Ageism directed at older nurses in their workplace: A systematic review

Authors: Chunxu Chen PhD candidate, Dr Kay Shannon, Dr Sara Napier, Professor Stephen Neville, Associate Professor Jed Montayre

Background:

Global population ageing has triggered significant demographic changes across various sectors, including nursing, where the average age of nurses has been steadily increasing in many countries. While research has extensively documented the detrimental effects of ageism on older workers (Nilsson et al., 2016; Thorsen et al., 2016; Weber et al., 2019), there remains limited understanding of ageism directed at older nurses in their work environments.

Aim:

To identify and synthesise evidence related to ageism in older regulated nurses' practice settings.

Design

JBI methodology Registered with PROSPERO

Search Methods

An initial search was conducted on CINAHL, using terms related to ageism and older nurses Final searches conducted on MEDLINE, Scopus, PsycINFO, CINAHL, Google Scholar and a range of academic institutional websites

Inclusion Criteria

Empirical studies involving older nurses as the primary study population and studies focusing on ageism in older nurses' work environments, including strategies or interventions to address ageism within the workplace

Published in English after the year 2000

Search Outcome

A total of 1,833 relevant citations were uploaded into Covidence for screening, with duplicates removed. Initial screening of 1,776 titles and abstracts was undertaken resulting in 87 full-text records being screened and assessed independently by two members of the research team. The PRISMA and SWiM guidelines were utilised to summarise and report the screening process of the 19 studies included in the review.

Quality Appraisal

All relevant studies were critically appraised independently by two members of the research team using the JBI Critical Appraisal Tools

All included studies were assessed as being of moderate to high quality

Finding 1: Manifestation of ageism in older nurses' practice settings

Finding 2: Impacts of ageism on older nurses

Finding 3: Support for older nurses' continuation of practice

Ageist beliefs held by younger colleagues, nurses themselves and managers

Hindered access to training and promotions; not consulted on potential organisational changes; ageism associated with older nurses' continuation of practice

Positive perspective on ageing; fostering positive relationships with supervisors and peers; workplace environment that values all ages

This review forms the foundation for research aimed at reducing ageism in older nurses to support their continuation of practice. Researchers and policymakers can build upon these findings to develop targeted interventions and policies to support nurses of all ages in the clinical setting. Healthcare organisations must address ageism, develop and implement age-inclusive practices to support older nurses' continuation of practice. For example, incorporating anti-ageism professional development opportunities for all staff to promote a more age-inclusive health workforce.

Chen, C., Shannon, K., Napier, S., Neville, S., & Montayre, J. (2024). Ageism directed at older nurses in their workplace: A systematic review. Journal of Clinical Nursing. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.17088

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