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## Attitudes of undergraduate nursing students to cultural diversity: (Portuguese-Spanish) in a transboundary context.

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### Abstract

Our main goal was to identify the attitudes of nursing students to cultural diversity in a healthcare setting, and find the potential relationship between this and the students’ national background and their knowledge of cultural diversity. A descriptive observational study comparing two culturally different populations within a cross-border area (Algarve-Huelva) was conducted. The attitudes of the participants were measured across six categories: this study will describe the most significant ones. The cultural context is essential to the development of attitudes to immigration. Nursing care is a communicative act and encountering the “other” the core of the nursing professionals’ work.

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*Keywords:* Cultural diversity; nursing education; attitudes.

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### 1. Introduction

In the field of nursing, interpersonal relationships are part of everyday life; in this interactive area the culture of care recipients and nurses themselves is crucial in establishing an effective relationship and achieving cultural competence of care. University teachers, responsible for the training of future professionals, need to identify the students’ position on the phenomenon of diversity, and how it influences the care that will be provided to future

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citizens. Although European common competences for the Degree in Nursing are set (Burjales, 2005), addressing responsibilities with regard to cultural care are different in each nursing school.

Like much of society, nursing students have an attitude towards people from other cultural backgrounds, determined by stereotypes and prejudices generated largely by ignorance, which can hinder their future professional work if we cannot plan a competent educational intervention. Following the conclusions made by the authors of the literature reviewed (Moran, Abramson & Moran, 2014; Sosa, Fernandez & Zubieta, 2014; Sanchez & Rondon, 2013; Fernández, Gómez-Fraguela, Romero & Villar, 2010; Souza & De Souza, 2014; Alonso, Navarro & Lidon, 2014; Rúa, 2009; Gonçalves, 2012), it seems appropriate in this study not only to explore and learn about the attitudes of students in our school (taking into account the knowledge they have regarding cultural care), but also to compare this with another society, another environment with a different experience in the inclusion process of immigrant citizens. An example of this is our neighboring country, Portugal, in particular the Algarve region.

The Algarve has a history of migratory settlement very different from the rest of the country, mirroring what happens in the tourist areas of our country apropos elite immigration (Bäckström, 2012), characterized by being from the European Community nations – British, German and French - and over 60 years old; this community being 19.93% of the over 65 population in the Algarvian region. Apart from elite immigration, accepted by society for its great purchasing power, this region also has economic migration from the PALOP countries, Brazil and currently also receiving developing migratory flows from eastern countries, in particular the Ukraine. This favors cross-border comparison as to the attitudes of Portuguese natives with native Spanish.

## 2. Objectives

Given that attitudes can be modified or changed, the purpose of this research is to:

- Know whether there are differences between attitudes towards cultural diversity shown by university undergraduate nurses, depending on their location within the cross-border area (Algarve-Huelva).
- Know whether there are differences between attitudes toward cultural diversity shown by university nursing students based on the knowledge they have (knowledge acquired during nursing education), their gender, age and area of residence.

From the results of our investigation, and depending on whether they are positive or negative, an intervention could be needed to improve these attitudes.

## 3. Hypothesis

- The attitudes to cultural diversity shown by university undergraduate nurses are related to the cultural context in which they are (the culture of their own country).
- The knowledge they have as well as the values and beliefs (acquired during nursing education) influence the development of those attitudes.

## 4. Methodology

This is a descriptive observational quantitative design of populations by means of surveys, as rated by Montero and León (2005). This design is intended to describe how the attitudes of undergraduate nursing students alter depending on other variables. The population subject to study comprises of nursing students from the University of Huelva and the University of the Algarve (Faro). When the two syllabi were analyzed, we noticed that both have a commitment to cultural care, each of them following a different approach: on the one hand, the curriculum of the Escola Superior de Saúde do Algarve includes cultural diversity explicitly, with the subject “Socio-Anthropology of Health”, which is given in the second semester of the first year (having a total of four credits); on the other hand, at the University of Huelva the nursing department launched the subject “Nursing in the New Challenges in Health” several years ago, (despite being a six credit subject, the topic dedicated to this skill is only three hours’ duration, so it is insufficient to culturally educate the students in this area).

A sample of 180 students had to meet two specific criteria to be included in the research, the first of which was to belong to one of the two selected universities and have studied the subject of cultural diversity. The selection was a

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