



## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Engagement, resilience and empathy in nursing assistants<sup>☆</sup>



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### KEYWORDS

Engagement;  
Resilience;  
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### Abstract

**Objective:** To analyse the levels of engagement, resilience and empathy, and the relationship between them, in a sample of nursing assistants working in different private institutions in Huelva.

**Method:** A transversal, descriptive study. The sample comprised 128 nursing assistants working in private health centres of Huelva. They were given the following instruments: resilience scale Wagnild and Young, Interpersonal Reactivity Index and Utrech Work Engagement Scale.

**Conclusions:** There is a relationship between the cognitive and emotional components of engagement and empathy. Certain sociodemographic variables associated with the organisation of work and working conditions are associated with level of engagement.

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**PALABRAS CLAVE**

Engagement  
(compromiso);  
Resiliencia;  
Empatía;  
Auxiliares de  
enfermería

**Engagement (compromiso), resiliencia y empatía en auxiliares de enfermería****Resumen**

*Objetivo:* Analizar los niveles de engagement, resiliencia y empatía, y la relación entre ellos, en una muestra de auxiliares de enfermería que desempeñan su trabajo en diferentes centros privados de Huelva.

*Método:* El diseño corresponde a un estudio descriptivo transversal. La muestra la componen 128 auxiliares de enfermería de centros privados de Huelva, a quienes se les han administrado los siguientes instrumentos: escala de resiliencia de Wagnild y Young, índice de reactividad interpersonal y Utrech Work Engagement Scale.

*Conclusiones:* Existe relación entre los componentes cognitivos y emocionales del engagement y la empatía. Variables asociadas a la organización del trabajo y las condiciones laborales, como la antigüedad laboral, el tipo de jornada y el turno de trabajo, se encuentran asociadas con el engagement.

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**What is known?**

The psychological wellbeing of people in the caring professions, healthcare specifically, is modulated by psychological variables such as empathy, personality traits and resilience. There is also plentiful empirical evidence on burnout syndrome and its negative impact on the health and quality of life in general of this group of professionals.

**What do we contribute?**

Nursing assistants are perhaps one of the groups of healthcare professions that receive the least attention. This study provides some primary results on work satisfaction and occupational health and their association with psychological variables such as engagement, resilience and empathy. An analysis of these elements might help towards designing preventive programmes to encourage a better attitude towards this profession, protect against potential occupational diseases, and therefore result in better quality patient care. Furthermore, because there is more access to the sample of healthcare professionals working the public sector, mainly because these are the principal promoters of clinical research, results in fewer studies being undertaken in private centres. This type of analysis will enable a comparison between both populations and to obtain results related to the contextual factors of the working environment.

**Introduction**

The healthcare professions are considered to be among those most exposed to the psychosocial risks linked to the caring profession. Health workers in general experience high levels of stress, anxiety, fatigue and suffering due to the nature of their work and their workplace. This can result in a reduction in their perception of health and wellbeing.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, concern for health workers as a collective has led to studies on diseases and traits related with their work. Thus, research studies are being undertaken on burnout syndrome,<sup>2,3</sup> certain personality traits such as resilience (RS),<sup>4</sup> and the capacity for empathy.<sup>5</sup>

There are few studies that directly deal with the professional development of nursing assistants. We can highlight the most relevant characteristics in these studies that evidence the impact, both physical and emotional, of particular working conditions on the performance of nursing assistants. The studies outline their increased real shifts, sometimes due to a need for greater financial gain, and sometimes simply due to the way their work is organised; their patients' need for ongoing care; the monitoring and scrutiny that they are subjected to, and other activities such as academic meetings that they are obliged to attend.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, it should be stressed that the nursing assistant is the last link in a chain, and because of the idiosyncratic nature of the profession, they routinely suffer high levels of stress and other associated diseases.

However, recent trends reflect an increase in studies on the line of work in relation to positive psychology. The risk factors with negative consequences are not as relevant as the protective factors that help to prevent these risks.

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