

Abstract

Original Article

Exploring the Cultural Aspects of Compassion in Nursing Care: A Comparative Study of Greece and Cyprus

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Abstract

Introduction: The concept of compassionate care within a cultural context in terms of how it might be perceived and demonstrated in practice it is important to be considered. In this paper the findings from data collected from Greek and Greek-Cypriot Nurses during a study which sought to explore similarities and differences between the two countries regarding perceptions of compassion.

Methods: This is an exploratory, cross-sectional descriptive study. Data have been extracted from an on-line survey involving 15 countries. Greek-Cypriot participants were recruited through local professional organizations and university/college student associations. In Greece, participants were recruited through university associations and social networks. Participants were emailed a link to the survey and completed on-line a research tool consisted of 10 open and closed questions.

Results: Many similarities were identified between the two groups following their response to the survey, although some small differences were also identified. From the qualitative findings, 3 main themes emerged for both groups: compassionate communication; awareness of needs; and kindness, whilst a fourth theme was also identified applying mostly to the Greek nurses with regard to factors which might hinder compassion and referring mainly to the effects of economic crisis.

Discussion: A number of similarities were identified between the two countries and the feeling that compassion in nursing is very important, and also stating that nurses received little compassion from management. However, despite similarities in the perceptions of Greek and Greek-Cypriot nurses, some differences were also identified. Furthermore, our study revealed a greater number of Greek nurses reporting effects of austerity.

Conclusion: Greek and Greek Cypriot nurses may differ on how they define compassion but their practical expressions on compassion are very similar. Both countries felt that their own experiences of compassion were most likely to come from colleagues or patients, and most unlikely to come from their managers. There is an urgent need for compassionate leaders within their public health care systems, who will develop organizational cultures which nurture and sustain compassion. This is particularly evident in the case of Greece where we identified a larger number of nurses reporting restraints due to financial crisis.

Key Words: Compassion, Greek/Greek-Cypriot nurses, culture, similarities, differences