



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Influence of socio-demographic, labour and professional factors on nursing perception concerning practice environment in Primary Health Care

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KEYWORDS

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Primary Care Nursing;
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Abstract

Aim: To analyze the perception of nursing professionals of the Madrid Primary Health Care environment in which they practice, as well as its relationship with socio-demographic, work-related and professional factors.

Design: Cross-sectional, analytical, observational study.

Participants and context: Questionnaire sent to a total of 475 nurses in Primary Health Care in Madrid (former Health Care Areas 6 and 9), in 2010.

Main measurements: Perception of the practice environment using the Practice Environment Scale of the Nursing Work Index (PES-NWI) questionnaire, as well as; age; sex; years of professional experience; professional category; Health Care Area; employment status and education level.

Results: There was a response rate of 69.7% (331). The raw score for the PES-NWI was: 81.04 [95%CI: 79.18–82.91]. The factor with the highest score was "Support from Managers" (2.9 [95%CI: 2.8–3]) and the lowest "Workforce adequacy" (2.3 [95%CI: 2.2–2.4]). In the regression model (dependent variable: raw score in PES-NWI), adjusted by age, sex, employment status, professional category (coefficient $B = 6.586$), and years worked at the centre (coefficient $B = 2.139$, for a time of 0–2 years; coefficient $B = 7.482$, for 3–10 years; coefficient $B = 7.867$, for over 20 years) remained at $p \leq 0.05$.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Plantilla de enfermería;
Cuidados de enfermería en atención primaria;
Atención primaria de salud;
Entorno de práctica;
Practice Environment Scale of the Nursing Work Index

Conclusions: The support provided by nurse managers is the most highly valued factor in this practice environment, while workforce adequacy is perceived as the lowest. Nurses in posts of responsibility and those possessing a higher degree of training perceive their practice environment more favourably. Knowledge of the factors in the practice environment is a key element for health care organizations to optimize provision of care and to improve health care results.

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Influencia de los factores sociodemográficos, laborales y profesionales de enfermería en la percepción del entorno de la práctica en atención primaria

Resumen

Objetivo: Analizar la percepción de los profesionales enfermeros de atención primaria de Madrid sobre el entorno en el que realizan su práctica, también relacionada con los factores sociodemográficos, laborales y profesionales.

Diseño: Estudio observacional analítico transversal.

Participantes y contexto: 475 enfermeros de Atención Primaria de Madrid (áreas 6 y 9, en 2010).

Mediciones principales: Percepción del entorno de la práctica, a través del cuestionario *Practice Environment Scale of the Nursing Work Index* (PES-NWI); edad; sexo; años de experiencia profesional; categoría; área de salud; contratación y nivel académico.

Resultados: Se estudiaron 331 sujetos (tasa de respuesta: 69,7%). La puntuación bruta para el PES-NWI fue: 81,04 [IC 95%: 79,18-82,91]. El factor mejor valorado fue «Apoyo de los gestores» (2,9 [IC 95%: 2,8-3]) y el peor, «Adecuación de la plantilla» (2,3 [IC 95%: 2,2-2,4]). En el modelo de regresión (variable dependiente: puntuación bruta del PES-NWI), ajustado por edad, sexo, situación laboral, permanecieron con una $p \leq 0,05$, la categoría profesional (coeficiente $B = 6,586$) y los años de ejercicio profesional en el centro (coeficiente $B = 2,139$, para tiempo de 0 a 2 años; coeficiente $B = 7,482$, para tiempo de 3-10 años; coeficiente $B = 7,867$, para tiempo de más de 20 años).

Conclusiones: Las enfermeras con cargo de responsabilidad y aquellas que tienen mayor formación tienen una mejor percepción de su entorno de práctica. Conocer los factores del entorno de la práctica es un elemento clave para la organización sanitaria con el fin de optimizar la provisión de cuidados, y mejorar los resultados en salud.

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Introduction

Over the last decades it has been shown that an association exists between nursing practice environment factors and the stability of the nursing staff workforce, job satisfaction (absenteeism rates and perceived productivity), quality of care and results in patients (mortality, average length of stay, patient satisfaction).¹ Kazanjian et al.² reached the same conclusions after a systematic review which revealed that one or more unfavourable attributes in the nursing practice environment were associated with higher mortality rates. Moreover, the report of the USA Institute of Medicine, *Keeping Patients Safe: Transforming the Work Environment of Nurses*³ showed that 98,000 patients died each year due to errors, many of which were related to an unhealthy working environment characterized either by poor communication among health care staff, or resistance to changes and lack of leadership. On these same lines, the studies by Manojlovich et al.,^{4,5} also warned against the negative consequences (errors involving administering drugs) for patients of poor communication between medical and nursing professionals.

Laschinger's⁶ conclusions, after developing Kanter's⁷ *Theory of Empowerment*, maintain that many labour attitudes and responses are more closely related to the working

environment within organizations and have less to do with individual traits of the professionals who work there. In an *empowered* working environment, employees have access to information, resources and opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills. This translates into greater productivity for the organization, greater implication from staff⁸ and, with regard to results in patients, it has been demonstrated the association between *empowerment* and patient safety.⁹

From research carried out by the *American Academy of Nurses* on magnet hospitals, based on original studies by Kramer et al.,¹⁰ stemmed the concept 'practice environment' or 'working environment', which Lake defined as the organizational features that enable or hinder professional nursing practice.¹¹ Lake identified five key aspects relative to the nursing practice environment, that must occur in a healthy working environment as appropriate at Magnet hospitals: nurses' participation in the organization; foundation of quality of nursing care; managers' support to nurses; adequate workforce and resources; efficient medical/nursing staff relations. Contextual factors are also key elements to carry out an evidence based practice (EBP).¹²⁻¹⁴

Several tools have been developed to measure the nursing practice environment; among the most widely used is the *Practice Environment Scale of the Nursing Work*

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