

Nursing staff illness triggered by stress

Enfermedades del personal de enfermería desencadenadas por el estrés

Adoecimento da equipe de enfermagem desencadeado pelo estresse

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Abstract

This study aimed to describe factors that trigger stress and illness among the nursing team and to discuss how these factors influence the quality of care. This is an integrative review of scientific articles, of an exploratory and descriptive nature, with a qualitative approach. A search was conducted on Google Scholar. The inclusion criteria were articles published in full, free of charge, in Portuguese, published in the last 5 years. The exclusion criteria were course completion papers, dissertations, theses, books, manuals, and protocols, as well as duplicate articles. An initial 62 articles were found; however, four articles were selected after screening. Due to low salaries, professionals need to work multiple shifts to achieve the remuneration that can meet their basic needs. However, with the excessive workload, professionals tend to suffer emotional, physical, and psychological exhaustion, causing demotivation to perform their care function. Given the results found, this study contributes to deepening the understanding of the stressors that impact the health of the nursing team and how the resulting illness can compromise the quality of care provided to patients.

Descriptors: Nursing Team; Psychological Stress; Salaries and Benefits; Mental Health; Occupational Health.

Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio fue describir los factores que desencadenan estrés y enfermedad en el equipo de enfermería y analizar cómo estos factores influyen en la calidad de la atención. Se trata de una revisión integrativa de artículos científicos, de naturaleza exploratoria y descriptiva, con un enfoque cualitativo. Se realizó una búsqueda en Google Académico. Los criterios de inclusión fueron: artículos publicados íntegramente, de forma gratuita, en portugués y publicados en los últimos 5 años. Los criterios de exclusión fueron: trabajos de fin de curso, disertaciones, tesis, libros, manuales y protocolos, así como artículos duplicados. Inicialmente se encontraron 62 artículos; sin embargo, tras la selección, se seleccionaron cuatro. Debido a los bajos salarios, los profesionales necesitan trabajar en múltiples turnos para alcanzar una remuneración que cubra sus necesidades básicas. Sin embargo, con la excesiva carga de trabajo, los profesionales tienden a sufrir agotamiento emocional, físico y psicológico, lo que provoca desmotivación para desempeñar su función asistencial. Dados los resultados, este estudio contribuye a profundizar la comprensión de los factores estresantes que impactan la salud del equipo de enfermería y cómo la enfermedad resultante puede comprometer la calidad de la atención brindada a los pacientes.

Descriptoros: Equipo de Enfermería; Estrés Psicológico; Salarios y Beneficios; Salud Mental; Salud Ocupacional.

Resumo

Objetivou-se descrever fatores que desencadeiam estresse e adoecimento entre a equipe de enfermagem; e discutir como estes fatores influenciam na qualidade da assistência. Trata-se de uma revisão integrativa, de artigos científicos, de caráter exploratório e descritivo, com abordagem qualitativa. Realizada busca no Google Acadêmico. Os critérios de inclusão foram: artigos publicados na íntegra, gratuitos, no idioma português, publicados nos últimos 5 anos. Os critérios de exclusão foram: trabalhos de conclusão de curso, dissertações, teses, livros, manuais e protocolos, além de artigos em duplicidade. Foram encontrados 62 artigos iniciais, porém, foram selecionados após triagem quatro artigos. Devido à baixos salários, o profissional necessita se desdobrar, sacrificando-se em sucessivos turnos para alcançar a remuneração que possa suprir as suas necessidades básicas, entretanto, com a excessiva carga horária, os profissionais tendem a ter desgastes emocionais, físicos e psíquicos, ocasionando a desmotivação para exercer a sua função de cuidar. Diante dos resultados encontrados, este estudo contribui ao aprofundar a compreensão sobre os fatores estressantes que impactam a saúde da equipe de enfermagem e como o adoecimento decorrente pode comprometer a qualidade da assistência prestada aos pacientes.

Descritores: Equipe de Enfermagem; Estresse Psicológico; Salários e Benefícios; Saúde Mental; Saúde Ocupacional.



Introduction

In 1992, the World Health Organization (WHO) called stress "the disease of the 20th century" and described it as a set of psychological and/or physical phenomena that occur in the body of individuals and workers and can affect their health, quality of life and relationships with peers in the workplace, as well as in the family context. According to the Ministry of Health, stress is the body's natural reaction that occurs when experiencing situations of danger or threat. This mechanism puts the individual in a state of alert or alarm, causing physical and emotional changes. Reacting to stress is a biological attitude necessary for adapting to new situations. It can be divided into two types: acute, which is more intense and short-lived, and can be caused by traumatic situations, but temporary, and chronic, which affects most people and is constant in everyday life^{1,2}.

Occupational stress is defined as a set of disorders that generate serious physical and emotional exhaustion, related to the way of life imposed on workers, to adapt to constantly changing work processes. Among the factors intervening in the work activity specifically of nurses, stress has a prominent position, where research has identified symptoms of stress with risks to the health of these professionals, considering the inclusion of the high pace of work, exhausting workloads, care responsibilities, insufficient salaries and conflicting interpersonal relationships in the work environment, also generating professional burnout and lack of recognition³.

A study linked stress to nursing mainly because professionals in this area must work with sick people, in physical and psychological suffering, who demand attention, understanding, and empathy. Dealing with this group and adverse situations, the feelings they develop can lead to a state of irritation, disappointment, and even depression⁴.

A study carried out in the public health network in the municipality of Petrolina (PE) – Brazil, which had the participation of 200 health professionals, showed that 42% of the people interviewed presented stress at some stage, be it alert, resistance, near-exhaustion, or exhaustion⁵.

Nursing fights death and disease every day, manage teams, control equipment, provide healthcare to the sick, and in this scenario, seek pleasure as a result of contributing to the cure and/or rehabilitation of patients. Suffering arises when working conditions are unsatisfactory for providing quality care or when investments in healthcare are in vain. According to the above data, it is worrying both for the mental and physical health of the professional, as well as for public health, given that stress directly influences professional burnout, reflecting on the patient due to the quality of the care provided⁶.

The minimum wage as a stress factor encompasses several factors, such as double working hours, considering that the remuneration received often does not satisfy the professional's quality of life, making it necessary to extend their working hours, causing the nursing professional to have an excessive workload, leading to a high level of stress⁷.

Labor market rules allow for different employment relationships, working hours, and unequal salaries in the

same institution. Inequalities result in physical and mental exhaustion, raising a red flag regarding quality of life and work capacity. Such factors can also generate work overload for other colleagues in the profession, due to absenteeism and a lack of staffing. Given these factors, it is understood that the fight of nurses to establish a reduction in weekly working hours, a minimum wage, and a career plan is extremely necessary and relevant⁷.

Given the aforementioned facts, it is important to note the importance of the discussion regarding the application of the new minimum wage proposed in 2022, already present in the lives of some nursing professionals, since it is expected to achieve better working conditions, quality of care, personal fulfillment and satisfaction of health professionals, with no room for setbacks, but rather advances⁸.

In view of the above, this study aims to investigate the illness of the nursing team triggered by stress. This study is justified by the need to understand which factors can be precursors of stress in this team, wishing to understand how this issue directly influences stress among the nursing team, recognizing the importance of investigating this subject to identify decent working conditions and promote the health and well-being of nursing professionals and of the patients under their care.

The study is relevant not only to nursing professionals but also to the academic community, patients, health managers, and politicians. By addressing issues relevant to the clinical practice of stress among nursing staff, it is expected that this study may impact on the improvement of the mental and physical health of these professionals, positively adding to the quality and safety of patient care. In addition, this study will also contribute to the development of the academic community by serving as a basis for new themes on the subject. The objectives of this work are to describe factors that trigger stress and illness among nursing staff and discuss how these factors influence the quality of care.

Methodology

This is an integrative review of an exploratory and descriptive nature, with a qualitative approach. The integrative review uses data that has already received analytical treatment, that is, it is based on materials (scientific articles and books) that have already been published. It also has a descriptive nature, whose focus is not on the approach, but rather on the process and its meaning; that is, the main objective is the interpretation of the phenomenon that is the object of study. The qualitative approach is characterized by the fact that the researcher is the key instrument, the environment is considered the direct source of data, and does not require the use of statistical techniques and methods⁹.

The guiding question of this research was constructed based on the PICo strategy demonstrated in Chart 1, being: "How can stress cause illness in the nursing team?"



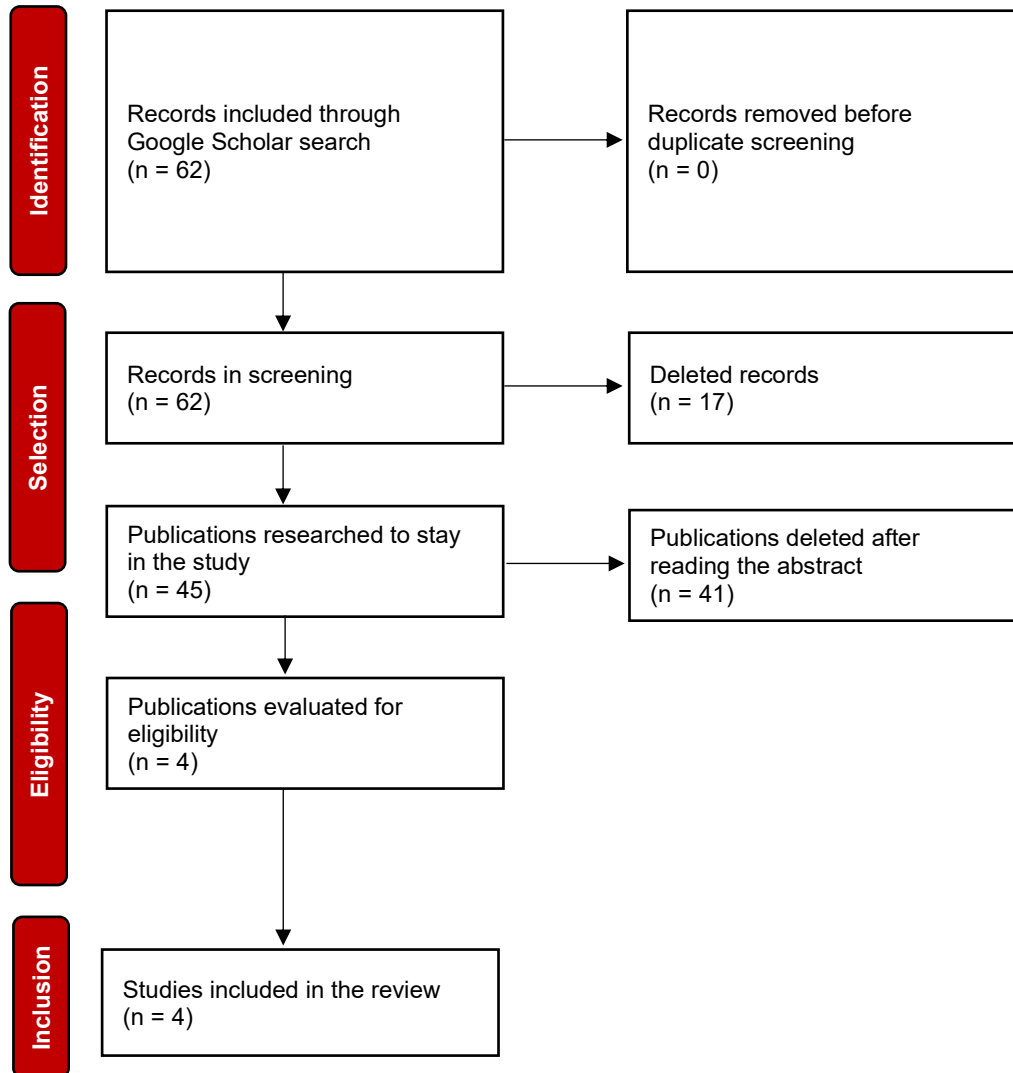
Chart 1. PICO Strategy. Cabo Frio, RJ, Brazil, 2024

Strategy	Definition	Application
P	Population	Illness of nursing professionals
I	Interest	Stress
Co	Context	In the workplace

The search was conducted between September and October 2024 on Google Scholar. The inclusion criteria were articles published in full, free of charge, in Portuguese, published in recent years. The exclusion criteria were course completion papers, dissertations, theses, books, manuals,

and protocols, as well as duplicate articles. The selected articles were grouped into an analytical framework, and the eligibility criteria were described in the PRISMA checklist flowchart (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Classification of articles and eligibility criteria. Cabo Frio, RJ, Brazil, 2024



Results

An advanced search on Google Scholar found 62 articles without applying inclusion and exclusion criteria. After applying these criteria, 45 articles were selected. These were analyzed by title, theme, and abstract to identify

scientific literature relevant to the chosen topic, with 41 articles being excluded after reading the abstract. Thus, a total of four articles were obtained, as shown in the chart below. The data were analyzed in the thematic modality.

Chart 2. Analytical classification of the articles applied in this review, in alphabetical order of title, with the following categories: title, journal, year of publication, objectives, type of study, main results and main conclusions. Cabo Frio, RJ, Brazil, 2024

Title	Journal	Publication Year	Objectives	Study Type	Main Results	Main Conclusions
Adoecimento dos profissionais de enfermagem que	Revista JRG de Estudos Acadêmicos	2023	Describe what has been published about the illness	Integrative literature review	The most recurrent health problems in the publications were stress, occupational stress,	The exhausting routine, family distance, psychological stress,



atuaram durante a pandemia da COVID-19: revisão integrativa			of nursing professionals who worked to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.		burnout syndrome, anxiety, depression, physical and emotional exhaustion, often associated with the fear of being infected and transmitting the disease to family and friends.	shortage of Personal Protective Equipment, and physical and mental exhaustion can contribute to the illness of nursing professionals.
Estresse e sofrimento em enfermeiros hospitalares: relação com variáveis pessoais, laborais e hábitos de vida	Texto & Contexto Enfermagem	2023	Identify possible associations between stress and suffering with personal, work, and lifestyle variables.	Cross-sectional, quantitative, exploratory, and correlational	Stress was associated with dissatisfaction with pay, indicators of distress, and interest in changing jobs and professions. Comparisons between indicators of distress and domains of stress research were significant.	The stress experienced by nurses in their work activities is strongly influenced by low pay, leading them to want to change jobs and professions. Professional burnout and lack of recognition are stressors that trigger defense mechanisms, including the desire to change jobs.
Fatores desencadeantes do estresse laboral na emergência médica: uma revisão integrativa	Revista Ciência Plural	2019	Analyze the triggering factors of occupational stress in health professionals working in emergency medical services.	Integrative literature review	It was observed that a series of environmental factors (poor working conditions, administrative activities) and personal factors (stable union, shorter service time) are associated with work-related stress. However, factors related to the environment are susceptible to intervention.	There is a need for policies to improve the work environment and empower health professionals working in emergency medical services.
Trabalho noturno, qualidade do sono e adoecimento de trabalhadores de enfermagem	Revista Acta Paulista de Enfermagem	2021	Analyze the relationship between sleep quality, excessive daytime sleepiness, and physical, psychological, and social illness in night shift nursing workers.	Quantitative, transversal, and correlational	A total of 139 workers participated, with a predominance of physical illness and poor sleep quality. An association was identified between sleep quality and the variables gender and physical damage. Physical illness was associated with gender, physical activity, work accidents and absence from work. There was a statistical difference between psychological illness and the sleep variables correlated with physical and psychological damage.	The factors identified are useful for planning health actions to promote the health of nursing workers who work the night shift.

Discussion

Factors that trigger stress among nursing staff

Studies point to factors such as work overload, emotional exhaustion, dissatisfaction, frustration, devaluation, lack of recognition of effort and performance, indignation, assignments related to service administration, and conflicting interpersonal relationships⁶.

These stressors were found in the work environment itself, with emphasis on poor working conditions, low wages, lack of equipment and supplies, multiple bonds, emotional involvement with patients and their companions, care responsibilities, heavy workload, inadequate number of professionals, shift work, reduced autonomy and proactivity of the professional and few promotions and opportunities for improvement⁶.

The accumulation of functions for the team occurs in a minimum amount of time available, regarding great responsibilities and little appreciation, leading to exhaustion and high stress levels for the team. The results found corroborate with a study that showed how physical and psychological factors trigger stress among nursing team

professionals^{4,10}.

Factors that influence the professional's quality of life and the quality of care provided

According to studies, the work context directly influences the relationship between health and disease, contributing to the emergence of physical, mental and emotional illness in the professional's life and, consequently, the quality of care provided. Excessive workload is one of the main elements that negatively impacts the health of these professionals, leading to stress, exhaustion, Burnout Syndrome and physical and mental fatigue. Stressful environments, with a lack of resources or team support, increase levels of demotivation, in addition to reducing the efficiency of daily activities¹¹.

Another important aspect is the physical working conditions, long hours standing, frequent handling of patients, and exposure to biological and chemical risks can cause musculoskeletal injuries and other health problems, affecting the well-being of professionals¹².

Furthermore, working double shifts to obtain better



financial return, due to low pay, also compromises the quality of sleep, job satisfaction, and engagement at work. This fact was evidenced by a study that showed that the lack of financial recognition negatively affects the well-being of professionals, exacerbating team stress¹³.

Psychosocial support is another essential factor. The lack of emotional support from colleagues or institutions increases stress and burnout. On the other hand, an environment of cooperation and support improves emotional well-being and facilitates teamwork. Training and continuing education also have a positive influence, offering access to opportunities for professional development, increasing confidence and satisfaction¹².

Conclusion

A balance between personal and professional life is essential, as these factors, when not managed properly, have a significant impact on both the quality of care provided to patients and the quality of life of professionals, and can be a precursor to stress. Lack of motivation and support for professionals directly influences the quality of care, resulting in less attentive and efficient care. As a result, professionals

who are physically and emotionally exhausted tend to make more mistakes, which compromises the safety and effectiveness of care.

The confrontation of increased and exhausting working hours experienced by many professionals, as a mechanism to compensate for low salaries and achieve a satisfactory income, is one of the factors that corroborate the need for the effective application of the Minimum Wage Law for Nursing professionals, within a decent working schedule.

Improving working conditions is not only a matter of justice for nursing professionals but also a necessity for the proper functioning of the health system. The discussion on work-related stress and its consequences needs to be expanded, with the aim of achieving significant advances in the field of nursing and in public health.

That said, it is concluded that social determinants such as income must be seen as extremely important for maintaining the well-being of Nursing professionals, to promote greater safety in the care provided, as well as for the recognition and appreciation of these professionals.

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