

Structural empowerment of nurses in the brazilian context: An integrative review

Empoderamento estrutural dos enfermeiros no contexto brasileiro: Uma revisão integrativa

Empoderamiento estructural de enfermeras en el contexto brasileño: Una revisión integrativa

RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar a produção científica sobre o empoderamento estrutural dos enfermeiros na literatura brasileira no período de 2013 a 2020. Métodos: Trata-se de um estudo de revisão bibliográfica nas bases BDNF, MEDLINE, LILACS, Portal de Periódico da CAPES e Google Acadêmico, de acordo com a estratégia PICOT. As buscas foram feitas em janeiro de 2021. Resultados: Identificaram-se 135 estudos, sendo que dois foram selecionados com base nos critérios de inclusão e exclusão da pesquisa. Duas categorias emergiram na análise dos dados: o uso do referencial teórico do empoderamento estrutural, e; o empoderamento estrutural e a gestão em enfermagem. Conclusão: Constatou-se que o empoderamento estrutural tem tido pouca visibilidade no Brasil, na área de Enfermagem. Os incipientes resultados encontrados se limitam ao uso do referencial teórico do empoderamento estrutural em pesquisas qualitativas.

DESCRIPTORES: Enfermagem; Empoderamento; Ambiente de Trabalho.

ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the scientific production on the structural empowerment of nurses in the Brazilian literature from 2013 to 2020. Methods: This is a bibliographic review study in the BDNF, MEDLINE, LILACS, CAPES Periodical Portal and Google Scholar, according to the PICOT strategy. The searches were performed in January 2021. Results: 135 studies were identified, two of which were selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the research. Two categories emerged in the data analysis: the use of the theoretical framework of structural empowerment, and; structural empowerment and nursing management. Conclusion: It was found that structural empowerment has had little visibility in Brazil, in the area of Nursing. The incipient results found are limited to the use of the theoretical framework of structural empowerment in qualitative research.

DESCRIPTORS: Nursing; Empowerment; Working Environment.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar la producción científica sobre el empoderamiento estructural de los enfermeros en la literatura brasileña de 2013 a 2020. Métodos: Se trata de un estudio de revisión bibliográfica en el BDNF, MEDLINE, LILACS, Portal Periódico CAPES y Google Scholar, según la estrategia PICOT. Las búsquedas se realizaron en enero de 2021. Resultados: se identificaron 135 estudios, de los cuales dos fueron seleccionados en base a los criterios de inclusión y exclusión de la investigación. En el análisis de datos surgieron dos categorías: el uso del marco teórico del empoderamiento estructural, y; empoderamiento estructural y gestión de enfermería. Conclusión: Se constató que el empoderamiento estructural ha tenido poca visibilidad en Brasil, en el área de Enfermería. Los incipientes resultados encontrados se circunscriben al uso del marco teórico del empoderamiento estructural en la investigación cualitativa.

DESCRIPTORES: Enfermería; Empoderamiento; Ambiente de Trabajo.

RECEBIDO EM: 07/10/2022 APROVADO EM: 07/11/2022

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INTRODUCTION

TEmpowerment is a new and complex concept, having its roots in the feminist movement and social action ideology of the mid-1950s. The word empowerment is derived from the English language, influenced by movements such as self-help in the 1970s and community psychology in the 1980s. During the 1990s, it received an influx of movements that aimed to affirm the right to citizenship regarding medical practice, health education and the physical environment.^{1,2} Empowerment is based on three approaches: psychological approach, community approach and structural approach. Among these, the structural approach has stood out as the phenomenon that correlates the organizational environment with the conditions of effectiveness at work.^{1,2}

In the dimension of structural empowerment, Rosabeth Moss Kanter was the first to develop the theory of that approach during the 1970s. According to the theory, the social structures of work organizations in-

fluence the attitudes and behavior of employees, who rationally react to the situations they are confronted with. Workplace characteristics influence employees' attitudes and behaviors more than their own personal characteristics, enabling professionals to be more efficient and demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction, as they are given more autonomy and more responsibilities to make decisions.^{3,4}

There are four conditions that enable the individual to achieve structural empowerment: information, which refers to subjective knowledge, organizational political values, in addition to technical knowledge that enables effectiveness at work; access to support, which is related to the support of colleagues, be that emotional, social and technical; resource access, which refers to having the necessary materials, supplies, money, time, and equipment to enable us to meet organizational objectives; access to opportunity, which implies the professional's ability to engage in activities beyond their current scope of practice, in order to progress within the organization.⁴⁻⁶

When workers have access to these structures, they are highly motivated and find meaning in their work. This motivation allows them to achieve work-related goals, in addition to promoting the engagement and training of other people, reflecting greater organizational effectiveness.⁷

Kanter's theory³ of structural empowerment it has been widely used in nursing with important determination of health and well-being standards in health organizations with new conformations.⁴ Bawafaa, Wong Laschinger found that an empowering environment influences positive attitudes in the workplace, being a determining factor for good professional performance, for job satisfaction and for a positive leadership performance.⁸

According to Armstrong Laschinger⁹ structural empowerment from the perspective of nursing management, enables health organizations to provide nurses with access to high levels of knowledge, enabling effectiveness at work with regard to safety in procedures, decision-making, interprofessional relationships and patient care.⁴ Boamah found strong relationships

between nursing empowerment and job satisfaction, ensuring that these relationships provide greater engagement in tasks to the detriment of high levels of stress. Added to this, structural empowerment improves working relationships between leadership and nurses, reflecting better interactions in teamwork.⁵

Structural empowerment is measured by the Conditions for Work Effectiveness Questionnaire-II (CWEQ-II) instrument, and was originally developed by Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, and Wilk¹⁰, in Canada, where it was used with 404 nurses, allowing assessment of the four main empowerment scales described by Kanter. In Brazil, the 'CWEQ-II was translated, adapted and validated in 2013 by Bernadino et al² and was used to carry out a study with 40 nurses in two hospitals in Curitiba, with a Cronbach alpha of 0.86 for the first hospital and 0.88 for the second, which represents a high internal consistency of responses, indicating that this questionnaire can be used in Brazil and is really capable of measuring variables. After validation, the instrument was named Work Effectiveness Condition-II (CET-II).^{2,11}

There is a shortage of Brazilian studies that address structural empowerment, so far, based on the instrument developed by Laschinger, demonstrating the need to develop research that assesses the structural empowerment of nurses in health institutions.¹²

Thus, realizing this gap, the objective was to explore the structural empowerment of nurses in the Brazilian context, guided by the following question: how has the structural empowerment of nurses been addressed in the Brazilian literature? Therefore, an integrative review was carried out, with the objective of investigating and analyzing the scientific production on the structural empowerment of nurses in Brazilian journals, in the period between 2013 and 2020.

Workplace characteristics influence employees' attitudes and behaviors more than their own personal characteristics, enabling professionals to be more efficient and demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction, as they are given more autonomy and more responsibilities to make decisions.

METHODS

An integrative review of the literature on Structural Empowerment in the Brazilian scientific nursing production was carried out between 2013 and 2020. The following steps were followed for its construction: elaboration of the guiding question, search or sampling in the literature, data collection, critical analysis of the included studies, discussion of the results and, finally, presentation of the integrative review.¹³⁻¹⁴

In the first stage, the research question was elaborated with the application of the PICOT strategy, which culminated in: how is structural empowerment presented in Brazilian Nursing research, in the period from 2013 to 2020? The delimitation of the initial year of the research is based on the year of publication of the instrument that measures structural empowerment in the Brazilian context.

Seeking greater coverage in data collection, five databases were consulted for the selection of publications: Latin American Literature in Health Sciences (LILACS), International Literature in Health Sciences (MEDLINE), Nursing Database (BDENF), CAPES Journal Portal and Google Scholar. The searches took place in January 2021.

In the research strategy, the following terms were used according to the Health Sciences Descriptors (DeCS): empowerment and nursing. The term "structural" was added to the research strategy. This was included because of its complementarity with the object of the study. To cross between the terms, the Boolean operators "AND" and "OR" were used in order to obtain the largest possible number of results, sensitive to the search. The final research strategy resulted in: "empowerment (empoderamento) OR structural empowerment (empoderamento estrutural) AND

nursing (enfermagem)”.

The following inclusion criteria were established: articles published in full in Portuguese, Brazilian articles, articles that addressed empowerment according to Kanter's structural theory, articles in journals, dissertations, theses, unpublished studies, monographs and studies in which the population is composed of nurses. The exclusion criteria were: articles that were not related to the empowerment of nurses, based on Kanter's theory; those whose population is not composed of nurses, duplicate articles, annals at events, review articles, opinion articles, books, historical articles.

The quality of the different studies was analyzed using an instrument validated by Ursi¹⁵, considering the elements: identification of the original article, methodological characteristics of the study, evaluation of the methodological rigor of the interventions measured and the results found. These data were extracted into a database in Excel 2011, which contained information such as: article title, journal, authors/year, objective, methodological design.

Because it is an integrative review carried out with literature available in the databases, approval by the Research Ethics Committee was waived, in accordance with Resolutions 466/12 and 510/16 of the National Health Council.

RESULTS

138 articles were identified, as detailed in Table 1, and 11 articles were selected.

Analysis of the full text allowed the exclusion of nine articles that were unrelated to Kanter's structural empowerment and/or did not fit the search criteria. Among these excluded articles, two were the cross-cultural validations of the instrument that allows the assessment of structural empowerment in the Portuguese lan-

Table 1. Results according to the Database and research refinement, Pinheiro, MA, Brazil, 2021.

Database	Results	Results after subject refinement	Results after language refinement and year of publication
MEDLINE	21	21	3
BDEF	219	32	16
CAPES journal	559	124	50
LILACS	260	43	19
Google Scholar	50	50	50

Source: Own elaboration, 2021.

Table 2. Summary of articles according to title, journal, authorship and year, objective, methodological design, Pinheiro, MA, Brazil, 2021.

Authors / Year	Title of the article	Publication	Objective	Methodological design
Albini, 2013	Experiencing the empowerment of nurses in a teaching hospital in the implementation of a management model. (Vivenciando o empoderamento do enfermeiro em um hospital de ensino na implementação de modelo gerencial.)	Doctoral thesis	The objective was to interpret the experience of the empowerment process by nurses in a teaching hospital in the implementation of a management model and to develop a theoretical model of this experience.	Qualitative approach
Massumessi et al. 2014	The leadership process in nursing management. (O processo de liderança no gerenciamento do enfermeiro.)	Accreditation Magazine	The objective of the study was to bring theoretical models of structural empowerment and psychological empowerment, as tools to help nurses build their own knowledge about leadership.	Qualitative approach

Source: Own elaboration, 2021.

guage of Brazil and Portugal, which are unsuitable for this review. A literature review article was also excluded because, despite addressing structural empowerment through Kanter's vision and being readable in Portuguese, its scope of production was not in Brazil.

Only two articles^{16, 17} fulfilled all the criteria proposed in this review, approaching empowerment from Kanter's structural view. Data from the articles are shown in Table 2.

DISCUSSION

During the analysis of the identified articles, two categories emerged: the use of the theoretical framework of structural empowerment; empowerment and management in nursing.

The Structural Empowerment of Nurses as a theoretical framework in Brazil

The selected articles had a qualitative methodological design and the

authors used Kanter's concepts 3 to substantiate and discuss the work of nurses within a managerial and leadership perspective. This finding differs from other studies in which the predominance of the quantitative approach using the CWEQ-II instrument was evidenced to assess the level of empowerment.^{12,18-19}

In the review of Goedhart Oostveen 18, which aimed to evaluate the direct relationships between structural empowerment and the quality of care provided to patients, all 12 (100%) selected articles had a quantitative approach and used the CWEQ or CWEQ-II instrument, to assess the level of empowerment of nurses. In Teixeira's review 12, which sought to understand the relationship between empowerment and job satisfaction, all articles (n=22) had a quantitative approach and of these, 15 (68%) used the CWEQ-II. Spencer and McLaren 19 also contribute by stating that quantitative studies on structural empowerment predominate in the international literature, mainly in the United States and Canada.

About this, Albin¹⁷ recommends carrying out studies with both methodological designs and also praises the importance of carrying out quantitative studies in Brazil, which demonstrate the level of empowerment of nurses, as these can encourage subsidies for specific strategies aimed at the needs of this professional category.

The results of this review may be predictive of the non-utility and/or lack of knowledge of the instrument that measures empowerment in Brazil, inclining studies on structural empowerment towards a theoretical and qualitative approach. This prerogative is in accordance with what Bernadino 2 affirms when performing the validation of the CWEQ-II instrument for the Brazilian version. The researcher concludes that instruments that measure the structural empowerment of nurses in health institutions is not a

common practice in the national context. Teixeira 20 also corroborates by stating that studies on structural empowerment are important in the Portuguese language due to their scarcity. Thus, not only is it important to carry out qualitative studies, but also quantitative studies that assess the level of structural empowerment of nurses in the Brazilian context.

Structural Empowerment in Nursing Administration

The articles that make up this review correlated structural empowerment with the nurse's managerial/administrative function. While one of the articles used Kanter's theory of structural empowerment to help nurses' knowledge of leadership, the other study used the same theoretical concepts to base the researcher's perspective on the process of changing the management model of a teaching hospital. In both cases, nursing administration was the researchers' scope of work.

These data are consistent with Moura's review 21 on leadership and job satisfaction, where at least 05 (33%) articles analyzed related leadership with structural empowerment. Other studies have also linked structural empowerment with leadership in nursing^{4-9,11,19,22} and point out that empowered nurse leaders play a vital role within the institution, as they can make decisions in line with their skills and convictions, improving the working conditions of the nursing team and the quality of nursing care.

A study carried out in Canada found that an empowering environment triggers a positive leadership performance.⁸ Regan and Rodriguez also emphasize the subject, stating that high levels of empowerment influence nurses' perception of their role in the institution, in addition to strengthening satisfaction and ability to perform the most varied management responsibilities.⁶

Furthermore, it was identified that one of the results of this review used the administration of nurses in the hospital context as the locus of investigation.¹⁷ This shows what the literature has pointed out about the priority given to carrying out studies on structural empowerment in the hospital context.^{18,21-23} About that, Moura²¹ argues that the nurse who assumes the role of manager in the hospital context needs to be prepared to assume this role, which is a basic condition to seek changes in their daily practice, with a view to the quality of care provided to the patient. This prerogative strengthens the importance of studies on the structural empowerment of the nurse manager and leader in the hospital environment, which may result in opportunities for restructuring working conditions, bringing gains for the nurse, for nursing, for the client and the institution.^{2,12,20}

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that structural empowerment has had little visibility in Brazil, in the Nursing area, when compared to other countries, such as Canada, the United States of America, China and European countries. Despite the fact that the instrument that assesses nurses' perception of structural empowerment has been validated for the Brazilian version since 2013, the notability of the instrument in the national scenario has still been low.

In this sense, there is a lack of studies about structural empowerment in the Brazilian context and the results found in these studies are limited to the use of the theoretical framework of structural empowerment in qualitative research. It is, therefore, a challenge to assess nurses' perception of empowerment and discern their main contributing factors, in order to optimize practice.

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