

## Possibilities of promoting the health of Haitian immigrants: perceptions of nursing students

### *Possibilidades para promover a saúde de imigrantes haitianos: percepções de estudantes de enfermagem*

### *Posibilidades para promover la salud de los inmigrantes haitianos: percepciones de estudiantes de enfermería*

#### ABSTRACT

**Purposes:** To understand how nursing students perceive the possibilities to promote the health of Haitian immigrants in Brazil. **Method:** This is a qualitative, participatory action research, based on Paulo Freire's Research Itinerary, which has three interconnected phases: Thematic Research; Encoding and Decoding; Critical Unveiling. A Culture Circle was held in 2019, with the participation of 12 nursing students, from a public university in southern Brazil. **Results:** The Culture Circle discussed the topics: physical and mental health; being a university student and worker; adaptation in Brazil. **Conclusion:** The health of immigrants is not usually discussed in the training of nurses, even though there are several possibilities to promote the health of this public: creation of leisure and interaction spaces at the university; permanence policies; valuing the work of Haitians; support home organization; information booklet in their native language, with a view to increasing the quality of life of immigrants in Brazil.

**Descriptors:** Emigration and Immigration; Health Promotion; Health Vulnerability; Quality of Life; Nursing students.

#### RESUMO

**Objetivos:** Conhecer as percepções dos estudantes de enfermagem sobre as possibilidades de promover a saúde de imigrantes haitianos no Brasil. **Método:** Pesquisa qualitativa, tipo ação participante, fundamentada no Itinerário de Pesquisa de Paulo Freire, que possui três fases interligadas: Investigação Temática; Codificação e Descodificação; Desvelamento Crítico. Realizou-se um Círculo de Cultura, em 2019, com a participação de 12 estudantes de enfermagem, de uma universidade pública do Sul do Brasil. **Resultados:** No Círculo de Cultura, discutiram-se as temáticas: saúde física e mental; ser universitário e trabalhador; adaptação no Brasil. **Conclusão:** Há invisibilidade de discussões sobre a saúde dos imigrantes na formação do enfermeiro, tendo diversas possibilidades de promover a saúde desse público: criação de espaços de lazer e interação na universidade; políticas de permanência; valorização do trabalho dos haitianos; organização de casa de apoio; cartilha informativa na língua nativa, com vista a ampliar a qualidade de vida dos imigrantes no Brasil.


**Descritores:** Emigração e Imigração; Promoção da Saúde; Vulnerabilidade em Saúde; Qualidade de Vida; Estudantes de Enfermagem.

#### RESUMEN


**Objetivos:** Comprender percepciones de estudiantes de enfermería sobre las posibilidades de promover salud de inmigrantes haitianos en Brasil. **Método:** Investigación cualitativa, tipo acción participante, basada en Itinerario de Investigación de Paulo Freire, que tiene tres fases interconectadas: Investigación Temática; Codificación y decodificación; Revelación crítica. En 2019 se realizó un Círculo de Cultura, con participación de 12 estudiantes de enfermería, de una universidad pública del sur de Brasil. **Resultados:** En Círculo Cultural se discutió los temas: salud física y mental; ser estudiante y trabajador universitario; adaptación en Brasil. **Conclusión:** Existe invisibilidad de discusiones sobre salud de inmigrantes en la formación de enfermeros, con varias posibilidades para promover salud de este público: creación de espacios de ocio e interacción en universidad; políticas de permanencia; valorar el trabajo de los haitianos; apoyar la organización del hogar; folleto informativo en lengua nativa, con miras a mejorar la calidad de vida de inmigrantes en Brasil.

**Descritores:** Emigración e Inmigración; Promoción de la Salud; Vulnerabilidad en Salud; Calidad de Vida; Estudiantes de Enfermería.


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## INTRODUCTION

The transformations generated by globalization have affected migratory movements around the world, which facilitates population displacement across borders. According to the United Nations (UN), it is estimated that the number of international migrants reached 272 million people in 2019, representing an increase of 51 million since 2010<sup>(1)</sup>. In Brazil, the arrival of immigrants has sparked searches for understanding the reasons, causes and consequences, especially of Haitian migration. Among the reasons, economic, labor and refugee issues stand out<sup>(2)</sup>.

Proper care and the right to access health care are issues that take place in relation to the demands of Haitian immigrants, who face heavy work, informal hiring, added to the distance from family members and obstacles with the new language<sup>(3)</sup>. The correlation between immigration and health is complex and permeated by social factors and inequities, which reinforces the importance of an articulated analysis of immigration and its relationships with social determinants of health, recognizing its specificities of health conception, cultural practices of care and health promotion<sup>(4)</sup>.

In the field of health promotion, the Ottawa Charter represents one of the main references for the development of strategies and actions in this area and reaffirms the social determinants of health. Nevertheless, the integration of health promotion and social determinants is still seen as a challenge, since the focus on individual lifestyle remains prominent in Brazil. The strengthening of health promotion actions depends on acting on the social determinants of health in the person, family and community<sup>(5)</sup>. Therefore, it is urgent to move forward with health promotion initiatives that seek to empower immigrants, in a critical perspective, in order to enhance the processes of transformation and autonomy.

In this context, the responsibility assigned to health professionals, including professional nurses, is evidenced in order to meet the health needs of immigrants, involving health promotion. However, despite the growing migratory trend observed nationally and internationally and the recognized relationship between the immigration process and illness, there are gaps in the knowledge of professionals concerning health issues and possible inconsistencies in the care provided to this population<sup>(6)</sup>.

In relation to the rights to health and its public policies, despite the abundant legislation, there are still great challenges for immigrants, which involve the organization and operation of services<sup>(3)</sup>. In addition, even with the increase in investigations related to the growing number of Haitian immigrants in Brazil, they focus on the characterization of this population, with few studies carried out in the context of public health, which rarely address the health-disease issues of this audience<sup>(4)</sup>.

From this perspective, it is essential to dialogue and develop strategies to mitigate these obstacles, providing comprehensive care to the immigrant population<sup>(6)</sup>. In light of the foregoing, the importance of constructing spaces for dialogue on immigrant care in the training of Brazilian nurses is raised, with a view to contributing to health care, giving visibility to the living conditions of this population. Thus, the relevance of researches that address the vulnerabilities and possibilities of promoting the health of immigrants in Brazil is evidenced, so that the health team and managers can positively intervene in the health care of this audience, which is so in need of care and information.

Accordingly, the research question appeared: what are the perceptions of nursing students regarding the possibilities of promoting the health of Haitian immigrants in Brazil? From then on, the objective of the study was to understand the perceptions of nursing students about the possibilities of promoting the health of Haitian immigrants in Brazil.

## METHOD

Qualitative study, participatory action research type<sup>(7)</sup>, articulated to the Research Itinerary of Paulo Freire, which covers three interconnected stages: Thematic Investigation; Encoding and Decoding; Critical Unveiling<sup>(8)</sup>. Thematic Investigation consists of the initial dialogue that leads to the identification of generating themes. In Coding, the representations of situations expressed by the participants are examined, developing codes that instigate critical reflection. Thus, it moves on to Decoding, when the situation experienced is analyzed, inducing the overcoming of borderline situations<sup>(9)</sup>. In Critical Unveiling, participants allow themselves to remove the veil that blinds them to see the analysis and veracity of the facts, with a view to

achieving expansion of knowledge and transformation<sup>(10)</sup>.

Qualitative research is articulated with Paulo Freire's assumptions, since it reflects the social context of the participants, through the dialogicity promoted in the space called the Culture Circle, in a dynamic process of learning and exchange of knowledge, where researcher and researched reflect, discuss and identify the reality and possibilities of intervention<sup>(11)</sup>.

One of the authors of this study was invited to discuss the health conditions of Haitian immigrants during a meeting of the Academic League of Collective Health (LASC, as per its Portuguese acronym) of a public university in Southern Brazil. At this meeting, it became urgent to reflect with students on the vulnerabilities involving the health of immigrants and the possibilities of promoting their well-being, given the presence of Haitian academics in the university space, who had entered through the Program of Access to Higher Education to Haitian Students (PROHAITI). Thus, the opportunity arose to hold a Culture Circle, with the participation of 12 LASC members, who agreed to participate in the research and signed the Free and Informed Consent Term (FICF). The 12 participants were Brazilian undergraduate Nursing students enrolled at the aforementioned university. As inclusion criteria, students enrolled in health courses, over 18 years old, were considered. As exclusion criteria, academics who did not attend LASC meetings were taken into account.

The Culture Circle took place, in a single meeting, lasting approximately two hours, in November 2019, in a university classroom. It was mediated by a doctor nurse, experienced in conducting this type of approach. In order to make the discussions in the Culture Circle more concrete and playful, it was decided to use colored images, projected in the multimedia system, consisting of a house, a sun and clouds. The house represented the lives of immigrants in Brazil, the sun depicted health and quality of life, while the various clouds illustrated the vulnerabilities surrounding the life of Haitians in the country.

For the Thematic Investigation, the mediator projected the image of a house, where she contextualized, together with the study participants, the arrival of Haitian immigrants to Brazil. Then, she cast the image of a sun on the house and reflected on the need for health and

quality of life of immigrants. But, the sun was gradually being covered by several clouds, which represented the vulnerabilities that involved the immigration process. From then on, it presented the following question: which clouds have been covering the sun in the lives of Haitian immigrants in Brazil? Several themes were mentioned, and then the students defined three themes for discussion in the Culture Circle: 1) Physical and mental health; 2) Being a university immigrant and a worker; 3) Adaptation in Brazil.

In the Coding and Decoding stage of Freire's Itinerary, the nursing students were divided into three groups, in order to discuss the possibilities and promote the health of Haitian immigrants, according to the three generating themes. Thus, each group discussed, seeking to answer one of the three questions: how to promote the physical and mental health of Haitian immigrants? How to promote the health of university immigrants and workers? What are the possibilities of promoting better adaptation of the immigrant in Brazil? The groups discussed and took notes, having the opportunity to share and discuss their reflections all the participants of the Culture Circle.

In Critical Unveiling, students discussed the three generating themes, socialized suggestions and reflected on alternatives to put them into practice. Thus, this Critical Unveiling provided an opportunity for each student to express his/her critical and reflective opinion on the real possibilities of promoting the health of Haitian immigrants. It should be underlined that the analysis of themes (data) took place throughout the development of the Culture Circle, as provided for in Paulo Freire's Research Itinerary, in a continuous analytical process, with the participation of all those involved<sup>(8,9)</sup>. The dialogues were recorded, with the permission of the participants, being transcribed and organized in digital folders, according to the three generating themes chosen for discussion in the Circle.

In order to guarantee the confidentiality of the participants, it was decided to call them by the name of butterflies, from the perspective that they were experiencing the process of metamorphosis in their academic training. The research complied with the required ethical standards and only started after approval by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Fronteira Sul, with opinion number

3.324.430, under the Certificate of Ethical Presentation nº 11511419.1.0000.5564, dated May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

## RESULTS

The 12 study participants were undergraduate nursing students, aged between 19 and 27 years, all female. During an extensive discussion in the Culture Circle, the students evidenced the invisibility of reflections on health vulnerabilities in the context of immigration in the academic environment and decided to turn their attention to university immigrants, as they were closer to their context, since there were numerous Haitians on that campus. Thus, they chose three generating themes for discussion in the Culture Circle, reflecting on the possibilities of promoting the health of Haitian immigrants in the following situations: 1) Physical and mental health; 2) Being a university student and a worker; 3) Adaptation in Brazil.

In the discussion of the first generating theme, with regard to physical health, the study participants shared the exhaustion that students face, whether immigrants or not, and suggested possibilities of promoting rest in the vacant moments at the university: "Providing a restful environment and comfort here at the university, for all students, because we don't have any of that here and, sometimes, we spend hours waiting for another class, with nowhere to rest a little (Blue)". "The students themselves could organize a space for leisure and rest here at the university, because we've many places that could be transformed into more useful and comfortable spaces for students (Transparent)".

In addition, they evidenced the importance of maintaining healthy food that is easily accessible to immigrants, with natural products. They discussed the possibility of having typical Haitian food on one day a week at the University Restaurant (RU, as per its Portuguese acronym), thus having the bonus of giving Brazilians the opportunity to learn more about the culture of that country: "Facilitating access to healthy food, with products organic, starting with our RU (Leaf)". "There could be, at least once a week, in RU, a typical Haitian food option and it would also be a way to learn more about their culture and value the Haitians, because we have many here on campus (Owl)".

Furthermore, in the discussion of the first theme, in order to promote mental health, the

students suggested developing playful activities during breaks and organizing a specific space for such action during classes: "In your spare time, here at the university, playful activities could be promoted at breaks of classrooms and a space, during classes, to promote the integration of immigrants and also of students in general [...] this would help a lot in the mental health of all students (Peacock)".

The participants highlighted other actions to integrate Haitian immigrant students with Brazilians at the university, revealing that they knew little about the culture of Haiti: "Promoting a schedule at the university, involving immigrants, with dance presentations, because we don't know their culture and, thus, in addition to getting to know it, it would be a way of leisure for everyone involved (Apollo)".

In the Culture Circle, they reflected that Brazilians needed to know more about the lives of immigrants, suggesting the disclosure of information in the media to encourage welcoming and fight prejudice, discrimination and bullying: "Brazilians had to know a little more about the situation of immigrants, so that they could better welcome Haitians, including the racial issue, in order to avoid bullying and discrimination, which harm their mental health (Red Admiral)". "There could be more information in the media, TV advertisements, encouraging welcoming, addressing discrimination, prejudice, bullying (Peacock)".

Participants acknowledged that Haitian immigrants have limited knowledge of their rights. They pointed out the need to explore knowledge on this topic, with university programs being carried out to serve this audience, with a view to improving citizenship: "It could be better explained to Haitian immigrants about their rights. Even here at the university, there could be some programs to serve them, because we have several, but there is nothing specific for them (Queen Alexandra)".

In the discussion of the second generating theme, which reflected on being a university student and a worker, it was revealed, in the Culture Circle, that several Haitian immigrants, besides studying, needed to work in order to support themselves in Brazil, evidencing how urgent it is to create strategies and policies for staying at the university and valuing work: "There had to be a specific permanence policy for immigrants, because there is no point in offering

vacancies in university courses if they don't offer possibilities for them to study, without having to kill themselves at work in order to survive in Brazil (Camouflaged White)". "There had to be strategies and policies to value the work of immigrants more, when they arrive in Brazil, in order to avoid their exploitation at work and also to be able to stay here (White of the Woods)".

In addition, the students addressed the need to value the profession and training that immigrants had in their country of origin: "There are some immigrants who came here already trained, but they can't find a job here in Brazil in their field and then end up working in places that Brazilians don't want. This has to change so that they can get better employment opportunities in Brazil. Brazil accepted them here, so it needs to give them opportunities to stay here with health and quality of life (Mormon)".

As for the third generating theme, where the adaptation of the immigrant in Brazil was discussed, the study participants reflected on the challenges involved in this adaptation in the new country, such as understanding the Portuguese language, misinformation about their rights, lack of financial resources and welcoming, difficulties with the climate, among other factors. In this sense, the nursing students listed actions to promote the insertion of Haitian immigrants in society. They discussed the importance of preparing booklets and classes with basic notions of Portuguese, shelters for immigrants, basic clothing and other needs, as highlighted in the statements: "There could be important information in the language of immigrants here in Chapecó, like a booklet, either in educational institutions and health facilities, especially in the neighborhoods where they live the most, because they have little or no information when they arrive and do not know how to speak Portuguese rightly (Apollo)". "Our town, which receives a lot of Haitian immigrants, had to construct a shelter for them, focused on knowledge about their rights and assistance to their needs, so that they know where to seek assistance (Peacock)". "In this shelter, we could also have winter clothes for them, who have few clothes and few financial resources, so that they could have a place of welcoming (Transparent)". "In this house, free Portuguese classes could also be offered to the new arrivals in Brazil, besides promoting meetings, in such a way that they can get

together more, overcome their homesickness and revive Haitian culture (Mormon)".

As the dialogue enabled a critical reflection of reality in the Culture Circle, the participants unveiled that they felt transformed and empowered, with a new look at the needs of immigrants: "From now on, I will look differently at immigrants [...] take part in this Culture Circle made me critically reflect on immigration and everything that surrounds it, and I'm going to leave different from how I entered here. I feel more empowered with everything we've discussed (Transparent)".

The nursing students highlighted the lack of visibility about immigration and their health care in their own academic training: "As an undergraduate student, I now realize how much these spaces for discussion are missing, because if this moment of broad discussion didn't exist here, I would graduate and I wouldn't have this look at how I could facilitate the access of immigrants, in the health facilities and in several sectors, in order to promote the health of these immigrants here in Brazil. At university, no one ever talked about it! To tell you the truth, I had never thought about it (Queen Alexandra)".

Furthermore, they expressed about the scarce scientific production involving the topic of immigration: "I think there is a lack of research involving the issue of health and quality of life of Haitian immigrants here in Brazil [...] there are so many immigrants spread across the country, but the researchers also seem to not being interested in their health and that's sad [...] without investigating the lives of immigrants; therefore, there will hardly be specific policies for them (Red Admiral)".

In the discussions, the students evidenced the need to expand the reflections raised in the Culture Circle to the university campus, paying attention to the possibilities of promoting the health of immigrants: "I think that everything we are talking about here, we would need to expand and make other campus students and professors could also know and reflect on it (Leaf)". It is noteworthy that, after a period of the occurrence of the Culture Circle, the participants designed and fixed reflective posters in university spaces, inviting the academic community to welcome immigrants.

## DISCUSSION

In the testimonies of the participants, it was noted that the visibility of Haitian immigrants in Brazil is permeated with weaknesses, influenced by different factors. The need to promote the health of this audience was emphasized, with a view to awakening the perception of the need for welcoming, both in nursing and in other sectors, so that health professionals can be sensitized and act in favor of the quality of life of these immigrants.

Promoting health is a promising strategy for dealing with the multiple health problems that affect individuals, communities and their surroundings. Nevertheless, in order to hold health promotion, professionals need to understand and expand their horizons, with a view to inserting themselves as critical actors and participants in the process of reducing health inequities, concerning the guarantee of human rights<sup>(12)</sup>, in this case, of Haitian immigrants.

The Ottawa Charter listed five strategies for the development of health promotion, namely: establishment of healthy public policies; development of personal skills; construction of favorable environments; strengthening of community action and reorientation of health services. Therefore, these health promotion strategies should be incorporated into the work process of health professionals, in order to favor new ways of producing care, which involves assistance to the immigrant audience. For this purpose, it is imperative to advance in an emancipatory perspective, seeking to enhance participation and instigate knowledge, valuing the autonomy of individuals to achieve the transformation of reality<sup>(5)</sup>.

Within the scope of immigration, there are stressful factors that produce impacts on health, depending on variations such as access to health services, welcoming and environment. The tension and concerns related to changes require physical and psychological efforts that can cause harm<sup>(13)</sup>. In addition, one can mention the fact that many immigrants are at university, attaching concerns and difficulties, such as fatigue with academic activities. Because many university activities take place in full, there are vacant moments when all students could rest, but few environments have appropriate spaces. They could be constructed by students, contributing to comfort in an environment made up of movement

and responsibilities, also giving ambience to the university space.

Another important factor that makes the immigrant population more vulnerable is food, one of the priority health determinants of the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>(2)</sup>. One of the concerns is the access to richly organic food, which concerns healthy foods, produced without the addition of chemicals and preservatives, considering that, currently, due to lack of time or poor financial condition, industrialized products have become intensively consumed and processed<sup>(14)</sup>. Participants reported not knowing the typical Haitian foods, and the absence of these dishes in the meals offered at the university refectory. They identified RU as a potential source to promote Haitian food on certain days of the week, combining the search for Haitian flavors with natural and healthy food.

It is also noted a need to explore leisure activities for immigrants when they are not studying or working. Leisure helps to reduce stress, providing entertainment and socialization. Nonetheless, it should be underlined that not all free time characterizes leisure<sup>(13)</sup>. There are moments and spaces at the university where integrative activities capable of promoting and facilitating the release of emotions could be developed. Furthermore, programs that involve a mixture of Brazilian and Haitian cultures, such as artistic presentations, would be tools for simultaneously stimulating leisure and social bonding. In this scenario, the university is a locus for enhancing the social inclusion and visibility of Haitian immigrants in Brazil. It is a space to produce reflections, share cultural values and fight prejudice, also addressing racial issues, with the aim of enhancing the welcoming process.

It is also noted that the visibility of Haitian immigrants is affected by the media. In 2015, for example, newspapers published a photo of a Haitian in a bathroom at the *Casa do Imigrante da Missão Paz*, in São Paulo, entitled "Haitian bathes in a urinal". It was shared on the internet, generating debates on the rights of immigrants, symbolic representations, as well as reinterpretations of victimization<sup>(15)</sup>. This denotes the influence of the media on immigration, above all, due to its current anchoring in spectacularization, which requires changes. There are already Haitian movements and enunciations, in communication spaces about their migratory experiences, to give due visibility and attention to

the real needs, expanding the places where it is possible to make interventions<sup>(15)</sup>.

Furthermore, in order to live in a new country in solitude and, at times, with little or no support network, the Haitian immigrants also seek a source of income, and some of them still need to combine jobs and studies. In relation to work opportunities, barriers are perceived, such as the social exclusion related to the immigrant worker. Although the Migration Law (Law 13.445/2017) seeks to expand rights and provide opportunities for new public policies, the fields most offered to the Haitian population are those refused by Brazilians<sup>(16)</sup>.

Accordingly, it is denoted that immigrants are naturally exposed to situations of multiple vulnerabilities, and the deprivation of their rights is perpetuated, since they find it difficult to express themselves, which makes their opinions and actions ineffective in the public space. They experience situations of vulnerability, not only in the socioeconomic and political environment characteristic of the country of origin, but also after arriving at the new place of residence<sup>(17)</sup>.

In light of the foregoing, the establishment of public policies is urgently needed to guarantee the rights of immigrant workers in Brazilian society, seeking to expand their areas of activity. It is necessary to reflect on the rights that immigrants have on Brazilian soil, so that they have an active voice and that they are protagonists, including in the fight for the right to health. In this sense, it is up to health professionals, especially nurses, to turn their eyes to the immigrant audience, seeking to strengthen the empowerment of this population, so that they can transform their reality and develop their self-care<sup>(18)</sup>.

The adaptation of an immigrant is influenced by the environment, which may or may not facilitate it. Situations of racism and xenophobia, for example, are obstacles to acculturation, as well as lack of preparation in the legislation and welcoming policies. However, the immigrant sees job opportunities and professional training in Brazil<sup>(13)</sup>. In this sense, the university environment is a potential place to enhance the knowledge of the immigrants who surround it.

For this reason, certain universities have developed programs to make vacancies available to the immigrant audience, such as PROHAITI, which provides opportunities for inclusion in courses available at Brazilian universities.

Although this opportunity for insertion is indispensable, it is necessary to carefully plan the life context of these immigrants, such as simultaneous work to obtain income<sup>(19)</sup>. The need for permanence policies and specific programs in these institutions is highlighted, especially in those that offer full courses, providing opportunities for the immigrant to be more dedicated to studies and obtain better results in teaching, in addition to continuous welcoming and support regarding their reality of life.

Immigration challenges extend from departure to arrival in Brazil. Living in an unknown country, with a language that is sometimes misunderstood, in addition to culture, cuisine, climate and other obstacles, result in the social exclusion of these immigrants. In order to reverse the situation, the welcoming must be well planned, being under the responsibility of government agencies in the three spheres<sup>(20)</sup>. That said, with a type of welcoming that provides the immigrants with prior knowledge of their rights, Portuguese language and housing, it would be possible to visualize social inclusion more easily, thus enabling an assisted and humanized adaptation.

Therefore, tools for positive disclosure of information about immigrants are essential to provide mutual knowledge of both cultures and ways of life, culminating in the reduction of prejudice and of the resistance to the novelty<sup>(22)</sup>. Thus, welcoming becomes promising, generating better social visibility and encouraging research and the search for better living conditions for these immigrants.

The self-transformation arising from the co-participatory dialogue, antagonistic to the traditional research methods, through the Culture Circle, as produced in this study, contributed to the construction of these tools for positive disclosure of information about immigrants, where participants discussed and broadened horizons in the action-reflection process, transforming and empowering themselves from the need to promote the health of immigrants, but highlighting the lack of debates on the topic in academia<sup>(21)</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

This study enabled us to reflect, from the perspective of nursing students, on the needs of immigrant Haitian students, in a reality of invisibility in the face of policies, services and

investigations, and, based on that, it was possible to outline possibilities for accomplishing their welcoming and improving their quality of life, especially at the University. In this sense, the following items are highlighted as strategies to promote their health: construction of resting and social involvement environments at the university; disclosure of cultural information that minimizes prejudice; promotion of Haitian cuisine at RU; development of university permanence policies, with valorization of their work and training brought from their country of origin; promotion of information in their language at the university and health facilities; and establishment of a shelter that provides information about rights and support to their needs.

The nursing students transformed their knowledge and practices with the reflections that appeared during the dialogues in the Culture Circle, learning about their role in facilitating the access and welcoming of Haitian immigrants in the university and community spaces.

With regard to the area of health and, especially, nursing, it was noted a need to include the topic of immigration and its implications for health during the training of nurses. Thus, when faced with this demand in services, nurses and other health professionals are expected to be prepared and empowered to provide care that is consistent with the reality of immigrants, providing qualified, competent and attentive care to their health conditions and rights as citizens.

Through this study, the aim is to contribute to the area of health, evidencing the main needs of the immigrant audience in Brazil and joining efforts to create initiatives to promote health and quality of life. In addition, it aims to contribute to the professional practice of current nurses and those in training, instigating awareness of the importance of the topic during the undergraduate phase and the welcoming and promotion of well-being in the locus of life of these people.

As limitations of this study, one can consider the fact that only nursing students participated in the discussions in the Culture Circle. Continuing research should be encouraged, involving the situation of immigrants in Brazil, seeking greater participation of nursing students and other areas of expertise, with a view to encouraging reflection on the relationship between immigration and health during professional training.

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