



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Engagement of nurses in their profession. Qualitative study on engagement[☆]



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KEYWORDS

Work engagement;
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Abstract

Objective: To identify common issues of nurses with high engagement to enable us to develop the construct as it applies to nursing in more depth.

Method: Based on the constructivist paradigm and with a phenomenological approach, a qualitative content analysis was conducted using an inductive approach. Participants were nurses working in direct care in different healthcare areas. The sample size was determined by data saturation and 15 participants were interviewed.

Results: The units of meaning were grouped into 11 subcategories, and then into 7 categories termed vigour, dedication, reward, autonomy, social support, conciliation and attributes of nurses. Then these categories were grouped into 3 major themes: job characteristics, characteristics of organisations, and individual characteristics.

Conclusions: Having high engagement does not mean ignoring the negative aspects of work and organisations. Nurses who maintain high engagement are also affected by the negative aspects, however the assessment of positive aspects such as enjoying the work, the meaning of being a nurse, reward and autonomy enable the process of depletion of engagement to be overcome.

In view of the findings, we propose reconceptualising the construct, taking the features of nursing into account.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Engagement en el trabajo;
Síndrome de estar quemado;
Enfermeras;
Investigación cualitativa

Implicación de las enfermeras en su profesión. Un estudio cualitativo sobre el *engagement*

Resumen

Objetivo: Identificar aspectos comunes de las enfermeras con elevado *engagement*, que nos permitan desarrollar con más profundidad el constructo aplicado a enfermería.

Método: A partir del paradigma constructivista y con un enfoque fenomenológico, se llevó a cabo un análisis cualitativo del contenido, utilizando una aproximación inductiva. Las participantes fueron enfermeras que trabajaban en atención directa de diferentes ámbitos asistenciales. El tamaño de la muestra vino dado por la saturación de los datos y fue de 15 participantes a los que se les realizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas grabadas.

Resultados: Las unidades de significado se agruparon en 11 subcategorías, estas a su vez en 7 categorías, que se han llamado vigor, dedicación, recompensa, autonomía, apoyo social, conciliación y cualidades de las enfermeras. Posteriormente estas categorías se agruparon en 3 grandes temas: características de los puestos de trabajo, características de las organizaciones y características individuales.

Conclusiones: El hecho de tener un *engagement* elevado no significa ignorar los aspectos negativos del trabajo y de las organizaciones. Las enfermeras que mantienen el *engagement* elevado también se ven afectadas por los aspectos negativos, sin embargo, la apreciación de aspectos positivos como disfrutar con el trabajo, el significado de ser enfermera, la recompensa y la autonomía permiten superar el proceso de desgaste del *engagement*.

A la vista de los resultados se propone una reconceptualización del constructo que contemple las particularidades de la enfermería.

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What is known?

The psychological process that leads to engagement is related to resources and is a different process to that leading to burnout, which is linked to demand, these 2 processes are inter-related.

Engagement is the result of interaction between dispositional factors, personal learning and working environments and therefore liable to change and affects nurses' professional activity and has an impact on care outcomes.

What do we contribute?

This research study was designed to discover aspects of nursing practice that are relevant in maintaining engagement and that quantitative research has failed to make relevant because they are left out of standardised questionnaires. The research study has enabled us to establish that nurses who are engaged also suffer the effect of work demands, and that the resources that relate most to engagement in nursing are meaning of the profession, intrinsic reward and autonomy.

Based on the study results, we propose a new definition of engagement for nurses.

Introduction

Nurses are the largest group of health professionals. Demographic changes due to an ageing population and the increased incidence of chronic disease require nurses to play a crucial role in building efficient health systems that can take on new challenges. Facing these changes requires highly committed practitioners who provide excellent healthcare and this is what we term engagement. The scientific literature on nurses' engagement shows it to have a positive influence on their professional performance through increased efficacy¹ and extra-role² performance, with a beneficial effect on care outcomes.^{3,4}

Engagement is a construct arising from positive psychology focussing on people's strengths and is defined as "a positive mental attitude to work, characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption". Vigour translates as a great willingness to devote effort to work and persistence in the face of difficulty. Devotion refers to being strongly committed to working activities and to feel enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, a sense of challenge and meaning. Absorption translates as being fully focussed and happily immersed in one's work, in such a way that time passes rapidly and a sense of not wishing to leave the workplace.⁵

Engagement was initially considered in the study as the polar opposite to burnout.⁶ The syndrome of burnout is defined as "...a state of exhaustion where the person feels cynical about their professional role and doubts their ability to perform" and comprises 3 factors: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced self-efficacy.⁶⁻⁸ Emotional exhaustion is described as a feeling of being unable to

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