Assertiveness in family nurses

Assertividade em enfermeiros de família

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1 INTRODUCTION

Assertiveness is a crucial social skill for effective and efficient communication in nursing (Montezeli et al., 2018). At the professional level, its lack can generate conflicts, frustrations and loss of essential information, compromising the care process (Silva, 2018). In contrast, becoming more assertive contributes to the success of the therapeutic relationship with users and families, by promoting: greater recognition and respect for the nurse as a person and professional; greater satisfaction in the performance of tasks and in the relationship with the team and the user; and also greater security for the user (Haladin et al., 2015; Nakamura et al., 2017; Omura et al., 2017). In addition, it can protect nurses from the daily pressure to which they are exposed and from situations that trigger stress and depression (Alves, 2016).

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2016) recognizes assertive communication as essential in the global challenge for patient safety.

2 OBJECTIVE

To analyze the relationship between the adoption of Assertive Behaviors, with users and multidisciplinary team, and the sociodemographic, professional and job satisfaction characteristics of family nurses, working in family health units of a grouping of health centers in the Northern Region of Portugal.

3 METHODOLOGY

Quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive-correlational study. The sample consisted of 66 nurses. Data were collected through an electronic questionnaire, consisting of two parts: sociodemographic and professional characteristics and the Scale for the Evaluation of Assertive Behaviors of Nurses, developed and validated by Amaro and Jesus (2007). This scale assesses the adoption of assertive communication behaviors in two dimensions: Assertive Behaviors with the Patient and Assertive Behaviors with the Multidisciplinary Team.

4 DEVELOPMENT

The nurses who participated in the study had a high mean value of adoption of assertive behaviors (= 4.86; SD= 0.65), both with the patient (= 5.09; SD = 0.63), or with the multidisciplinary team (= 4.78; SD = 0.65).

There were no statistically significant differences between the sociodemographic characteristics and the adoption of Assertive Behaviors of the professionals in the sample. However, among the professional characteristics analyzed (Professional Category; Experience in Other Services; Training in Community Nursing in the area of Family Health Nursing; link to the Family Health Unit; and Length of Service in the Career, in the Professional Category and in the Family Health Unit) there was statistical evidence to affirm that the adoption of assertive behaviors differed according to Experience in Other Services for the Total Scale (Mann Whitney Test = 317.50; $p = 0.017$), for the Assertive Behaviors with the Patient subscale (Mann-Whitney test = 330.500; $p = 0.027$) and for the Assertive Behaviors with the Multidisciplinary Team subscale (Mann-Whitney test = 340.00; $p = 0.037$), with the median value being higher in professionals with Experience in Other Services. There were no statistically significant correlations between the Total Scale of Adoption of Assertive Behaviors and dimensions and the Length of Service in the Family Health Unit and Professional Category. There was a significant, positive and weak correlation between the Length of Service in the Career

and the total Assertive Behaviors Scale (Spearman's rho = 0.304; p = 0.013) and the Assertive Behaviors dimension with the Multidisciplinary Team (Spearman's rho = 0.333; p = 0.006).

As for the job satisfaction variables analyzed (Liking the Workplace; Considering that One's Ideas are Listened to and Put into Practice; Having the Right Working Conditions; and Feeling of Professional Accomplishment), there was statistical evidence to affirm that the adoption of Assertive Behaviors varied according to the Liking for the Workplace, for the Total Assertive Behaviors Scale (U = 52.00; p = 0.012) and for the Assertive Behaviors with the Multidisciplinary Team dimension (Mann Whitney Test = 43.50; p = 0.005), with the median value being higher in professionals who liked their workplace. There was no statistically significant relationship between the other job satisfaction variables and the Total Assertive Behavior Scale and its dimensions.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, it was found that the levels of self-perception of adoption of Assertive Behaviors were high. This social skill was not related to the sociodemographic characteristics of the nurses under study, agreeing with Silva et al. (2017) who report that assertiveness is not directly related to biological issues, but rather behavioral, so it will be a learned behavior and not a social skill of a physiological nature. On the other hand, the adoption of Assertive Behaviors was statistically significantly and positively related to Experience in Other Services and positively correlated with Length of Service in the Career. These results can be explained by the fact that previous experiences are reflected in an increased ability to express thoughts and emotions, greater self-confidence, better ability to manage conflicts and a conception of a more satisfactory relationship with the user (Benner, 2001; Bronfenbrenner, 2002).

Although the adoption of Assertive Behaviors was not positively related to other job satisfaction variables, except Enjoyment of the Workplace, it may be due to the fact that the adoption of Assertive Behaviors is more related to the ability to regulate emotions, the worker's knowledge of their assertive rights and the ease of expressing positive feelings assertively, due to a more permissive work culture for them (Freitas, 2001). It is not so directly linked to the feeling of being heard and having ideas put into practice, to adequate working conditions or to the feeling of professional fulfillment. In fact, professionals may feel that their ideas are not listened to, but this does not prevent them from expressing them assertively, at most it may inhibit their presentation.

These results corroborate the importance of assertiveness in preventing conflicts, increasing job satisfaction and improving relationships with the team. However, it is recommended that the study be replicated in a larger sample.

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