41,5
Baby Boomer	50	13,0
Total	385	100,0

The sample is mostly female, corresponding to 89.9% of the total number of respondents. Most respondents hold a Bachelor's degree (60.2%), 21.6% of nurses hold a Post-Graduate Specialization in Nursing and 12% hold a Master's degree. Only 6.3% of the sample hold a Bachelor's degree.

Table 2 presents the values of frequencies and percentages related to the dimensions of the UWES scale. It can be seen that the dimension of the scale with the highest average value in the dimensions was the dimension "Dedication" with 4.10, followed by the dimension "Vigor" while the dimension "Absorption" was the one with the

lowest average ($\bar{x}$= 3.30). Overall, the responses to the various dimensions are slightly above average, and it can be said that the involvement of these professionals is regular.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics by dimension of the UWES. Lisbon, Portugal, 2019

UWES DIMENSIONS	N	AVERAGE	STANDARD DEVIATION
FORCE	380	3,55	1,08
DEDICATION	379	4,10	1,20
ABSORPTION	376	3,30	1,15
TOTAL	376	3,65	1,06

Detailing the responses of the participants in relation to each of the dimensions, it appears that, in the "Force" dimension, item 17 stands out "In my work I am always persevering (I do not give up), even when things are not going well" to which had the highest average ($\bar{x}$=4.32), while the lowest average corresponds to item 8 "When I get up in the morning I feel like going to work" ($\bar{x}$=2.94), demonstrating that nurses only sometimes feel I want to go to work in the morning.

Table 3. Means of responses to the UWES Vigor dimension. Lisbon, Portugal, 2019

ITEM	AVERAGE	STANDARD DEVIATION
1. At work I feel full of energy	3,39	1,34
4. In my work I feel strong and energetic	3,56	1,38
8. When I get up in the morning I feel like going to work	2,94	1,59
12. I am able to stay at work for very long periods of time	3,23	1,64
15. I am a person with a lot of mental toughness in my work	3,83	1,48
17. In my work I am always persevering (I don't give up), even when things are not going well	4,32	1,32

The Dedication dimension presents itself as the one with the highest average values. Among these, items 2 "I think my work has a lot of meaning and usefulness" and 10 "I am proud of what I do in this job" stand out, with $\bar{x}$=4.92 and $\bar{x}$=4.52, respectively, that reveal a feeling of self-recognition of the value of nurses and the importance of their role in society.

Table 4. Means of responses to the UWES Dedication dimension. Lisbon, Portugal, 2019

ITEM	AVERAGE	STANDARD DEVIATION
2. I think my work has a lot of meaning and usefulness	4,92	1,21
5. I am excited about my work	3,63	1,53
7. My work inspires me	3,45	1,51
10. I am proud of what I do in this job	4,52	1,37
13. My job is challenging for me	3,97	1,53

Finally, in the Absorption dimension, similar mean values were obtained in all items, with a slightly lower mean in item 16 "It is difficult to disconnect from my work" ($\bar{x}$= 2.83), which corresponds to the frequency "Sometimes", with the remaining items being in the "Regularly" frequency.

Table 5. Means of responses to the UWES Absorption dimension. Lisbon, Portugal, 2019

ITEM	AVERAGE	STANDARD DEVIATION
3. Time flies when I'm working	3,91	1,51
6. When I'm working I forget everything that happens around me	3,06	1,56
9. I feel happy when I am working intensely	3,19	1,63
11. I am immersed in my work	3,69	1,44
14. "I let myself go" when I am working	3,20	1,60
16. It's hard to disconnect from my work	2,83	1,60

With regard to the results related to involvement in work in the generational perspective, these show slight differences, between the various generations evaluated, noting that the Baby Boomer Generation presents higher values in all dimensions.

Table 6. Professional involvement by generation. Lisbon, Portugal, 2019

GENERATION		DIMENSIONS			
		Force	Dedication	Absorption	TOTAL
Generation Y	N	175	172	173	
	Average	3,44	4,05	3,18	3,56
	Standard Deviation	1,01	1,21	1,08	
Generation X	N	158	159	154	
	Average	3,53	4,02	3,31	3,62
	Standard Deviation	1,09	1,19	1,17	
Baby Boomer	N	47	48	49	
	Average	4,01	4,52	3,73	4,09
	Standard Deviation	1,21	1,09	1,24	

More specifically, and according to table 6, in the Vigor dimension, the averages obtained reveal an upward trend compared to the older generations, with average values of 3.44 in Generation Y, 3.53 in Generation X and 4.01 in Generation Baby boomer. The same upward trend is observed for the Absorption dimension, with average values of 3.18 in Generation Y, followed by Generation X with 3.31 and, finally, the Baby Boomer Generation, with the highest value ($\bar{x}$ =3.73). However, in the Dedication dimension, Generation X has the lowest average ($\bar{x}$=4.02), immediately followed by Generation Y with $\bar{x}$=4.05 and, again, with the Baby Boomer Generation with the highest mean ($\bar{x}$=4.52). When the Student's t test was applied, it was found that there were statistically significant differences, with the Baby Boomer Generation having a higher mean value in the dimension Vigor, Dedication and Absorption than that of Generations X and Y ($p<0.05$).

In none of the dimensions were statistically significant differences found between Generation Y and Generation X.

Discussion

In this study, statistically significant differences were identified between the averages obtained by the Baby Boomer Generation and the X and Y generations in the three dimensions of professional involvement, with the older generation having higher average values than the other generations.

These results are in line with the study by Martins in which, despite the researcher not using the demarcation of generations, higher values were obtained in the three dimensions by participants over 40 years of age.[17] Also in the study by Lepistö et al., respondents reported higher values in the Dedication dimension than in the Vigor or Absorption dimensions.[19] In this study, generational differences in work engagement were also identified and a trend towards better scores in the older generation was detected.

The work developed by Stevanin et al., on the other hand, suggests that nurses from the Baby Boomer Generation and Generation X exhibit different degrees of involvement at work, compared to nurses from Generation Y.[8] Specifically, Baby Boomers are more involved and less

influenced by the negative aspects of work, and are less willing to leave. Generation X expressed greater sensitivity to issues of satisfaction at work and in the relationship with their superiors. Apparently, Gen Y nurses are less attached to their jobs.

More recently, the results of research carried out by Hisel, carried out worldwide with a sample of 1885 nurses, found that professional involvement in the total scale and in each of its dimensions is higher in the older generation, of the Baby Boomers, followed by Generation X and finally Generation Y.[20] These results are in agreement with those obtained in the present study, revealing the same generational distribution that appears to be transversal to the consulted studies.

These results seem to express the characteristics of the various generations, namely a greater focus on the work of the Baby Boomer generation, which appears to have more energy and mental resilience at work, greater concentration and involvement in the activities to be performed and gives greater meaning and usefulness to their profession. Work engagement is related to job performance. Thus, the people involved may perform better than their peers with less professional involvement.[21]

Conclusion

Generational differences are often felt over the course of professional life, whether when starting a career or when younger elements are integrated into teams. The present study allows us to conclude that, in this group of nurses, there are significant differences regarding their professional involvement. The Baby Boomer Generation presents the highest average values in all dimensions of this variable, which is in agreement with the studies carried out in this area. It is also noted that the Dedication dimension is the one with the highest results, showing that this profession continues to be felt as of great significance and usefulness and of which nurses are proud.

From a global perspective, the results obtained in the Vigor and Absorption dimensions show the physical and mental exhaustion and fatigue that result from an emotionally intense profession.

In view of these results, it is reinforced that the nurse manager responsible for multigenerational teams has a leading role in defining strategies for understanding, creating mechanisms for cooperation and conflict resolution, and harmonizing teamwork.

However, although this study points to the confirmation of generational differences, one must bear in mind that, sometimes, there are stereotypes that are formed and that, in turn, accentuate these same differences, increasing the gap between each generation and creating barriers. communication and relational balance.

In this sense, it is considered pertinent to develop other studies in this field of knowledge, namely longitudinal research that allow tracing a direction in the evolution of these generational differences as well as understanding how they influence the work environment and the management of units.

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