

Anomalous/Paranormal experiences reported by nurses themselves and in relation with their patients in hospitals: Examining psychological, personality and phenomenological variables

ABSTRACT:

Background

Anomalous/Paranormal Experiences (APEs) reported by nurses consist of apparitions, “coincidences,” death-bed visions, and other anomalous phenomena, sometimes in relation to patients.

Aims

The aims were (1) to determine the extent of occurrence of APEs in nurses from one-single and multiple hospitals, and to relate them to work stress, absorption, schizotypy, hallucination and empathy, and (2) to carry out a retrospective study with a sample of interviewed nurses.

Method

We received 344 questionnaires from 36 hospitals in Buenos Aires, Argentina, which were grouped into 235 experiencers and 109 nonexperiencers. We hypothesized that nurses experiencers will tend to score higher on work stress, on schizotypy proneness, on absorption, and on empathy than those who do not report such experiences. Additionally, 38 nurses from three hospitals took part in a two-year retrospective APE’s qualitative approach.

Results

Nurses reporting APEs did not tend to score higher on work stress, however, nurses reporting APEs scored higher on psychological absorption, proneness to hallucinate, and also scored higher on schizotypy, and cognitive/emotional comprehension than nurses nonexperiencers. Qualitative approach also showed that APEs differed from drug-induced hallucinations, occurred in clear consciousness and provided comfort and consolation for the bereaved.

Conclusions

Of the 344 nurses surveyed, 12–28% of them reported having had at least one anomalous experience. The most common anomalous experiences reported as experiencers are sense of presence or apparitions, hearing strange noises, voices or dialogues, crying or complaining, and knowing the disease intuitively; and as listeners of their patients/peers’ experiences, are near death experiences, anomalous healing after religious intervention, and experiences in relation with children. Interviewees’ reports suggested that APEs are not uncommon.

Keywords

Anomalous/Paranormal Experiences (APEs), Nursing, Absorption, Empathy

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