

Relacionamento interpessoal de docentes de enfermagem: conflitos e desafio

Interpersonal relationship of nursing professors: conflicts and challenges

Relación interpersonal de docentes de enfermería: los conflictos y los desafíos

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RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar o relacionamento interpessoal entre os docentes do departamento de enfermagem em uma universidade pública de Natal-RN. **Método:** estudo exploratório, descritivo, com abordagem qualitativa. A coleta de dados ocorreu no período de maio a junho de 2012 com 17 docentes a partir de entrevista semiestruturada, sendo os dados analisados através da Análise de Conteúdo de Bardin, utilizando a modalidade da análise temática. **Resultados:** a partir das falas dos docentes, foi estruturada a categoria Heterogeneidade nas relações interpessoais, dividida em subcategorias: conflitos interpessoais vistos como normais no ambiente de trabalho, bom relacionamento nos grupos/disciplinas e dificuldades de relacionamento no grande grupo do corpo docente. **Conclusão:** a partir deste estudo, foi possível detectar as dificuldades existentes no relacionamento entre os docentes da realidade estudada. Aponta-se a ferramenta da comunicação como estratégia para a melhoria das relações intergrupais.

Descritores: desgaste profissional; ambiente de trabalho; docentes de enfermagem.

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the interpersonal relations between the professors of the nursing department at a public university in Natal, RN. **Method:** it is an exploratory, descriptive study with a qualitative approach. Data collection occurred from May to June of 2012 with 17 professors from semi-structured interviews, and the data analyzed through content analysis of Bardin, using the method of thematic analysis. **Results:** from the speech of the professors, the category of Heterogeneity in interpersonal relationships was structured, divided into subcategories: interpersonal conflicts seen as normal in the workplace, a good relationship in groups/subjects, relationship difficulties in the large faculty group. **Conclusion:** from this study, it was possible to detect difficulties in the relationship between the professors of the studied reality. The instrument of communication is highlighted as a strategy for improving intergroup relationships. **Descriptors:** burnout; working environment; nursing professors.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar las relaciones interpersonales entre los profesores del departamento de enfermería de una universidad pública en Natal, RN. **Método:** estudio exploratorio, descriptivo con un enfoque cualitativo. La recolección de datos tuvo lugar entre mayo y Junio de 2012 con 17 profesores por entrevista semiestructurada, y los datos analizados a través de análisis de contenido de Bardin, utilizando el método de análisis sistemático. **Resultados:** a partir del discurso de los docentes, fue estructurada la categoría heterogeneidad en las relaciones interpersonales, dividido en subcategorías: conflictos interpersonales se ven como normales en el lugar de trabajo, buenas relaciones en los grupos/disciplinas, dificultades de relación en el gran grupo de profesores. **Conclusión:** en este estudio, se pudo detectar dificultades en la relación entre los profesores de la realidad estudiada. Se señala la herramienta de la comunicación como una estrategia para mejorar las relaciones intergrupales. **Descriptor:** agotamiento profesional; ambiente de trabajo; docentes de enfermería.

INTRODUCTION

Communication can be understood as a behavior aimed at reflection, relationship, exchange of information, ideas, images and feelings at human understanding and practice of intentional influence. It intends to give a message consisting of a meaning with sense, although there is a degree of uncertainty surrounding the communicative process, that is, it cannot guarantee the kind of behavior that will produce a message on the receiver.¹

From this, it is understood that the human being is a person with relationships and communication is essential for growth. It is necessary to seek greater understanding of the principles and skills to be perfected in the communicative process.

In health care, the professional action cannot be considered without the importance of the communication process in it since the professional is based on his work relationships, whether they are established with the patient, family and/or with the multidisciplinary team.

In that context, to communicate effectively, such relationships must be bidirectional, that is, there must be

answers and validation of messages transmitted. It should be tried to reduce conflicts and misunderstandings. It is up to the team to know the communication mechanisms that will facilitate the performance of their duties to the patient and improve relationships between themselves and team members.²

When considering nursing in the teaching area, this understanding indicates the importance of human and intergroup relationships as necessary for the consolidation of space in which each actor of the educational process and care feels as a member, a participant, a protagonist - since the feeling of participating in a context's set on individual and collective motivation.

In this way, regarding the professor engaged with his peers in the collective work he can only be understood as a person under construction, who depends on interpersonal relationships. This construction of identity being linked to group experiences, social relationships is prone to cases of tensions and balances.³

Thus, the competence in interpersonal communication is understood as fundamental to the nurse teaching or acting in another activity of care practice, giving him the ability to develop caring, consciousness, truthfulness and transformation, in interaction with the student, patient and co-worker.⁴

Thus, it is justified the study of the characteristics of these relationships and their possible conflicts, since they are complex and can directly affect the individual and the educational institution, being relevant the question: how interpersonal relationships in the university workplace can influence the teaching profession?

Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze the interpersonal relationships among professors of the nursing department in a public university of Natal-RN.

METHODS

It is an exploratory, descriptive study with a qualitative approach, trying to analyze the interpersonal relationships among professors in the university workplace.

Descriptive studies point to a phenomenon or situation by a study in the given space-time addressing four aspects: description, registration, analysis, and interpretation of current phenomena.⁵

The qualitative approach is applied to the study of history, representations, beliefs, opinions that are results of abstracted interpretations of how men live and how it is possible to understand the existing subjectivity in the results.⁶

Data collection occurred in the Department of Nursing of a the University of Rio Grande do Norte, in the period from May to June of 2012. The study population consisted of 17 professors. The inclusion criteria were effective professors in operation for at least six months in the institution. The exclusion criteria were those that have had no activity during the period of data collection due to

vacation, maternity leave or medical leave, in a master's or doctorate.

The collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews. This type of interview combines open and closed questions, in which the informant has the possibility to discuss the theme. The interview came from the following question: "How do you observe interpersonal relationship in teaching?" The speeches were documented in a mp4 player for later transcription and analysis.

Data was analyzed through Bardin's content analysis, using the method of thematic analysis in three distinct stages: pre-analysis, with the intense reading of the interviews; exploration of material and text clipping into thematic units for analysis of the formulated categories and the interpretation and discussion of result.⁶

Thus, for data discussion, the category was defined as heterogeneity in interpersonal relationships, divided into sub-categories - interpersonal conflicts seen as normal in the workplace; a good relationship in groups/subjects; relationship difficulties in the large faculty group.

This study is based on the Resolution 196/96 of the National Council of the Ministry of Health (1996) concerning human beings research, with the approval by the Ethics and Research Committee (CEP) of UFRN through the protocol number 0287.0.51000-11, ensuring anonymity of its participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Heterogeneity in interpersonal relationships

Before the new configurations of the working world where technical, scientific knowledge and hard technologies are put in evidence, it is noticed the importance of the human and relational dimension of workers, especially those who deal directly with people. The importance given to relationships assumes that the needs and interests of the organization are the needs and interests of individuals collectively. Their expectations come from human complexity and then go through the emotionality of social relationships and their intersubjective exchanges.⁷

In this context, the work of university professors aims to form common goals of good professionals, to generate and organize knowledge, and to preserve the culture of the university purposes -based on teaching, researching, and extension programs. These objectives are achieved within and across interpersonal relationships among individuals and their peers. Those relationships are described as heterogeneous as they are built from the diversity among people. It is believed that the greater the diversity of views, the more likely it is to find effective responses due to the range of skills, knowledge and skills supported by the members. Such fact show the importance of this diversity to achieve the objectives of the work.⁸

It is necessary to consider that there will always be differences in this process, because they are part of the

relationship since every human being has their specific desires and needs. In this sense it can be said that the diversity of ideas will generally create conflict situations.

Thus, in the reality studied prints on interpersonal relationships seem heterogeneous, and for a better understanding of this diversity on how these relationships are established it was decided to divide the discussion into three subcategories described below.

Interpersonal conflicts seen as normal in the workplace.

When professors were asked about the interpersonal relationships in the nursing department, they said that relationship difficulties are normal in any work environment. This difficulty is inherent to the process of interaction between people since the affinities and sympathies may or may not be developed while they establish their working relationships, thus generating both harmonic and conflict areas, as shown below:

(...) I think in any work environment we'll find people that we have more ease and friendliness, and we are going to have a little more difficulty in it, right? (P14)

(...) And you will find harmony and disharmony zones, that to me is understanding, it is part of it. I believe it escapes from normal when it passes into an aggressiveness. (P4)

Thus, it is clear that professors put the heterogeneity of interpersonal relationships - described as harmonious and inharmonious - as intrinsic to the workplace, developing teaching activities related to the relationships among professors, which will result of the different ways of thinking and acting of each group member. Understanding the behavior of people and their relationships at work also includes understanding the factors that interfere in the working conditions and in the life of the professor.

Some internal and personal characteristics of the professor are relevant to interpersonal contacts, and that will influence the development of the work - such characteristics can be given by a person who cares more for others than for himself, by high expectations and impossible goals and by low self-esteem and negativity. The external factors also related to the work environment are: lack of social interactions at work; social isolation and lack of sense of community; high expectations of superiors, parents, and community; lack of autonomy.⁹

On the other hand, there are enjoyable aspects expected by professors in the workplace concerning professional and informal relationships: collaboration/participation, discussing issues at meetings, collegiate fellowship, daily/pleasant environment, friendship, conversation during breaks, good humor, jokes and acquirement of new friends.¹⁰

The development of such positive attitudes may be differences in the coping factor among professors and consequently a better use of the different ideas for achieving the group's goals. Thus, a positive proposal for living among the people are highlighted in the following lines, when considering human differences as capable of understanding and acceptance and as potential interpersonal growth:

(...) It is because people are different, they have different education, different origins, and we have to learn to live with diversity, you have to live unit in diversity, right... (P4)

(...) I think this should be seen as something that will be important to democratize the relationships, and grow and not divide, diverge, compete, nothing like that, I see much more in a more positive logic, over-aggrandizement and no different from that. (P2)

Therefore, it is clear that the variety of personalities, ideas and opinions of the professors indicate an enrichment potential of the academic environment as a whole, since knowledge is dynamic and needs to grow through dialogue of ideas, through effective communication among different individuals, even facing the challenge of living with the conflicts inherent to the interpersonal process. The emotional and social support among professors is important to show there can be a good development of work activities, being able to avoid chronic wear and the lack of involvement at work through good relationships.

Good relationship in groups/subjects

At first, the professor claims to have a positive interaction with other colleagues, and trying to avoid conflict situations:

(...) I do not have difficulty, great difficulty in relationships, by the way, I am very communicative (...) with respect to my colleagues (...). (P12)

(...) I get along very well, I talk to everyone, speak with everybody (...). (P8)

(...) I try to preserve an interpersonal relationship, away from me a bit of trouble, conflicts (...). (P2)

Showing empathy and seeking always to have harmonious relationships with other colleagues can be a significant contributor to good relationships in the workplace since there is transparency in these attitudes and they don't overlook aspects of an effective and authentic communication, which may mask conflict situations that need to be dialogued and addressed to achieve the group's goals.

Working together requires the integration of individual, group and organizational goals. People may experience

stress when the communication process does not occur in authentic forms, which prevents mutual recognition of group members and sharing something meaningful between people. Thus, the form of communication between people, the way to resolve conflicts, cohesion to make decisions and acceptance of minority opinions can determine or not stressful situations. Often coercion takes place instead of cohesion; conflicts are hidden under the title of consensus and conformity takes the place of creativity compromising the professor's work.¹¹

Another factor that has been shown which can further strengthen this relative avoidance of interpersonal relationships is the weekly schedule, for the appointment of professors with temporary employment or reduced weekly working hours only to the classroom, so they do not maintain close contact with the University, as those with exclusive dedication.¹² Thus, the relationships end up becoming even more evasive and deficient in terms of communication. Two professors illustrate this by justifying they cannot assess in depth the relationship within the large teaching group, expressed as follows:

I don't have, actually, a lot of contact with teachers of other disciplines, as I also have twenty hours, then, indeed, I have more interaction with teachers of the same discipline that I minister. As I'm not involved with no (...) other discipline, or any other project with another teacher, so really, I do not have much to evaluate this relationship (...). (P1)

I have never had a problem. I do not know how would it be to have 20 hours; we have less ... teachers who have a 20-hour bond generally have less contact and less commonplace with the rest of the teachers, so we have this greater experience with the subject. Moreover, perhaps this is a factor that does not cause us to have many problems - or that doesn't enable us to evaluate them in a different way. (P13)

Nevertheless, it is evident that these professionals need to relate themselves for teaching, with or without conflict. It is noteworthy that as members of a work team they feel more similar than different, tending to like their workforce and the people who comprise it. Therefore, it is more likely to settle emotional bonds and probably develop a good job, but this relative homogeneity must be considered within groups through the perception of its members, that is, the collective construction of group identity that becomes important for binding its participants.⁸

This is important, especially in the context of nursing education where several professors share the same teaching module or training field, needing an exchange and articulation of knowledge between them - once the way through which this process takes place will build the collective identity of

professors with their peers under their vision. Thus, some professors said that it is common to develop an improved interpersonal relationship together with the peers they interact more routinely, such as those that share a common subject, forming groups:

There are others with whom you work directly, and you build this daily lot of good things, events together, work together, put ideas into practice together, this is common among teachers who share the same subject. (P3)

Of course it has, a group of more than 30 teachers, you know, there are more groups with more bond ... where the interaction happens, flows more smoothly. (P12)

I think I'm one of the few teachers who have a team that is united, yet. (...) We respect a lot. (P17)

Therefore, it is also necessary to consider that within the recent Curriculum Guidelines approved by the MEC for all higher education degree courses, an opening is indicated that the curriculum is not based only on closed courses, but to be established as a set of core competencies for each job profile, covering aspects of building knowledge, research, openness to other areas of knowledge beyond their specific, opportunities for innovations, working in multi and interdisciplinary team.¹³

Professors with their fellows are responsible for the formation of new professionals expected by society's needs. This involves developing effective communication that goes beyond the groups and subjects, thus contributing to a completeness in teaching, involving everything each one has to offer as an educator and strengthened with their peers.

Relationship difficulties in the large faculty group

It is important that the professor identifies the academic environment as a place not only for student education but also as a teaching training environment - the exchange of knowledge and expertise, becoming a permanent building process in which ethics, respect, humility, and commitment enable the development of the formation of the teaching space. The teaching learning in peer relationships is achieved through daily contact with the subjects as well as in moments of training - present in plenary meetings. These moments allow to see the process of learning to be a teacher in a collective and shared way.¹⁴

It is important that learning establishes effective communication between professors so that they build interpersonal relationships that allow this collective learning process and that improve pedagogical motivation for building an educational environment that encompasses the entire academic community.

However, this shared educational environment depends on the ability to establish a good interaction between the

teaching staff. Despite reporting a good relationship within the small groups, professors claimed directly that there are problems in coexistence of big groups of professors of the department mainly due to the difficulty when it comes to dealing with some attitudes and postures of the colleagues:

There is a mutual growth. There are groups of the same area, and there is not a link between the two. (P11)

I think interpersonal relationships within that department, including teachers, is not very positive. (...) The general relationships are not cool here. It is my vision. We see the situation in the plenary here in the department. (P6)

(...) There are different views of colleagues, teachers, taking some behaviors that I would not take (...). (P8)

In this context, some professors are considering that the work environment becomes rowdy when some personal skills regarded as necessary for teaching nursing practice are neglected:

(...) They are teachers of nursing, they should be more sociable, more connoisseurs of situations, but it is not what happens. (P6)

(...) there is a lack of solidarity practice (...). (P9)

(...) Because people, teachers in the vast majority, it seems... that they forgot some principles they teach in the classroom, issue of humanization, the question of ethics (...), not to mention those who tend to get worse and worse, rather than put out the fire, they throw in more fuel (...). (P10)

From this, it can be understood that teamwork depends on the effort of each subject involved, aiming to the same end. The commitment to the patient care and collegiality among staff are key factors for building good work in nursing; health professionals should meet and understand the particularities of others. Thus, the expectation around the professor-nurse is to develop his practice rooted in his care attitudes, which goes beyond technical competence, especially encompassing ethical postures.

Neglecting the ethical dimension experienced in the workplace is taken as a professional dissatisfaction factor and is described regarding individualism, competition, lack of cooperation between peers and lack of respect to the specifics of each area.¹⁵

A professor emphasizes in his speech the resulting consequences of this troubled coexistence and the need for change:

(...) Then, this seemingly peaceful coexistence among our teachers, it is highly traumatic for some of them, (...)

then it ends up interfering directly, and I would say that interference is so, it is ... shall we say, harmful, which influences directly in what it produces, then the profession that should be collective ends up being targeted, and I do not know how the groups still manage to live with this type (of environment) and by extension, hindering the action of other groups. (...) Our group needs to wake up in this new world where I think many things that happen here should just finish, such things are ... further complicating the relationships (...) (P10)

Thus, there's a difficulty for nursing professors, which must care for the patient and the student when teaching the practice - establishing a respectful and supportive relationship with their peers. Regarding such facts the nursing professionals cannot give enough attention to their colleagues - who are working for the same purpose, which is the effective teaching and assistance of qualified nursing.

The humanized care to another, in this case, the colleague, comes from attitudes in the search for a better living - that is, the professional and the interactive processes figure as open and flexible. Dividing tasks, overcoming individual and collective resistance, negotiating and sharing common spaces are attitudes of care that can be demonstrated by the professional, pointing an ethical form of human relationships.¹⁶

CONCLUSION

From this study, it was possible to detect difficulties in the relationships between the professors of the studied reality. Positive and negative aspects of interpersonal relationships were appointed in the reality experienced by them. As positive factors, were highlighted the closer interaction with colleagues (especially with those that share the same subject) and personal differences that naturally could be taken as difficulties in generating the relationships, described by a professor as a means of enriching him.

Among the negative aspects hindering the evaluation, there was poor posture from colleagues; low weekly working hours (which does not allow a closer relationship with all colleagues); the lack of understanding, solidarity and humanization; and the segregation between groups.

The communication tool is highlighted as an effective strategy for improving intergroup relationships. It highlights problems encountered during coexistence, which can be discussed until a satisfactory common solution for all is found - minimizing or remedying the stress caused by the relational situations identified as problematic by professors.

Finally, this paper aims to highlight the importance of studies like this to understand the teaching environment and to seek the improvement of a healthy relational environment that may influence positively the professional and personal lives - regarding the physical, intellectual, emotional and psychosocial well-being of each worker.

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