Title

A commentary on spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality in nursing management

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A commentary on spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality in nursing management

Abstract

Aim: Bring to discussion how spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality, on a health care system that faces constant challenges and seeks constant adaptations, as a way to guarantee nurses' well-being and quality of care

Background: The work environment has shown to have impact on staff well-being. Workplace spirituality relates to sense of belonging, motivation and commitment. A spiritual leadership is fundamental to develop workplace spirituality.

Evaluation:

Starting from literature, a reflection on the theme was carried out based on the results of the development of spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality in health care institutions, in professionals and in patients.

Key issues: Nurses have spiritual needs which need to be also addressed in order to promote the sense of identification with the institutions vision and goals. A relation between spiritual leadership, workplace spirituality and subjective well-being is often found in literature, and this is critical evidence towards new management and leadership dynamics and models in health care institutions, that should integrate workplace spirituality.

Conclusion: Nursing leaders are responsible for workplace spirituality facilitation. Nursing leadership and workplace spirituality seem both an answer and way to the change of health institutions management paradigm, but more studies are needed to inform this change in practice.

Implications for Nursing Management

- Workplace spirituality must be promoted in all healthcare institutions, aiming the humanization of care and teams.
- Nursing leaders must have spiritual competences and must include the promotion of workplace spirituality in daily agenda as a foundational area in management.
- The healthcare institutions' managers should consider the best leaders who should facilitate workplace spirituality.

Keywords: Spiritual leadership; workplace spirituality; job satisfaction; Motivation; health manager

Introduction

Spirituality integrates nursing heritage, but only in the 80's of the last century this theme was included in an explicit way in nursing theories (Matič Supervisor, 2004). Spirituality is a foundational dimension of healthcare and in the last three decades the evidence and research about spiritual care in nursing has grown rapidly (Timmins & Caldeira, 2017). Spirituality is often defined as a dimension related to transcendence, meaning in life and feeling connected (Weathers et al., 2016).

At the same time, in the last years, the literature about professional well-being is growing as a dimension of leadership, and the interest in workplace spirituality, spiritual climate, and spiritual leadership has been in particular focus. Nurturing the well-being of employees and the interest in understanding of how to integrate quality of care and professional and patient satisfaction are particular concerns of healthcare institutions (Rogers & Wattis, 2015). In this regard, recent literature start calling for empirical studies on spiritual leadership and on workplace spirituality (Caldeira, Gomes & Federico, 2011; Kazemipour & Mohd Amin, 2012; Pirkola, Rantakokko, & Suhonen, 2016; Rego & Pina Cunha, 2007), but interestingly scientific literature in this domain remains sparse in healthcare context. Spiritual leadership is defined "as comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership" (Fry, 2003, p. 711). Ashmos & Duchon (2000) define workplace spirituality as the perception that workers have of their inner life that nourishes and is nourished by a meaningful work.

Job satisfaction is remains a topic of interest in literature on management and is defined as a combination of positive or negative feelings that workers have towards their work, it represents the extent to which expectations are and match the real awards and is closely linked to that individual's behavior in the workplace (Davis & Newstrom, 1977).

The workplace environment has shown to have impact on staff well-being (Kazemipour & Mohd Amin, 2012). In fact, Phillips, MacKusick & Whichello (2018) found a positive relationship between spirituality and ethics with the decrease of uncivilized behaviors and consequently job satisfaction. Other studies found that workplace spirituality relates to sense of belonging, motivation and commitment (Caldeira et al., 2011; Rego et al., 2007; Van Der Walt & De Klerk, 2014). Motivation and job satisfaction emerge from the implementation of an environment that brings out the best in each element of the team. In particular, nurses have spiritual needs and a greater sense of identification with the institutions vision and goals (Kazemipour & Mohd Amin, 2012).

Spirituality in the workplace may be accomplish with an implementation of "(…) a range of strategies customized to align with the diversity and complexity of health care settings and cultures" (Batcheller et al., 2013, p. 312). Spiritual leadership is based on shared and strongly instilled values (Fry, 2003) promoting within the group a sense of trust, benevolence, justice, respect, humanism, dignity and honesty (Rego, Pina e Cunha, & Oliveira, 2008). Thus, workplace spirituality could be facilitated and promoted by the nursing leaders, given the recognition of its impact on the quality of care and professional satisfaction (Caldeira et al., 2011; Kazemipour et al., 2012), aiming an effective spiritual leadership, which is related to a sense of sharing organizational mission and feeling self-realization (Fry, 2003; Rego, Pina e Cunha, & Oliveira, 2008). But spiritual leadership may also reflect on nursing care delivery. In this regard, Caldeira and Hall (2012) highlight spiritual leadership role on workplace promotion in order to provide an holistic care, and Kazemipour & Mohd Amin, Pourseidi (2012) consider that workplace spirituality influences nursing outcomes and should be nurtured aiming to provide positive outcomes in a broader dimension. Nurses are the largest group of professionals who are involved directly in patient care and therefore the quality of care (Kazemipour & Mohd Amin, 2012), thus workplace spirituality values have been proposed as the way to achieve the organizational success. Spiritual leadership encourages well-being, job satisfaction and motivation in employees. In that sense literature discloses a relationship between spiritual leadership, workplace spirituality and well-being, job satisfaction, personal motivation and quality of care.

1 The ever-changing health care system – a challenge to client and professional's satisfaction

Healthcare institutions are looking for quality of care and client's satisfaction, while changing main paradigm. Understanding global employees needs, looking for their well-being, motivations and job satisfaction, based on a caring and compassionate attitude (Paal et al., 2018). Workplace spirituality, since it presupposes a principle-based behavior that shapes the morale of the entire organization, can be a comprehensive organizational achievement, with a view to increasing the well-being of workers and increasing the quality of production (Vasconcelos, 2011).

Nurses are a vulnerable group in healthcare environment and therefore they're exposed to stress and burnout. In the same situation each nurse, as single human been, react and adapt in a different way, most of all influenced by their personal attributes (self-efficacy, coping, control and personal competence) (Paal et al., 2018). The growing social issues and complex interventions have led organizations to deal with other emerging issues, in an adaptation perspective, with spirituality in the workplace being one of them (Vasconcelos, 2011).

 Leaders may and must support nurses by instilling a positive culture (Paal et al., 2018) in order to provide nurses well-being and easy coping to stress situations that are inherent to health care practice and demanding.

The conclusions of Zou et al. (2020) reinforce the conviction that spirituality in healthcare institutions (workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership) may be the answer to the well-being of professionals and the quality of care in a challenging future.

2 Workplace Spirituality in health care system – a path to satisfaction

Health care institutions, while seeking worker's well-being and at the same time their motivation, involvement in institution's goals and quality of care and consequently client' satisfaction, need to realize the path to get it in current times. Workplace spirituality as well as spiritual leadership is fundamental to quality of care, nurses' job satisfaction and motivation, so health care management need to get a way to promote it.
 Cruz et al. (2020) concluded that a positive spiritual climate of hospitals leads to improved "compassion satisfaction" and low "burnout" and "secondary traumatic stress" among nurses, and therefore policymaker, nurse leaders and nurse advocates are responsible for encourage nurses spirituality in clinical areas, granting and respecting a place for different spiritual views of diverse nurses, improving the job satisfaction. Birnie (2019) call to the hospitals the responsibility to ensure spiritual materials in their libraries. The same are assert by Zou et al. (2020) when underlining that health care institutions management are responsible for promoting workplace spirituality through providing spaces and times for spiritual promotion and development.
While advocate by literature in the last decades, workplace spirituality is not yet totally implemented or neither a concern in most healthcare institutions. Recent events in world's health my change that concern, and recent studies have been presented and hopefully more

will be done, bringing workplace spirituality to the spotlight when professional's well-being and quality of care are in the focal point.

3 Spiritual leadership – a challenge to nursing leaders

Nursing leaders' mission comprises taking care of nurses and patients, aiming well-being and satisfaction. Recent events rekindles the need to change cultural organizations to be more caring and compassionate (Paal et al., 2018).

Although the calling for empirical studies concerning spiritual leadership reassemble to early 2000s, the evidence is still scarce to inform implementation (Yang, Huang and Wu, 2019). World health currently faces a new challenge, a new demand for care, a new look at the safety of health care providers, and this situation has implications on professional's well-being. Therefore nursing leaders' responsibility emerge again as focus of attention, concerning the emergent need of intervention to guarantee nurses' well-being essential to provide nursing care to patients. Recently, a paper entitled "The influence of spiritual leadership on the subjective well-being of Chinese registered nurses" (Zou et al., 2020), aimed to examine how and why spiritual leadership may have a positive influence on nurses' subjective well-being. This study brings new dimensions and perspectives on nursing management that needs urgent consideration by leaders, educators and researchers. The authors found relation between spiritual leadership, workplace spirituality and subjective well-being. This finding is critical for health care management, specifically for nursing management, which has been considered important in enhancing workplace spirituality (Pirkola, Rantakokko, & Suhonen, 2016). The recognition of the impact on nurses' satisfaction, motivation and well-being as well as the quality of care just by the instillation of a spiritual workplace can motivate leaders to a spiritual leadership.

Recently a reserarch aiming to understand spiritual leadership on team effectivenss when facing uncertain tasks concluded that leaders have a critical role on shaping meaningfulness climate by demonstrating spiritual values and practices promoting a meaningfulness climate (Yang, Huang and Wu 2019). This is importante in nursing manegement if we're taking in acount that meaningfulness climate has positive relation with team performance and organizational citizen behaviour, and therefhore with nurses efectiveness as a team (Yang, Huang and Wu, 2019).

These have been so far fundamental in the development of new management and leadership dynamics, and recent world's health situation may be the lead to the recognition that spiritual leadership is essential; consequently, its adoption and implementation should be recognized as an emerging need, in a perspective that its applicability will be a short-term reality in most health institutions.

Zou et al. (2020) assert that healthcare institutions management is responsible for: promoting spiritual leadership by promoting training and selecting managers. This change of paradigm in healthcare institutions calls for changing in education and human resources development, based on the assumption that this kind of leaders are vital to change organizations toward a spiritual paradigm (Vasconcelos, 2015).

Conclusions

As human beings, nurses have spiritual needs. If nurses' spiritual needs are nurtured their behavior and attitude will bring an improvement on quality of care and patients' satisfaction. Workplace spirituality influences nurses' satisfaction, motivation, well-being, and the quality of care. As so, workplace spirituality should be promoted in health care institutions by spiritual leadership. There is no time for the absence of this dimension in nursing leaders' performance. The holistic paradigm on health calls for this approach in caring those who care. But more evidence is needed to inform spiritual leadership, from the conceptual clarity to studies that could bring good evidence on the outcomes when implementing spiritual leadership and nurturing workplace spirituality, in both healthcare team members and in patients. These studies may consider qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods approach, and should be culturally sensitive.

The challenges on healthcare and in nursing management require new perspectives, such as those that spiritual leadership may bring. In times of global challenges, when nurses are in the front line, organizational environments that nurture well-being and sense of dignity, bringing hope, happiness and meaning, seem foundational. It is time for asking how leaders are ready for this spiritual challenge. It is time for searching effective evidence-based answers.

Implications for nursing management:

- Workplace spirituality must be promoted in all healthcare institutions, aiming the humanization of care.

- Nursing leaders must have spiritual competences and include the promotion of workplace spirituality in daily agenda as a foundational area in management.

- The healthcare institutions' managers should consider the best leaders who should facilitate workplace spirituality.

- Health care institutions must offer spaces and conditions to nurture spirituality in team dynamics.

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