

WORKING WITH THE ELDERLY: FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE INTEREST OF NURSING STUDENTS IN BRAZIL AND CHILE

TRABALHAR COM IDOSOS: FATORES ASSOCIADOS AO INTERESSE DE ESTUDANTES DE ENFERMAGEM NO BRASIL E NO CHILE

TRABAJAR CON ANCIANOS: FACTORES ASOCIADOS CON EL INTERÉS DE LOS ESTUDIANTES DE ENFERMERÍA EN BRASIL Y CHILE

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Objective: to identify factors associated with the interest in working with the elderly as a future job market among nursing students from Brazil and Chile. **Method:** cross-sectional analytical study, conducted between March and September 2018, including 885 nursing students. A form was used with sociodemographic information related to family and areas of activity and the Family Support Perception Inventory. Statistical analysis included bivariate associations and multiple logistic regression models. **Results:** 27.5% of the students considered working with the elderly as a possible professional performance, without association with family variables. There were positive associations between those who attended public institutions and cited working with children and negative associations among older students. **Conclusion:** for most nursing students in Brazil and Chile, working with the elderly was not considered as a possibility of professional performance; this possibility was lower among older students and higher among students from public institutions.

Descriptors: Aging. Nursing Students. Nursing Education. Labor Market. Intention.

Objetivo: identificar fatores associados ao interesse em trabalhar com idosos como futuro mercado de trabalho entre estudantes de enfermagem do Brasil e do Chile. *Método:* estudo transversal analítico, realizado entre março e setembro de 2018, incluindo 885 estudantes de enfermagem. *Utilizou-se formulário com informações sociodemográficas, relacionadas à família e áreas de atuação e o Inventário de Percepção de Suporte Familiar.*

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A análise estatística incluiu associações bivariadas e modelos de regressão logística múltipla. Resultados: 27,5% dos estudantes consideraram trabalhar com idosos como possível atuação profissional, sem associação com variáveis familiares. Verificaram-se associações positivas entre aqueles que cursavam em instituições públicas e citavam trabalhar com crianças e associações negativas entre alunos mais velhos. Conclusão: para a maioria dos estudantes de enfermagem do Brasil e do Chile, o trabalho com idosos não era considerado como possibilidade de atuação profissional; essa possibilidade era menor entre os alunos mais velhos e maior entre alunos de instituições públicas.

Descritores: Envelhecimento. Estudantes de Enfermagem. Educação em Enfermagem. Mercado de Trabalho. Intenção.

Objetivo: identificar factores asociados con el interés en trabajar con los ancianos como un futuro mercado laboral entre los estudiantes de enfermería de Brasil y Chile. Método: estudio analítico transversal, realizado entre marzo y septiembre de 2018, incluyendo 885 estudiantes de enfermería. Se utilizó un formulario con información sociodemográfica relacionada con la familia y las áreas de actividad y el Inventario de Percepción de Apoyo Familiar. El análisis estadístico incluyó asociaciones bivariantes y múltiples modelos de regresión logística. Resultados: El 27,5% de los estudiantes consideró trabajar con los ancianos como un posible desempeño profesional, sin asociación con variables familiares. Hubo asociaciones positivas entre estudiantes de instituciones públicas y citaron trabajar con niños y asociaciones negativas entre los estudiantes mayores. Conclusión: para la mayoría de los estudiantes de enfermería en Brasil y Chile, el trabajo con los ancianos no fue considerado como una posibilidad de desempeño profesional; esta posibilidad fue menor entre los estudiantes mayores y más grande entre los estudiantes de instituciones públicas.

Descriptores: Envejecimiento. Estudiantes de Enfermería. Educación en Enfermería. Mercado laboral. Intención.

Introduction

Following global trends in population aging, Brazil and Chile present worrying data. In Brazil, there are projections of an increase in life expectancy at birth in 2030 to 78.64 years⁽¹⁾. People aged over 65 years, who, in 2020, represented 9.83%, will represent 13.54% of the population in 2030 and 25.49% in 2060⁽¹⁾. In Chile, life expectancy in 2020 was estimated at 85.25 years⁽²⁾. Data from 2017 already indicated a projection of elderly people (aged 60 years or older) corresponding to 19.3% of the population⁽³⁾. Thus, in absolute numbers, the number of elderly people in 2021 is close to 22 million in Brazil⁽¹⁾ and 3.5 million in Chile⁽²⁾.

The economic impacts of this aging can be perceived as an increased demand for specialized services, in the manufacture of drug-chemical, pharmaceutical, aesthetic, nutritional products, expansion of private health, financial intermediation, insurance, supplementary pension, among others⁽⁴⁾.

In the health area, population aging in Latin America have been widely observed in the demand for elder care, mainly portrayed by functional dependence, which increases with aging. A

meta-analysis revealed that high prevalence of functional disability in the Brazilian elderly, with an average of 42.8% (± 21.0) among women and 39.6% (± 26.2) among men⁽⁵⁾. In Chile, 14.2% of the elderly have some functional dependence, requiring help to perform activities of daily living (ADL), such as eating, bathing, moving indoors, using the bathroom, lying down or getting out of bed or dressing⁽²⁾.

Forms of financing and availability of health services for this population, through care models focused on health promotion and prevention, would avoid overloading the health system^(4,6). However, despite initiatives such as the *Examen de Medicina Preventiva del Aulto Mayor* (EMPAM) in Chile, current Latin American public policies are insufficient, not following demographic and social transformations⁽⁷⁾.

Moreover, elder care, which was previously provided informally by family members, has undergone changes due to new social dynamics and new family arrangements, which include many individuals choosing to remain alone, single-parenthood, homoparenthood, couples who choose not to have children, among others.

Together with women's insertion in the labor market, social changes will increasingly affect the informal elder care⁽⁸⁾.

There is a trend to have gaps in the future about elder care and health, opening fields of action to the professional nurse. Thus, education programs have the responsibility to prepare future nurses, so that they go beyond the restricted view of health and include sociocultural interventions in an active participation with the elderly, aiming to improve their quality of life⁽⁹⁾.

However, a review study⁽¹⁰⁾ on the preparation of nurses and nursing students to care for the elderly in low- and middle-income countries revealed, in addition to insufficient knowledge and misconceptions about the care of the elderly, the low preference for working with these individuals.

International research indicates, in the future nursing professional, distancing from the desire to care for the elderly, revealing motivations related to cultural issues and lack of deepening of the theme during graduation. Demographic or social factors, such as family relationships, living with the elderly outside the hospital environment, ethnicity and religion⁽¹¹⁻¹²⁾, could also influence career choices and students' desire to work with the elderly⁽¹³⁾.

Despite the relevance of the theme, there is a scarcity of research in Latin America. Knowing the interest of nursing students in working with the elderly as a future professional, as a possibility of a job market, in countries such as Brazil and Chile, can help guide the development of programs related to aging in these places, an innovative attitude based on the economy of longevity, ensuring sustainability of nursing services for the growing elderly population.

Thus, the present study aimed to identify factors associated with the interest in working with the elderly as a future job market among nursing students from Brazil and Chile.

Method

This is a cross-sectional analytical study, conducted by the STROBE tool, with data

collected from March to September 2018 in five Brazilian and Chilean educational institutions. In Brazil, students from a day course at a public university and two night courses of private institutions in the countryside of the state of São Paulo participated. In Chile, students from day courses at a public and a private university took part, both from the Maule region. The nursing courses covered the period of five years, except for the Brazilian public university (4 years).

With a total population of 1,196 students enrolled in undergraduate Nursing courses, the non-probabilistic (intentional) sample covered 74% (n=885) of respondents in relation to the population.

The data collection instrument, designed in Portuguese and Spanish by the researchers, was composed of two parts: questionnaire with sociodemographic, family and income information; spreadsheet to fill out open answers to cite possibilities of areas of activity in relation to the labor market of the future nurse.

To assess the work with the elderly as a possibility of a job market, the words mentioned by the interviewees in the second part of the collection instrument were examined to search for terms related to aging or the elderly, such as: geriatrics, gerontology, nursing homes, Long-Term Elderly Care Institutions (LTECI), caregiver of the elderly, among others.

In order to verify the interviewees' family relationships, the Family Support Perception Inventory (FSPI) was also used. This is a Brazilian instrument, validated in Chile⁽¹⁴⁾ and has good internal consistency (0.93). Composed of 42 items, it evaluates three factors: affective consistency (expressed by positive affective relationships within the family, interests for the other, verbal and nonverbal expression of affection, clarity in the roles and rules of family members, as well as skills and strategies to face conflict situations); family adaptation (verified by expressions of negative feelings about the family, such as exclusion, anger, shame, aggressive relationships, irritation, misunderstanding, perceived competence in the family, interests and guilt among family members, in conflict situations); and family autonomy (perception

of relationships of trust, privacy and freedom among family members)⁽¹⁵⁾.

With a standardized approach procedure in both countries, the students were verbally invited by the researchers during the classes, and the voluntary participation in the study was explained. The completion of the instruments took about 30 minutes, being collected and encrypted only for identification of the educational institution and country.

The analysis of the factors associated with the interest in working with the elderly after finishing nursing college was performed by adjusting multiple logistic regression models. Associations were considered statistically significant if $p < 0.05$. The analysis was performed with the Software SPSS v21.0.

Ethical aspects were respected in both countries. In Brazil, the study was previously approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Botucatu Medical School of the Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP), by Opinions 2.499.340 and 2.885.923; in Chile, the project that includes this research was approved by the Ethics Committee

of the Universidad Autónoma de Chile by *Acta de Evaluación* n. 75-18. The study participants signed the Informed Consent Form.

Results

The participants were 378 Brazilian students (43.7%) and 487 Chileans (56.3%), totaling a sample of 865 students, composed mostly of women (81.5%), from private institutions (55.1%) aged between 20 and 25 years (60.2%), according to Table 1.

Regarding family information, Table 1 shows that the majority lives with the family (76.2%), has no children (87.7%) or partners (88.9%) and has lower family income (38.1%). The perceived family support score considered a median of 63 (min=0; max=82) in Brazil and 65 (min=0; max=80) in Chile.

Table 1 also shows, regarding the pretensions for the professional future after graduation, that less than one third of the students indicate work possibilities related to the elderly, both in Brazil (n=117; 31.0%) as in Chile (n=121; 24.8%).

Table 1 – Distribution of the students' sociodemographic variables, family information, career possibility related to the elderly. Brazil and Chile – 2018. (N=865) (continued)

Variables	Brazil		Chile		Total	
	n (378)	%	n (487)	%	n (865)	%
Type of institution						
Public	106	28.0	282	57.9	388	44.9
Private	272	72.0	205	42.1	477	55.1
Course year						
1	89	23.5	80	16.4	169	19.5
2	95	25.1	128	26.3	223	25.8
3	102	27.0	112	23.0	214	24.7
4	87	23.0	105	21.6	192	22.2
5	5	1.3	62	12.7	67	7.7
Sex						
Female	333	88.1	372	76.4	705	81.5
Male	45	11.9	115	23.6	160	18.5
Age group						
<=19	97	25.7	94	19.3	191	22.1
20-25	171	45.2	350	71.9	521	60.2
26 or more	110	29.1	43	8.8	153	17.7
Marital status						
Without partner	288	76.2	481	98.8	769	88.9
With partner	90	23.8	6	1.2	96	11.1
Children						
No	296	78.3	463	95.1	759	87.7
Yes	82	21.7	24	4.9	106	12.3

Table 1 – Distribution of the students' sociodemographic variables, family information, career possibility related to the elderly. Brazil and Chile – 2018. (N=865) (conclusion)

Variables	Brazil		Chile		Total	
	n (378)	%	n (487)	%	n (865)	%
Family income						
Line 1	178	47.1	97	19.9	275	31.8
Line 2	147	38.9	106	21.8	253	29.2
Line 3	34	9.0	112	23.0	146	16.9
Line 4	9	2.4	96	19.7	105	12.1
Line 5	10	2.6	76	15.6	86	9.9
Lives with family						
No	101	26.7	105	21.6	206	23.8
Yes	277	73.3	382	78.4	659	76.2
Lives with someone						
No	366	96.8	397	81.5	763	88.2
Yes	12	3.2	90	18.5	102	11.8
Lives alone						
No	347	91.8	474	97.3	821	94.9
Yes	31	8.2	13	2.7	44	5.1
Family Support Perception Inventory (median)						
Intention to wage	63		65			
No	355	93.9	455	93.4	810	93.6
Yes	23	6.1	32	6.6	55	6.4
Work with children in the future						
No	228	60.3	356	73.1	584	67.5
Yes	150	39.7	131	26.9	281	32.5
Work with the elderly in the future						
No	261	69.0	366	75.2	627	72.5
Yes	117	31.0	121	24.8	238	27.5

Source: Created by the authors.

According to the bivariate associations model described in Table 2, there were significant differences in the factors that could condition this intention, being higher in Brazil in relation to Chile ($p=0.046$; OR 0.74). In Chile, the chance of intending to work with the elderly is lower among students from private institutions ($p<0.001$; OR 0.38), in the same way that it is lower among students aged 20 to 25 years compared to younger students ($p=0.018$; OR 0.65). On the other hand, the possibility of working with the elderly increases in Chile

among those who live with someone ($p=0.040$; OR 1.68), while in Brazil, this chance occurs among those who live alone ($p=0.032$; OR 1.07). In addition, considering working with the elderly was higher among students who also see the possibility of working with children in the future in Brazil ($p<0.001$; OR 3.37) and Chile ($p<0.001$; OR 6.86). No associations were found in both countries between any of the family variables studied, such as marital status, having children, living with family or perceived family support.

Table 2 – Bivariate associations for the chance of considering working with the elderly as a future labor market. Brazil and Chile – 2018. (N=865) (continued)

Variables	Brazil			Chile		
	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval	p-value	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval	p-value
Type of institution	1.19	0.73 1.95	0.487	0.38	0.24 0.60	0.000
Course year	0.86	0.71 1.04	0.125	0.91	0.77 1.07	0.239

Table 2 – Bivariate associations for the chance of considering working with the elderly as a future labor market. Brazil and Chile – 2018. (N=865) (conclusion)

Variables	Brazil			Chile		
	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval	p-value	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval	p-value
Sex	0.79	0.39 1.59	0.508	0.65	0.39 1.10	0.106
Age group (Reference ≤ 19 years)			0.594			0.030
20-25	0.77	0.45 1.30	0.325	0.60	0.37 0.99	0.044
≥ 26	0.79	0.44 1.42	0.439	0.31	0.12 0.82	0.018
Marital status	1.08	0.65 1.80	0.765	1.52	0.28 8.41	0.631
With children	1.29	0.77 2.17	0.329	0.79	0.29 2.16	0.642
Family income			0.500			0.590
Line 1	0.89	0.56 1.42	0.626	0.80	0.41 1.54	0.498
Line 2	0.52	0.22 1.27	0.152	1.01	0.54 1.90	0.966
Line 3	1.61	0.42 6.23	0.488	0.96	0.50 1.85	0.899
Line 4	0.50	0.10 2.45	0.396	1.40	0.72 2.74	0.320
Family Support Perception Inventory	1.00	0.99 1.01	0.926	1.00	0.99 1.02	0.638
Living with family	0.90	0.55 1.46	0.662	0.74	0.45 1.19	0.211
Living with someone	1.12	0.33 3.79	0.856	1.68	1.02 2.76	0.040
Living alone	2.25	1.07 4.73	0.032	0.25	0.03 1.91	0.180
Intention to wage	0.78	0.30 2.02	0.603	1.41	0.65 3.07	0.388
Intention to care for children	3.37	2.14 5.30	0.000	6.86	4.36 10.80	0.000

Source: Created by the authors.

When multiple regression models were used in the total sample, significant differences were found only in relation to public and private institutions and care for the elderly and children. Thus, the chance of having the intention of working with the elderly was lower among

students from private institution ($p=0.009$; OR 0.58). On the other hand, the chance of having the intention of working with the elderly was almost five times higher among students who intend to work with children ($p<0.001$; OR 4.65).

Table 3 – Multiple regression for the chance of considering working with the elderly as a future job market. Brazil and Chile – 2018. (N=865)

Variable	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval	p-value
Chilean Student (Reference = Brazil)	0.72	0.47 1.09	0.117
Private Institution (Reference = Public)	0.58	0.38 0.87	0.009
Year	0.88	0.75 1.04	0.133
Male sex	0.85	0.55 1.33	0.490
Age group (Ref ≤ 19 years)			0.847
20-25	1.05	0.65 1.68	0.841
≥ 26	1.18	0.65 2.16	0.585
Lives with family	1.63	0.76 3.51	0.209
Lives with someone	2.41	0.99 5.83	0.052
Lives alone	2.35	0.90 6.14	0.080
Intention to work with children	4.65	3.35 6.47	0.000

Source: Created by the authors.

Discussion

This is the first study that evaluates the work with the elderly as a possible market for the professional performance of future nurses, comparing the two countries of Latin

America and considering family issues, besides incorporating potential associated factors. The results revealed that, for most nursing students interviewed, working with the elderly was not considered as a possible market for professional performance, without association with any of the

family variables studied. Being slightly higher among those who attended public institutions in Chile, there was a decrease in this possibility among older students compared to younger students (up to 19 years). On the other hand, the possibility increased in Chile among those who lived with someone while, in Brazil, this chance occurred among those who lived alone. It was also higher among students who cited the possibility of working with children in both countries.

With levels below expected, most students did not consider the possibility of working with the elderly, confirming the study⁽¹⁰⁾ on low preference in middle and low income countries. This study contradicts the results of studies conducted in developed countries, such as Sweden, where 58% of respondents answered that they considered working with the elderly⁽¹⁶⁾, or even Australia, China and the United States, where there were favorable attitudes and positive perception of working with older people⁽¹⁷⁻¹⁹⁾. However, studies from Turkey and Saudi Arabia, despite presenting individual averages just above neutral or moderate scores, were also lower than expected, given the cultural importance of aging in these societies^(11,20). These findings may indicate a need to promote the competencies and skills inherent to the care of the elderly, through appropriate pedagogical projects that encourage future work with this population.

Despite our expectations, none of the family variables was associated with the expectation of working with the elderly, corroborating a study conducted with 468 Turkish students, in which the only predictors were attitudes about aging⁽²⁰⁾. Moreover, the attitudes of the students interviewed in that survey were worse among those who had an elder living with them, indicating that exposure to the elderly did not necessarily improve attitudes.

A study in Taiwan pointed out that the willingness of nursing students to care for the elderly was not associated with the period of time with the elderly or grandparents who provided childcare to the students, but to the attitudes of the students towards the elderly, paying attention

to issues related to the elderly and having the experience of volunteering in the care of the elderly⁽¹³⁾. This indicates that participation in educational activities in elderly care environments, knowledge about aging and the institutional environment that promotes this contact can positively contribute to the intentions of students to work with those individuals in the future.

Although Brazilian students considered a little more the possibility of working with the elderly than Chileans, no significant differences were observed between the two Latin countries. These findings may be associated with the similarity of the historical context related to their political emancipations and social and cultural characteristics, reflected in the process of human development in those countries⁽³⁾. In this same sense, a study conducted among nursing students from Korea and the United States showed a more negative attitude of Koreans towards older adults, while American students showed a greater willingness to care for them, probably due to large cultural differences⁽¹⁹⁾.

The positive association between the possibility of working with the elderly and those who attended public institutions, more expressive in Chile, corroborates the result of a nationwide study conducted with 1,462 nursing students from Malaysia, which also revealed that students from public educational environments are more inclined to care for older people, exploring religious and ethnic issues⁽¹²⁾. These findings may reveal differences in the profile of students attending public and private institutions in both Latin countries. It is also advisable to reflect on the different curricula adopted, since the hours and the volume of internship and their insertion in places of care that included the elderly could be influencing these results. In Brazil, students from public schools often lived alone, since most came from other cities and attended full-time classes, pointing to another congruence in the associations found in the study.

Regarding the reduction of the possibility of professional performance among the elderly among older students compared to younger students (up to 19 years old), this research finds

similarity with a study from Turkey, in which, the older the student, the worse the attitude towards aging⁽²⁰⁾, as well as nursing students in the USA, who showed low willingness to care for the elderly when they were in the last year⁽¹⁹⁾. In studies conducted in Saudi Arabia, Taiwan and Sweden, there was no association between age and students' willingness to work in the care of the elderly^(11,13,16). However, an Australian study with 886 nursing students showed that younger participants and those who had no experience with the elderly had less positive perceptions regarding working with these individuals⁽¹⁷⁾. The study found that, although students had positive perceptions about working with the elderly, they did not want to commit themselves to working with older people upon qualification⁽¹⁷⁾. As pointed out in The Australian investigation⁽¹⁷⁾, this research indicates that students may have lost interest in the care of the elderly during the course, having developed greater aspiration for other fields of nursing care as they advanced during the program. It may also point to generational differences among the young people studied⁽⁸⁾. Therefore, the reasons for this disinterest should be understood in future studies, in order to act in the restoration and commitment in elder care.

Therefore, the curricula should be reviewed, in a way that adapts to the current context of work and professional development that young millennials are following in nursing. It is necessary to consider changes in undergraduate profiles, so that they are congruent with the demands of the world of work, so influenced by population aging, as well as expectations in relation to these young people⁽²¹⁾, so that they consider, with greater emphasis, the job opportunities that nursing students have in other areas, such as management, education, research and entrepreneurship⁽²²⁾.

Pointing out the possibility of working with the elderly was five times higher among students who also mentioned working with children. This may reflect the premises of nursing care related to humanization, regardless of age, and to the pillars of education, supported by the history of the profession.

In preparation for the projected exponential increase in the number of elderly people, curricular changes are very necessary in all health sciences⁽²⁰⁾. Considering the low availability to work with the elderly in this study conducted in Brazil and Chile, it is essential to develop positive skills and attitudes towards older adults and the desire for care for the elderly as a possibility of a job market for future nursing professionals⁽¹⁰⁾.

Studies confirm the importance of educational preparation and the favorable learning environment^(16,20). They also emphasize the relevance of nursing educators in recognizing the positive attitudes of students based on early clinical practices in the care of the elderly. Learning experiences aimed at the care of the elderly in several clinical contexts⁽¹⁶⁾, accompanied by nurses specialized in elder care⁽¹⁷⁾, need to be implemented in nursing curricula, ensuring that positive attitudes prevail throughout the nursing course.

Thus, it is necessary to take into account the needs and priorities of this generation of students, with their new work and family trajectories. In this sense, providing the opportunity for these young people have a double meaning. On the one hand, it favors their perspectives; on the other hand, it contributes to economic development, social cohesion and general well-being⁽²³⁾. Adapting curricular guidelines for this new scenario is in line with the proposed study⁽⁸⁾ that proposes the creation of policies aimed at these young people as a way of investing in the new human capital, promoting the insertion of labor in quality jobs, a very controversial theme for this generation.

A limitation was the non-probabilistic sample, but almost all of the students from each institution participated in the research, thus increasing the possibility of the results being generalized to the participating institutions. However, the results should be carefully generalized, due to the size of these two populations. Nevertheless, the study brings important contributions, when discussing the importance of adequacy of nursing education, aiming at the preparation of future nurses and full care to the elderly population.

Conclusion

The study reveals that, for most nursing students interviewed in Brazil and Chile, working with the elderly was not considered as a possibility of professional performance; this possibility was lower among older students and higher among students from public institutions. Among those was also mentioned the possibility of working with children.

Future studies should guide the development of pedagogical projects in nursing graduation that encourage the inclusion of the aging theme, in order to ensure the provision of services for the growing elderly population in Latin America. At the same time, they should expand the possibilities of working in the labor market of future nursing professionals. This will certainly bring positive repercussions in meeting the needs of the elderly, in a society that recognizes and includes them in sustained development, in a constant improvement of the different aspects related to the quality of life and well-being of all.

Collaborations:

1 – conception, design, analysis and interpretation of data: Rosana Maria Barreto Colichi, Andres Eduardo Jimenez Figueroa, Verónica Gómez Urrutia and Hélio Rubens de Carvalho Nunes;

2 – writing of the article and relevant critical review of the intellectual content: Rosana Maria Barreto Colichi, Andres Eduardo Jimenez Figueroa, Verónica Gómez Urrutia, Hélio Rubens de Carvalho Nunes and Silvana Andrea Molina Lima;

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