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Valorization of the nurse's tutor characteristics: enhancing the teaching learning process

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Abstract

The nurse tutor is so relevant in the teaching learning process that we carried out a research with the aim to identify the valorization of the nurse's tutor characteristics with the use of the Portuguese version of the Clinical Instructor Ranking Scale. This study was placed within the paradigm of quantitative research and we obtained 513 filled out questionnaires from nurses, nursing students and nursing teachers from several institutions.

We pointed out differences of opinion among the groups and inside each group about the valorization of the nurse's tutor characteristics.

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Keywords: Nurse Tutor; Valorization of Characteristics; Clinical Supervision; Nurses; Nursing Students; Nursing Teachers.

Introduction

In the existing literature, we find studies which relate clinical supervision and training in nursing. Jerlock, Falk & Severinsson (2003) refer that the clinical supervision aims to influence positively the process of student learning, it can support the students decision making' in the clinical practice. Holm, Lantz & Severinsson (1998) suggest that there is an association between the group supervision effects and the development of the professional identity by the nursing students.

The figure of the nurse tutor is so relevant in the teaching learning process that we decided to carry out a research that took the following problem as a core: What are the nurse's tutor characteristics that enhance the teaching learning process?

The aim of this study was to identify the valorization of the nurse's tutor characteristics with the use of the Portuguese version of the Clinical Instructor Ranking Scale.

This study was placed within the paradigm of quantitative research and was made in several institutions in the metropolitan area of Oporto - Portugal.

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We pointed out differences of opinion among the groups and inside each group about the valorization of the nurse's tutor characteristics.

This article is divided into four main sections: the first one is related to the Clinical Instructor Ranking Scale; in the second, the methodology and the study design are explained; in the third one and the others we presented the results followed by the discussion and the conclusion of the article.

1. The Scale

In the absence of instruments to measure students' expectations about the characteristics of the clinical tutor, Rauen (1974) developed a tool. The Clinical Instructor Ranking Scale is an 18 characteristics of the clinical nurse tutor with an equal distribution of the 3 dimensions contemplated (teacher, nurse and person). It is an opinion scale that allows a hierarchy of values. Therefore, the participants need to give values ranging between 1 and 6 to each characteristic of the dimensions. The value 6 is for the most valued characteristic and the value 1 is for the less valued. The characteristics in each dimension were randomly distributed by the author. The characteristics with the value 6 and 5 were again reclassified and got the value 3 for the most valued one and the value 1 for the less valued. Thus, it allows reaching the most and the less valued dimension as well.

2. Methodology and study design

Training in nursing is connected to the clinical work environment therefore the conceptualization of the curriculum of the graduation course is a demanding and complex activity. Moreover, the cooperation between educational and health organizations is not always easy. Student learning is often done in the clinical setting where they interact with the patients and their families; nurses; nurse tutors; nurse teachers; other professionals and other students. It is in this context they realize the gap between theory and practice. So, they constantly need to adapt to new situations and to solve them which sometimes is very stressful. The clinical training must be done in a safety environment with emotional support and with proper educational strategies (Abreu, 2003). The management of this reality is very difficult but clinical training is essential to learn how to be a nurse. Therefore, the clinical nurse tutor has a huge importance on it. Thus, we decided to carry out a research with the aim to identify the valorization of the nurse's tutor characteristics by students, teachers and nurses.

This study was placed within the paradigm of quantitative research and grew in several institutions of the metropolitan area of Oporto - Portugal. This is a descriptive and exploratory study that allowed the identification of the valorization of the nurse's tutor characteristics by different groups. We obtained 513 filled out questionnaires from the respondents (199 from nursing students, 49 from nursing teachers and 265 from nurses). Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 12.0 was used for data analysis.

2.1 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population comprises all the individuals with common characteristics for the research. Therefore, our population was all the pre-graduated nursing students from the Escola Superior de Enfermagem de São João which were in the clinical training in the 2003/2004 school year, with the exception of the students who were in specific programs like Erasmus or Vasco da Gama (n=211); all the teachers from the School, with the exception of the researcher and her academic supervisor (n=52); all nurses which contacted with the pre-graduated nursing students in the clinical training in the same school year, with the exception of the nurses who were at the "Optional Module" (n=401).

We decided to study all the individuals (n=664). We had a convenience sample constituted by those who answered the questionnaire (n=513). The response rate was 77% and the response rate by each group is shown in table 1. We had a very high response rate.

Table 1 – Response rate by group (nursing students, nursing teachers and nurses)

	n	%
Nursing Students	199	94
Nursing Teachers	49	94
Nurses	265	66
Total	513	77

The response rate for the group of nurses was 66% because some of them were not available since they were on holidays or were missing work or didn't answer the questionnaire returning it without filling it.

2.2 ETHICAL ISSUES

We obtained permission from the seven institutions involved in the study: Escola Superior de Enfermagem de São João, Hospital de Magalhães Lemos, Hospital de São João, Hospital Geral de Santo António, Instituto Português de Oncologia Francisco Gentil – Centro Regional de Oncologia do Porto, Maternidade de Júlio Dinis and Unidade Local de Saúde de Matosinhos.

The questionnaire with the Portuguese version of the Clinical Instructor Characteristics Ranking Scale had an introductory part where we explained the study and the ethical issues that we were going to respect like the anonymity and confidentiality of the collected information. We outlined the voluntary nature of the individuals' participation.

3. Results

The questionnaire used in this study was divided into two main parts: the first one, where we asked the socio demographic data and the second one where we achieved the valorization of the nurse's tutor characteristics with the use of the Portuguese version of the Clinical Instructor Characteristics Ranking Scale.

We had a convenience sample constituted by those who answered the questionnaire (n=513). The relevant socio demographic data are shown in table 2 for the group of the nursing students, in table 3 for the group of the nursing teachers and in table 4 for the group of the nurses.

Table 2 – Socio-demographic data from the group of the nursing students

	n	%
Sex		
Female	162	84
Male	31	16
Year of the Course		
3 rd	101	51
4 th	98	49
Clinical Training		
Health Center	48	48
Hospital	53	52

In our sample, the majority of the nursing students were female (84%), they were in the third year of the graduation course (51%) and were in the hospital setting in their clinical training (52%).

Table 3 – Socio-demographic data from the group of the nursing teachers

	n	%
Sex		
Female	36	73
Male	13	27
Professional Category		
Assistant	21	43
Associate Professor	20	41
Coordinator Professor	8	16

In our sample, the majority of the nursing teachers were female (73%) and they were assistants (43%) in their professional category.

Table 4 – Socio-demographic data from the group of the nurses

	n	%
Sex		
Female	217	83
Male	46	17
Professional Category		
Nurse	227	87
Specialized Nurse	30	11
Chief Nurse	6	2
Institution		
Instituto Português de Oncologia	36	14
Hospital Geral de Santo António	42	16
Hospital de Magalhães Lemos	25	9
Hospital de São João	48	18
Maternidade Júlio Dinis	21	8
Unidade Local de Saúde de Matosinhos	93	35
Care Unit		
Health Center	46	17
Surgical Unit	61	23
Medical Unit	35	13
Obstetric Unit	21	8
Pediatric Unit	35	13
Psychiatry Unit	25	10
Emergency Unit	42	16

In our sample, the majority of the nurses were female (83%) and nurses (87%).

Appropriated statistical tests were used to assess the significant relations between the variables (table 5).

Table 5 – Median, minimum – maximum values of the nurse's tutor characteristics by group and comparison between them

Characteristics	Nurses (N) (n=221)		Teachers (T) (n=49)		Students (S) (n=192)		N/T/S	N/T	N/S	T/S
	Med ⁽¹⁾	Min-Max ⁽²⁾	Med ⁽¹⁾	Min-Max ⁽²⁾	Med ⁽¹⁾	Min-Max ⁽²⁾	<i>p</i> ⁽³⁾	<i>p</i> ⁽⁴⁾	<i>p</i> ⁽⁴⁾	<i>p</i> ⁽⁴⁾
Group A										
Item 1	4,0	1-18	3,0	1-18	6,0	1-18	<0,001	0,282	<0,001	0,001
Item 2	5,0	1-18	6,0	1-18	4,0	1-18	0,001	0,459	0,001	0,005
Item 3	2,0	1-18	2,0	1-18	3,0	1-18	0,011	0,609	0,003	0,156
Item 4	10,0	1-18	10,0	1-18	6,0	1-18	0,097	0,177	0,276	0,027
Item 5	3,0	1-18	3,0	1-15	2,0	1-15	<0,001	0,329	<0,001	0,002
Item 6	2,0	1-18	2,0	1-18	2,0	1-18	0,212	0,462	0,191	0,122
Group B										
Item 7	4,0	1-18	4,0	1-18	4,0	1-18	0,249	0,702	0,092	0,578
Item 8	5,0	1-18	6,0	1-18	4,0	1-18	<0,001	0,079	<0,001	<0,001
Item 9	3,0	1-18	3,0	1-15	3,0	1-15	0,712	0,603	0,447	0,926
Item 10	4,0	1-18	3,0	1-15	3,0	1-18	0,028	0,657	0,008	0,211
Item 11	2,0	1-18	2,0	1-5	2,5	1-18	0,008	0,323	0,020	0,004
Item 12	4,0	1-18	6,0	1-18	6,0	1-18	0,006	0,174	0,001	0,563
Group C										
Item 13	3,0	1-18	5,0	1-18	4,0	1-18	0,148	0,062	0,329	0,182
Item 14	5,0	1-18	4,0	1-15	6,0	1-18	<0,001	0,016	0,001	<0,001
Item 15	4,0	1-18	4,0	2-12	5,0	1-18	<0,001	0,066	<0,001	<0,001
Item 16	3,0	1-18	3,0	1-12	3,0	1-15	0,436	0,214	0,772	0,252
Item 17	1,0	1-15	1,0	1-12	1,0	1-12	0,013	0,372	0,003	0,385
Item 18	5,0	1-18	6,0	1-18	4,0	1-18	0,001	0,263	0,001	0,008

(1) Median; (2) Minimum-Maximum; (3) Kruskal Wallis Test, significance level of 5 %; (4) Mann Whitney Test, significance level of 1%

To the group of nurses and the nursing teachers, item 4 was the most valued characteristic with the value of 10, 0 for the median and item 17 was the less valued one with the value 1, 0 for the median.

To the group of the nursing students, item 17 was also the less valued one with the value 1, 0 for the median.

In table 6, we presented the scores of the dimensions of the Clinical Instructor Characteristics Ranking Scale by group and the comparison between them.

Table 6 – Scores of the dimensions of the Portuguese version of the Clinical Instructor Characteristics Ranking Scale by group and comparison between them

	Group						<i>p</i>
	Nurses (n=221)		Teachers (n=49)		Students (n=192)		
Score of the Teacher Dimension mean (Sd) ⁽³⁾	38,7	(11,8)	37,0	(10,8)	45,4	(10,5)	<i><0,001⁽¹⁾</i>
Score of the Nurse Dimension median (min-max) ⁽⁴⁾	38,0	(10,0-66,0)	41,0	(14,0-58,0)	28,0	(10,0-66,0)	<i><0,001⁽²⁾</i>
Score of the Person Dimension median (min-max) ⁽⁴⁾	17,0	(9,0-64,0)	19,0	(9,0-55,0)	19,5	(9,0-58,0)	<i>0,134⁽²⁾</i>

(1) One Way ANOVA Test, significance level of 5 %; (2) Kruskal Wallis Test, significance level of 5 %; (3) (Sd) Standard Deviation; (4) (min-max) Minimum-Maximum

The most valued dimension was the teacher one to the students and there were significant differences of opinion between the groups. The person dimension was the less valued dimension of all and in all groups.

4. Discussion

After the application of the Portuguese version of the Clinical Instructor Characteristics Ranking Scale, this research documents the valorization of the nurse's tutor characteristics. Rauen (1974) stated that the teacher dimension was the less valued dimension for the students. In Portugal, Antunes (1992) reached the same conclusion,

although the studies made by Santos (1999) and Carvalhal (2003) have different results. In the research conducted by Carvalhal (2003), the most valued dimension for the students was the teacher one, followed by the others and in the study made by Santos (1999) was the teacher dimension followed by the nurse and then the person one. In our study, the teacher dimension was the most valued by the nursing students followed by the nurse dimension and then the person dimension. Several authors reported that the role of each professional in the teaching learning process must be clarified, especially in the clinical training (Abreu, 2003; Franco, 2000; Longarito, 2002). In our research, an interesting finding was that the most valued dimension for the nursing teachers was the nurse dimension followed by the teacher one and for the nurses inquired it was the reverse (first the teacher dimension followed by the nurse dimension). Abreu (2002) pointed out the need of the clinical training being simultaneously supported by teachers and nurses with a complementary role between them.

Conclusion

The monitoring and the support of the pre-graduated nursing students is complex. In their teaching learning process there are many stakeholders, though, their roles must be clarified and they need to make efforts in the benefit of the students in order to train skilled professionals. Therefore, the nursing tutor is a key element in this process. The Clinical Instructor Characteristics Ranking Scale allows the valorization of the nurse's tutor characteristics and this study pointed out that there were differences of opinion among the groups inquired and inside each group although the person dimension is the less valued one for all groups.

On the basis of our findings, we recommend the role clarification of each professional in the clinical training and the choice of the nurse tutor should have specific criteria as the willingness of the nurse to be a nurse tutor, his/her clinical supervision training and finally his/her profile which should be consensual between the educational and health institutions.

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