Interventions for preventing and solve bullying in nursing: a scoping review

Luca Corina Elena MScN student, BScN 1-2 Sartorio Alessia MScN student, RN 1-3
Bonetti Loris PhD, MScN, RN 2-3 Bianchi Monica PhD, EMBA, MScN, RN 3

1Ende Ospedaliero Cantonale, Ospedale Regionale di Lugano, Lugano, Switzerland
2Nursing Research Competence Centre, Ende Ospedaliero Cantonale, Bellinzona, Switzerland
3Department of Business Economics, Health and Social Care, University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland, Manno, Switzerland

Corresponding Author: Luca Corina Elena corinaelena.luca@eoc.ch

Background

Incivility, bullying and lateral violence in the workplace are serious problems in nursing, as well as in other contexts. Considering how widespread the problem is and its impact on the well-being of nursing staff, patients and the organisation, it is of great importance to explore the existence of interventions that would enable its prevention or resolution.

Method

A scoping review of primary research published in English between 2011 and 2021 was undertaken. Data was analysed using Arksey and O’Malley’s (2005) five-stages framework:

Identifying the research question

Are there interventions for the prevention and/or resolution of bullying in the nursing profession in health care settings?

Identifying relevant studies

The process of identifying relevant studies started with the identification of databases (Cochrane Collaboration, Pubmed, CINAHL Complete and PsychInfo) and the use of key words in the form of MESH and free terms, combined in different ways using the boolean operators AND and OR (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cochrane Collaboration</th>
<th>Pubmed</th>
<th>CINAHL Complete</th>
<th>PsychInfo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bullying</td>
<td>lateral violence</td>
<td>horizontal violence</td>
<td>mobbing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workplace incivility</td>
<td>harassment</td>
<td>nurses*</td>
<td>intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td>AND</td>
<td>AND</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Search strategy

Study selection

The reviewers defined the criteria for inclusion and/or exclusion of articles: (1) published between January 2011 and December 2021; (2) related to the health care context and the nursing field; (3) published in English and Italian; (4) all types of study design; (5) excluding conference proceedings, editorials and grey literature. The authors independently determined the eligibility of articles using a two-stage screening process based on the information provided in the title and abstract, followed by a discussion and subsequent full-text review phase, resulting in a classification of included, excluded or uncertain studies. Discrepancies were solved by a third reviewer.

Charting the data

The reviewers extracted the data using a table containing the author, year, country of origin, objectives, study design and data collection instruments, participants/contexts, type of intervention and key findings.

Collating, summarizing and reporting the results

The selection process is presented in Figure 1 by using the Prisma Flowchart (Page et al., 2021).

Result

From a total of 1066 articles initially identified, after removing duplicates and studies considered irrelevant, 88 articles were selected for the full-text review and 14 papers met the review eligibility criteria. Their analysis evidenced four main themes: educational interventions, cognitive rehearsal, team building and nursing leaders’ experiences. The findings show the different interventions designed to address bullying, implementing both formative and cognitive approaches and strengthening interaction among team members.

Conclusion

The research results showed the effectiveness of interventions concerning nurses’ recognition of the phenomenon and increased skills in addressing it with assertive communication. However, a slight and not always significant reduction in the occurrence of these phenomena was observed and, from the different studies, the need for further research emerged in order to demonstrate the interventions’ effectiveness and to understand if their effects result in a significant decrease in the short and long-term frequency of these issues. International opinion underlines the importance of an active engagement of nurses at all levels, the relevance of the support from nursing leaders and organisations, and policy-making to reduce and eradicate these phenomena from healthcare settings.