

Scientific literature on the structural and psychological empowerment of nurses: a scoping review*Producción científica sobre el empoderamiento estructural y psicológico de las enfermeras: una revisión del alcance**Produção científica sobre o empoderamento estrutural e psicológico de enfermeiros: revisão de escopo***Andréia Pessoa da Cruz^{1*}**

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***Corresponding author:**andrea.pessoa@unesp.br**Submission:** 08-07-2026**Approval:** 09-10-2026**Abstract**

This study aimed to characterize the profile of scientific publications regarding the structural and psychological empowerment of nurses in healthcare settings. It was conducted as a scoping review based on the Joanna Briggs Institute methodology and the PRISMA-ScR extension. The search was performed in January 2026 across the BVS (MEDLINE, BDNF, LILACS), CINAHL, Scopus, Web of Science, and Embase databases, covering primary studies published between 2019 and 2025. The PCC mnemonic was used (Population: nurses; Concept: structural/psychological empowerment; Context: healthcare services). Nineteen international and national studies were selected. A moderate level of structural and psychological empowerment was observed among nurses. The most prominent dimensions were opportunity and meaning, whereas support, information, and bureaucratic autonomy recorded lower scores. A strong positive association was found between empowerment and authentic/transformational leadership, safety climate, professional performance, and quality of care, alongside a negative correlation with burnout, bullying, and turnover intention. Nurse empowerment is a key management element that directly influences job satisfaction and care outcomes. Investing in favorable organizational structures and empowering leadership behaviors strengthens professional practice within healthcare services.

Descriptors: Empowerment; Nurses; Practice Management; Health Services; Leadership.**Resumen**

El objetivo fue caracterizar el perfil de las publicaciones científicas sobre el empoderamiento estructural y psicológico de las enfermeras en los servicios de salud. Se realizó una revisión exploratoria utilizando la metodología del Instituto Joanna Briggs y la extensión PRISMA-ScR. La búsqueda se llevó a cabo en enero de 2026 en las bases de datos BVS (MEDLINE, BDNF, LILACS), CINAHL, Scopus, Web of Science y Embase, abarcando estudios primarios publicados entre 2019 y 2025. Se utilizó el acrónimo PCC (Población: enfermeras; Concepto: empoderamiento estructural/psicológico; Contexto: servicios de salud). Se seleccionaron diecinueve estudios internacionales y nacionales. Se encontró un nivel moderado de empoderamiento estructural y psicológico entre las enfermeras. Las dimensiones más destacadas fueron oportunidad y significado, mientras que apoyo, información y autonomía burocrática registraron puntuaciones más bajas. Se encontró una fuerte asociación positiva entre el empoderamiento y el liderazgo auténtico/transaccional, un entorno laboral seguro, el desempeño profesional y la calidad de la atención, así como una correlación negativa con el agotamiento, el acoso laboral y la intención de rotación. El empoderamiento de las enfermeras es un elemento clave en la gestión, que influye directamente en la satisfacción laboral y los resultados de la atención. Invertir en estructuras organizativas de apoyo y en comportamientos de liderazgo que fomenten el empoderamiento fortalece la práctica profesional en los servicios de salud.

Descriptores: Empoderamiento; Enfermeras y Enfermeros; Gestión de la Práctica Profesional; Servicios de Salud; Liderazgo.**Resumo**

Objetivou-se caracterizar o perfil das publicações científicas sobre o empoderamento estrutural e psicológico de enfermeiros nos serviços de saúde. Revisão de escopo pautada na metodologia do Joanna Briggs Institute e na extensão PRISMA-ScR. A busca foi realizada em janeiro de 2026 nas bases BVS (MEDLINE, BDNF, LILACS), CINAHL, Scopus, Web of Science e Embase, abrangendo estudos primários publicados entre 2019 e 2025. Utilizou-se o mnemônico PCC (População: enfermeiros; Conceito: empoderamento estrutural/psicológico; Contexto: serviços de saúde). Selecionaram-se 19 estudos internacionais e nacionais. Constatou-se um nível moderado de empoderamento estrutural e psicológico entre enfermeiros. As dimensões de maior destaque foram oportunidade e significado, enquanto suporte, informações e autonomia burocrática registraram menores pontuações. Evidenciou-se forte associação positiva do empoderamento com liderança autêntica/transaccional, clima de segurança, desempenho profissional e qualidade da assistência, além de correlação negativa com burnout, bullying e intenção de rotatividade. O empoderamento de enfermeiros é um elemento articulador da gestão, influenciando diretamente a satisfação no trabalho e os resultados assistenciais. Investir em estruturas organizacionais favoráveis e comportamentos empoderadores de liderança fortalece a prática profissional nos serviços de saúde.

Descritores: Empoderamento; Enfermeiras e Enfermeiros; Gerenciamento da Prática Profissional; Serviços de Saúde; Liderança.

Introduction

The National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) for the Undergraduate Nursing Course adopt as the profile of the professional graduate a nurse grounded in generalist, humanist, critical, and reflective education, qualified for the practice of Nursing based on scientific and intellectual rigor, guided by ethical principles. The following competencies and skills are recommended: health care, decision-making, communication, leadership, administration, management, and continuing education¹.

To guide the competencies of nurses, the Professional Nursing Practice Law No. 7,498, of June 25, 1986, determines that nurses shall perform all nursing activities, with the following functions being exclusive to them: direction of the nursing body that is part of the basic structure of the public or private health institution; organization and direction of nursing services; and planning, organization, coordination, execution, and evaluation of nursing care services².

Regarding the legal determination of professional practice, Cofen Resolution No. 727, of September 27, 2023, which establishes the necessary procedures for the granting, renewal, and cancellation of the registration of the Technical Responsibility Annotation for the Nursing Service and defines the attributions of the Technical Responsible Nurse (ERT), recommends that ERTs are responsible for compliance with the Professional Nursing Practice Law and the Decree that regulates it. According to the resolution:

*"It is mandatory that every company/institution/public, private, charitable, or philanthropic organization where there are nursing services and/or teaching have at least one ERT and present the respective CRT, which must be posted on its premises, in a visible and publicly accessible location"*³.

From the perspective of the nurse's role as a leader, it is reported that, in recent decades, there has been a growth in interest in the concept of innovative leadership in areas of managerial practice, as well as in the concept of empowerment related to this practice among professionals and managers from various fields⁴.

Studies reveal the existence of two perspectives of empowerment in the professional environment: psychological empowerment, which consists of the professional's involvement and how motivated they are with their practice environment; and structural empowerment, which is related to the support of resources, information, and conditions that provide learning and professional growth⁵.

The Psychological Empowerment Instrument (PEI), or Instrumento de Empoderamento Psicológico in its translated and validated version in Brazil (IEP), is a multidimensional measure of psychological empowerment in the work context, composed of 12 items and subdivided into four domains (meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) with a Likert-type measurement scale⁶. For the evaluation of structural empowerment, the Conditions of Work Effectiveness Questionnaire (CWEQ-II) is an instrument that provides understanding of intervention mechanisms between the conditions and the organizational

process of work. Its translation and cultural adaptation to Brazilian Portuguese resulted in the Brazilian version called Condições de Eficácia de Trabalho II (CET-II)⁷.

An instrument to analyze leader behavior in empowering their team is the Leader Empowering Behaviour (LEB), which enables managers' self-assessment of empowering behavior and its reflection on teams. Originally, it contains 27 items divided into five domains. This instrument was adapted and validated for Brazilian Portuguese in a sample of Brazilian nurses, being named Escala do Comportamento Empoderador do Líder (CEL)^{4,7}.

Empowerment analysis instruments are important tools for the management process, just as it is relevant to know the professional practice environment of nurses, since it is inferred that this environment interferes with empowerment and leader behavior for the empowerment of their team. Thus, the Nursing Work Index - Revised (NWI-R) - Brazilian Version is an instrument that can contribute to this analysis⁸.

Empowerment is a central element in the performance of nurses' work. Research on structural empowerment can present an overview of the level of this empowerment among nurses in the hospital environment, as they relate to professional satisfaction and the quality of care provided to patients⁹. Considering the importance of the theme, the need to know and analyze scientific production in this context is recognized. Therefore, the study aims to characterize the profile of scientific publications on the structural and/or psychological empowerment of nurses in health services.

Methodology

This is a scoping review, according to the method proposed by the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI), which aims at the synthesis of knowledge in a rigorous, transparent, and reliable way¹⁰. For the execution of this research, the five determined steps were followed: elaboration of the guiding question; identification and selection of studies; mapping of information; grouping, summary, and reporting of results¹¹. This review was registered on the Open Science Framework (OSF) platform under DOI: 10.17605/OSF.IO/9ACYV.

For the elaboration of the research question, the objective was aligned with the main mnemonic elements of the inclusion criteria. To this end, the following was stipulated: Population (P) = nurses; Concept (C) = structural and psychological empowerment; and Context (C) = health services, thus integrating the PCC strategy, according to the JBI protocol¹⁰. Based on these definitions, the following research question was determined: "What are the characteristics of scientific publications on the structural and psychological empowerment of nurses in health services?"

The survey of scientific literature was conducted in January 2026. The search descriptors in the Portuguese databases, obtained through the Health Sciences Descriptors (DeCS), were: empoderamento, enfermeiros, gerenciamento da prática profissional and serviço de saúde. For the English databases, the descriptors from the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH: psychological empowerment, structural empowerment, empowerment, nurses) and



EMTREE (nurse, empowerment, health service, nursing management) were used, associated with free terms in English (psychological empowerment and structural empowerment). The Boolean operators "AND" and "OR" were employed to establish the search strategy in the databases. Regarding the databases, the following were used: Online System for Search and Analysis of Medical Literature (MEDLINE), BDENF, LILACS, and IBEC, through the Virtual Health Library (BVS); Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Scopus, and Web of Science (WOS) - Chart 1.

Subsequently, the reading of titles and abstracts was performed for the selection of articles, adopting the following eligibility criteria:

- Inclusion criteria: primary empirical studies with a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods

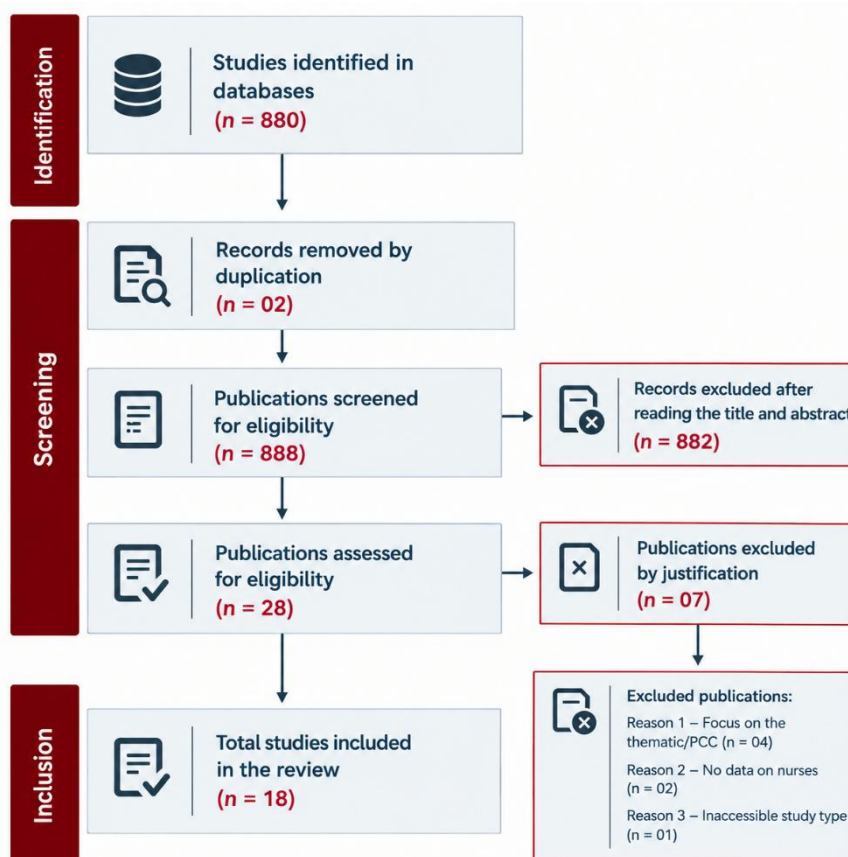
approach; published in full text in Portuguese, English, or Spanish; with a time frame between 2019 and 2025 (search closed in January 2026); and whose thematic focus was centered on the structural and/or psychological empowerment of nurses working in health services.

- Exclusion criteria: theoretical studies, narrative or integrative reviews, editorials, opinion articles, conference proceedings, theses, dissertations, institutional reports (gray literature); methodological research strictly aimed at psychometric validation of instruments; studies focused exclusively on students or other categories without disaggregated data for nurses; and publications whose full text was not accessible.

Chart 1. Search strategies used in the databases. Botucatu, SP, Brazil, 2019-2025

Databases	Search strategies
 BVS	((empoderamento) OR ("empoderamento para a saúde") OR (empoderamiento) OR (Empowerment)) AND ((enfermeiros) OR ("enfermeiras e enfermeiros") OR (enfermeira) OR (enfermeiro) OR (nurses) OR ("enfermeiras y enfermeros")) AND (("gerenciamento da prática profissional") OR ("Administração da Prática Profissional") OR ("gerenciamento de Prática Profissional") OR (Gestão da Prática Profissional) OR ("Serviços de gerenciamento da Prática") OR ("Practice Management") OR ("Gestión de la Práctica Profesional") OR ("serviços de saúde") OR ("serviço de saúde") OR ("serviços de atenção ao paciente") OR ("uso de serviços de saúde") OR ("Health Services") OR ("Services of Health") OR ("organização e administração") OR (gerenciamento) OR (administração) OR (gestão) OR (supervisão) OR ("Organization and Administration") OR ("Organización y Administración"))
 CINAHL	((("psychological empowerment" AND "structural empowerment" AND (nurse))
 SCOPUS	((TITLE-ABS-KEY ("empowerment") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("nurse") OR ("nursing") AND (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("health services"))
 WOS	TS= (("nurse*" OR "nursing staff" OR "registered nurse*") AND ("empowerment" OR "psychological empowerment" OR "structural empowerment" OR "leader empowering behavior") AND ("health service*" OR "health care" OR "Practice management" OR "nursing management" OR "hospital"))

Figure 1. Flowchart of the selection of review articles prepared by the authors, adapted to PRISMA-ScR. Botucatu, SP, Brazil, 2019-2025



For the storage and organization of references, the Mendeley reference manager was used, which enabled access by all researchers involved, who independently reviewed the studies for relevance. To extract and present the data from the studies, the form recommended by JBI was adopted, containing: authors, year, country of origin, objectives, study population or sample size, methods, results, and main conclusions¹⁰.

To describe the flow of study selection, the model recommended by the PRISMA-ScR extension was used, as presented in Figure 1¹².

Results and Discussion

The characterization of the 19 selected studies, containing author, country, year, methods, and main results, is presented in Chart 2.

Chart 2. Characterization of the studies included in the scoping review. Botucatu, SP, Brazil, 2019-2025

Title	Country	Year	Methods	Results
Impact of psychological empowerment on workplace bullying and intent to leave ¹³	United States of America (USA)	2019	Descriptive and cross-sectional. PE, bullying, and turnover intention instruments were used. Analysis of bivariate correlations and ANOVA.	PE correlated negatively with bullying and turnover intention. Directors presented significantly higher PE than nurse managers.
Empowerment of front-line leaders in an online learning, certificate programme ¹⁴	USA/Australia	2019	Pre- and post-intervention study with 29 frontline leaders. CWEQ-II, PE, intention to stay, and self-assessment were used.	Structural empowerment improved significantly (post-test M=19.47 vs. pre-test M=18.50). 83% agreed that the intervention contributed to empowerment in the role.
Empoderamento estrutural dos enfermeiros no ambiente hospitalar ¹⁵	Brazil	2020	Descriptive-analytical, cross-sectional study conducted with 237 nurses who performed care and management activities. The Conditions of Work Effectiveness Questionnaire II was used.	It was identified that nurses have a moderate level of structural empowerment (18.06 ± SD 0.9). The highest score was obtained in the Opportunity dimension (4.08±SD 0.8), followed by the Resources (3.17±SD 0.8) and Informal Power (3.04±SD 0.9) dimensions; while the scores for Support (2.67±SD 1.0), Formal Power (2.59±SD 0.9), and Information (2.51±SD 0.9) were the lowest.
Empoderamiento de los enfermeiros de un hospital del sur de Chile ¹⁶	Chile	2020	Cross-sectional and descriptive study with 117 nurses. The Spanish version of the CWEQ-II was used.	Means: Opportunity (4.11±0.82), Information (3.81±0.90), Support (3.81±0.86), and Resources (3.13±0.97). Significant difference associated with length of experience and job satisfaction.
How job performance is affected by a structurally empowered work environment ¹⁷	Jordan/Saudi Arabia	2020	Cross-sectional study with convenience sampling of 195 nurses in 4 hospitals. The CWEQ-II was used.	Work environment perceived as moderately empowering. Significant positive correlation between structural empowerment and job performance.
The effect of nurses' empowerment perceptions on job safety behaviours: a research study in Turkey ¹⁸	Turkey	2020	Study with 377 nurses from five hospitals. The CWEQ-II and the PEI were used.	Moderate and significant relationship between empowerment (structural and psychological) and adherence to universal safety precautions and occupational health obligations.
Empoderamento estrutural de enfermeiros atuantes em pronto-socorro: estudo de método misto ¹⁹	Brazil	2021	Mixed-methods study.	Moderate level of structural empowerment (18.06±0.9). Partial access to support, formal/informal power, and insufficiency of resources and time stood out.
Empoderamento psicológico dos profissionais de saúde ²⁰	Brazil	2021	Comparative, quantitative, and cross-sectional study with 165 health professionals (56 nurses). The IEP was used.	Nurses obtained a mean of 71.4 points in the total instrument score, with no statistically significant difference between professional categories (p=0.5959).
Staff structural empowerment: observations of first-line managers and interviews with managers and staff ²¹	Sweden	2021	Qualitative study (observation of 5 first-line managers and interviews with 13 professionals).	Managers demonstrated intentional actions to enable team access to empowering structures, recognized as fundamental by both parties.
Association between work-related psychological empowerment and quality of nursing care among critical care nurses ²²	Jordan	2022	Cross-sectional study with 480 intensive care nurses.	Means: psychological empowerment (5.22±0.92) and quality of care (3.75±0.62). Significant positive relationship between psychological empowerment and quality of care.
Fatores associados ao empoderamento psicológico da	Brazil	2023	Quantitative and correlational study with 64 nursing professionals.	Positive and strong association between psychological empowerment, practice environment (r=0.57), and

enfermagem em serviços de hemodiálise ²³				safety climate ($r=0.62$). Mean empowerment score of 68.7 ± 10.8 .
Jordanian nurse leader's empowering behaviors and contributing factors as perceived by staff nurses ²⁴	Jordan	2023	Descriptive and correlational study with 414 nurses. The LEB scale was used.	Moderate levels of leader empowering behavior. Continuing education, nurse experience, and work shift explained 55% of the variation in behaviors.
Relationship between structural empowerment and nurse and patient-reported outcomes: the mediating role of control over nursing practices ²⁵	Turkey	2023	Correlational and cross-sectional study with 319 nurses from two public hospitals.	Structural empowerment was positively related to job satisfaction and quality of care, and negatively related to turnover intention.
Comportamento empoderador do enfermeiro-líder na perspectiva de técnicos e auxiliares de enfermagem ²⁶	Brazil	2024	Cross-sectional and correlational study with 260 mid-level professionals. The CEL scale was used.	Highest mean in the "meaningful work" domain and lowest in "autonomy regarding bureaucracy." Greater perception of empowerment among daytime shift workers and those satisfied.
Transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, and organizational citizenship behaviors among nursing workforce: a single mediation analysis ²⁷	Saudi Arabia	2024	Cross-sectional study with 305 nurses.	Positive association between transformational leadership and psychological empowerment ($r=0.507$). Empowerment partially mediated the relationship with organizational citizenship behaviors.
Influences of nursing professionalism, empathy, and clinical decision-making ability on shared decision-making awareness among hemodialysis nurses ²⁸	South Korea	2024	Descriptive cross-sectional study with 145 hemodialysis nurses.	Empathy and clinical decision-making ability were the main predictors of awareness about shared decision-making ($R^2=23\%$).
Structural empowerment of nurses in the hospital setting: a cross-sectional study ²⁹	Portugal	2025	Cross-sectional study with 684 hospital nurses using the CWEQ-II scale.	Total mean structural empowerment of 18.74 ± 3.46 (moderate level). Significant differences between specialist and generalist nurses ($p=0.0477$), shifts, and sectors.
Structural and psychological empowerment in explaining job satisfaction and burnout in nurses ³⁰	China/ Turkey	2025	Multilevel study analyzing organizational perceptions of empowerment, satisfaction, and burnout.	Organizational-level empowerment significantly reduces emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, promoting retention and positive work attitudes.
Influência do estilo de liderança no empoderamento estrutural de enfermeiros: um estudo transversal ³¹	Portugal	2025	Observational and correlational study with 308 nurses.	Moderate level of structural empowerment reported (16.66 ± 3.88). The most scored leadership style was relationship-oriented (32.31 ± 9.24). There are positive correlations between the different leadership styles and the level of structural empowerment. Relationship-oriented leadership presents the strongest correlation ($r=0.446$; $p=0.000$).

The analysis of the scientific production included in this scoping review revealed that structural and psychological empowerment consolidates itself as a central and articulating element of nursing management, directly influencing the quality of care, job satisfaction, and the sustainability of health organizations. The findings indicate a predominance of moderate levels of empowerment among nurses working in hospital environments and specialized services at both global and national levels^{13-15,17,19,24,30,31}.

The identification of moderate levels of empowerment suggests that, although there are organizational structures and intrapersonal motivations that favor professional practice, significant institutional barriers still persist that prevent the full achievement of autonomy and effectiveness at work. In the theoretical model of Structural Empowerment, facilitated access to information,

resources, support, and learning opportunities is indispensable for effectiveness at work^{5,7}. Likewise, from the perspective of Psychological Empowerment, the perception of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact guides the individual's intrinsic motivation in their work role^{5,6}.

One of the most convergent findings among the analyzed studies concerns the asymmetric behavior between the different dimensions of the applied scales. It was observed that the dimensions "Opportunity" (in structural empowerment) and "Meaning" (in psychological empowerment) consistently presented the highest mean scores^{15,16,26}. This pattern evidences the high ethical-vocational commitment of nurses to the profession, in addition to the continuous desire for improvement and learning. The strong feeling of meaningful work reflects the



convergence of nursing practice with the professional profile recommended by DCNs¹ and with the legal framework of profession^{2,3}, which emphasize humanized, ethical care focused on the health needs of the population.

On the other hand, structural domains such as access to "Information," "Support," "Resources," and "Autonomy regarding bureaucracy" registered the worst evaluations^{15,19,26}. The scarcity of material resources, work overload, limited time, and fragmented communication flows limit the formal and informal power of nurses in institutions. This limitation can weaken clinical and managerial decision-making, directly impacting the exclusive exercise of leadership and care management assured by the Professional Practice Law (Law No. 7,498/1986)² and regulated by resolutions of the Federal Nursing Council, such as Cofen Resolution No. 727/2023³.

The analyzed literature reinforces that leadership plays an indispensable catalytic role in the empowerment of nursing teams. Leadership styles oriented by empowering behaviors^{4,24}, authentic²⁰ and transformational²⁷ correlate positively with the elevation of employees' psychological and structural empowerment scores. When managers act intentionally to enable team access to the necessary structures and resources²¹, a favorable work environment is created, promoting Organizational Citizenship Behaviors²⁷ and strengthening the patient safety climate^{18,23}.

Furthermore, the results evidence that empowerment acts as a crucial protective factor against the psychosocial challenges faced by the category. High levels of

empowerment proved to be inversely correlated with the occurrence of bullying in the workplace¹³, emotional exhaustion (burnout)³¹ and intention to leave or turnover^{13,25}. In contrast, empowering environments correlate directly with increased job satisfaction^{9,16,26}, and with the improvement of the quality of nursing care provided^{22,25}. Such evidence demonstrates that investing in empowerment strategies is indispensable for professional valorization and for the retention of nursing talent in health services.

Conclusion

The characterization of the profile of scientific publications evidences that structural and psychological empowerment constitutes a decisive element in nursing governance and in the sustainability of health services. Promoting organizational environments equipped with adequate resources, clear information flow, effective support, and empowering leadership reflects in the improvement of the safety climate, professional performance, and retention of nursing talent. This study presents limitations: the stipulated time frame (2019 to 2025) and the exclusive inclusion of articles published in three languages (Portuguese, English, and Spanish), which may have restricted the identification of evidence published in other languages or in gray literature. Additionally, the heterogeneity of methodological designs and instruments employed in the primary studies made it impossible to perform combined statistical analyses.

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