

Nursing working conditions: an integrative review

Condições de trabalho da enfermagem: uma revisão integrativa

Condiciones laborales de enfermería: una revisión integradora

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How to cite: Barreto GAA, Oliveira JML, Carneiro BA, Bastos MAC, Cardoso GMP, Figueredo WN. Nursing working conditions: an integrative review. *REVISA*. 2021; 10(1): 13-21. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.36239/revisa.v10.n1.p13a21>

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Received: 12/10/2020
Accepted: 29/12/2020

RESUMO

Objetivo: descrever as condições de trabalho do enfermeiro, com ênfase na exposição a doenças ocupacionais e influência da carga horária na qualidade de vida do profissional. **Método:** Trata-se de uma revisão integrativa, realizada em agosto de 2020 nas bases de dados: Scientific Eletronic Libray Online (SciELO), Literatura Latino-Americana e do Caribe em Ciências (LILACS) e PubMed. Utilizando os descritores saúde: saúde do trabalhador; qualidade de vida; riscos ocupacionais e enfermagem. **Resultados:** Foram selecionados 19 artigos, nos idiomas inglês, português e espanhol, publicados entre os anos de 2015-2020. O trabalho da enfermagem exige alto grau de atenção e responsabilidade, as condições em que esses profissionais estão inseridos os submetem a variados agentes produtores de danos à saúde. Estresse ocupacional, acidentes de trabalho, carga horária excessiva foram fatores associados à baixa da qualidade de vida desse grupo. Enfermeiros realizam suas atividades com grande pressão psicológica e desgaste físico, decorrente de condições de trabalho precárias, má organização da gestão do sistema, deficiência de equipamentos básicos e imprescindíveis ao desenvolvimento do trabalho, bem como a grande demanda de pacientes em relação à oferta de profissionais. **Conclusão:** Destaca-se a importância da criação de medidas para segurança desse grupo, através de investimentos financeiros e políticas públicas para melhora das condições de trabalho, assim como o fortalecimento das entidades de proteção a essa classe trabalhista. **Descritores:** Condições de trabalho; Enfermagem; Doenças ocupacionais; Qualidade de vida; Saúde do trabalhador.

ABSTRACT

Objective: to describe the nurses' working conditions, with an emphasis on exposure to occupational diseases and the influence of the workload on the professional's quality of life. **Method:** This is through an integrative literature review, performed in August 2020 through research in the databases: Scientific Eletronic Libray Online (SciELO), Latin American and Caribbean Literature in Sciences (LILACS) and PubMed. Using the descriptors health: worker health; quality of life; occupational risks and nursing. **Results:** 19 articles were selected, in English, Portuguese and Spanish, published between the years 2015-2020. Nursing work requires a high degree of attention and responsibility, the conditions in which these professionals are inserted subject them to various agents that produce damage to health. Occupational stress, work accidents, excessive workload were factors associated with the low quality of life of this group. Nurses perform their activities with great psychological pressure and physical exhaustion, due to precarious working conditions, poor organization of system management, deficiency of basic and essential equipment for the development of work, as well as the great demand from patients in relation to the supply of professionals. **Conclusion:** The importance of creating measures for the safety of this group is highlighted, through financial investments and public policies to improve working conditions, as well as the strengthening of entities that protect this working class.

Descriptors: Working conditions; Nursing; Occupational diseases; Quality of life; Worker's health.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: describir las condiciones laborales del enfermero, con énfasis en la exposición a enfermedades ocupacionales y la influencia de la carga de trabajo en la calidad de vida del profesional. **Método:** Se trata de una revisión integradora realizada en agosto de 2020, mediante la investigación en las bases de datos: Scientific Eletronic Libray Online (SciELO), Literatura Latinoamericana y Caribeña en Ciencias (LILACS) y PubMed. Utilizando los descriptores salud: salud del trabajador; calidad de vida; riesgos laborales y enfermería. **Resultados:** Se seleccionaron 19 artículos, en inglés, portugués y español, publicados entre los años 2015-2020. El trabajo de enfermería requiere un alto grado de atención y responsabilidad, las condiciones en las que se insertan estos profesionales los someten a diversos agentes que producen daños a la salud. El estrés laboral, los accidentes laborales, la sobrecarga de trabajo fueron factores asociados a la baja calidad de vida de este grupo. Las enfermeras realizan sus actividades con gran presión psicológica y agotamiento físico, debido a las precarias condiciones laborales, la mala organización de la gestión del sistema, la deficiencia de los equipos básicos y esenciales para el desarrollo del trabajo, así como la gran demanda de los pacientes en relación a la oferta de profesionales. **Conclusión:** Se destaca la importancia de crear medidas para la seguridad de este colectivo, a través de inversiones financieras y políticas públicas para mejorar las condiciones laborales, así como el fortalecimiento de las entidades que protegen a esta clase trabajadora.

Descriptores: Las condiciones de trabajo; Enfermería; Enfermedades profesionales; Calidad de vida; Salud del trabajador.

Introduction

Nursing work can be influenced by several issues, such as: power relations and class and gender struggles. These direct the professional to seek greater positioning and autonomy in their activities, in addition to the social and professional recognition that, at times, is weakened.¹

The deterioration of working conditions in the health field is present in the entire nursing service and occurs due to several factors, such as the lack of material resources and the shortage of professionals, creating overload on employees in certain sectors, in addition to fragile and low salaries.¹⁻²

Occupational diseases present themselves as a major enemy in the health sector. Nurses during their daily activities are exposed to the most diverse biological, chemical, physical and ergonomic risks, thus becoming a vulnerable group for the development of diseases (physical and emotional), affecting both their quality of life and their quality of care provided.³ These professionals in their working conditions are in charge of activities with high levels of responsibility, in addition to providing excessive hours, leading them to exhaustion, high level of stress, psychological damage and physiological problems.^{2,4}

Occupational stress is defined as a physiological and psychological pressure caused by an imbalance between personal requirements and the conditions in which the individual works. Baldonado et al.⁵ in a study on nurses' stress at work concluded that situations in which the individual experiences a lack of resources necessary for the activities in charge, expose them to constant stress, developing damage to their health, evolving slowly and progressively towards a state of disorder in the body. This situation creates exhaustion conditions, increasing the frequency of occupational accidents, since poor service conditions influence the performance of their tasks.⁵⁻⁶

The initiative of measures for safety and protection of this nursing team becomes partly the responsibility of the institution where this professional performs his work. Machado et al.⁷ in a study on nursing work conditions shows that only 40.6% of professionals are assisted when they fall ill by the institution they work for. Those who are not (30.5%) and those who 'sometimes' (19.1%) are assisted add up to 49.6%, that is, almost half of the team directly faces other people's health problems, but it has no institutional support when it comes to your own personal health.

Considering the growing interest in the activities performed by the nurse and the health status of these workers, this study aims, through an integrative literature review, to analyze the working conditions of nursing in a general context, with specificity in the exposure to occupational diseases and the influence of hourly load on your quality of life.

Method

This is a descriptive, exploratory study, developed through a critical analysis of the literature. At first, a bibliographic survey of the proposed theme was carried out, through research in virtual environments, in the following databases: Scientific Eletronic Libray Online (SciELO), Latin American and Caribbean Literature in Sciences (LILACS) and PubMed.

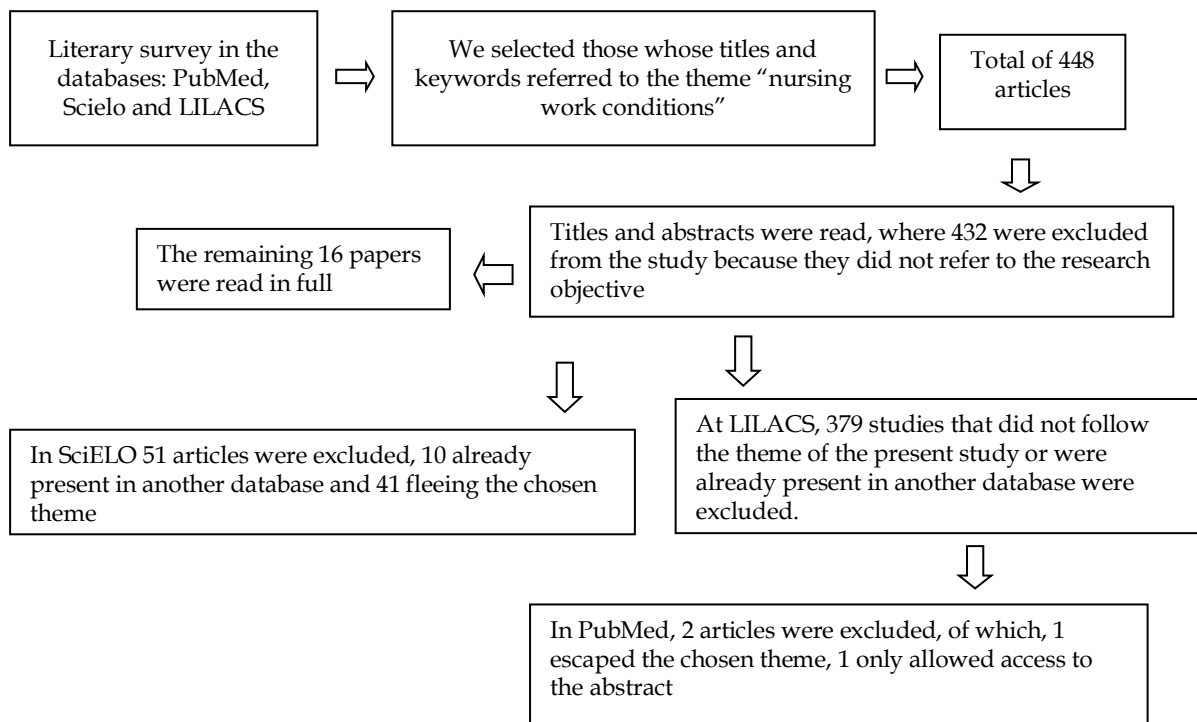
The descriptors used during the integrative literature review were: worker health; quality of life; occupational risks; nursing.

After selecting the descriptors, a crossover was carried out in the VHL (Virtual Health Library) with the Boolean operator AND as follows: “work conditions” AND “Nursing” AND “Nursing working conditions”, where articles from the databases were obtained data, LILACS, PubMed and Scielo. The studies obtained in each database were described, in due order, in **Chart 1** below:

Chart 1- Number of articles in the final sample per database, 2020.

Data bases	Search structure	Identified Sample	Excluded	Final Sample
SCIELO	“Nursing working conditions”	63	51	12
PUBMED	“work conditions” AND “Nursing”	3	2	1
LILACS	“work conditions” AND “Nursing”	382	379	3
TOTAL	--	448	432	16

Figure 1- Methodological process of the review, 2020.



The screening of the articles was developed by a group of reviewers, previously calibrated, so that both had access to the same references, but selected them independently.

The inclusion of the articles followed previously established criteria, in order to refine the indexed publications. The literary survey consisted of a sample of 16 articles published by the courses: Nursing and Psychology, chosen and characterized, focusing on the area of Nursing. Articles published between the years 2015-2020 were selected, and papers in English, Portuguese and Spanish were obtained.

Results

The screening of the articles was developed by a group of reviewers, previously calibrated, so that both had access to the same references, but selected them independently.

Titles and abstracts were read, where 432 were excluded from the study because they did not refer to the research objective, were duplicated in the databases or did not have open access. In LILACS, 379 studies that were not included in the theme of the present study or were already present in another database were excluded; 51 articles were excluded from SciELO, 10 of which were already present in another database and 41 from the theme, and 2 from PubMed were excluded, of which 1 was not in the chosen theme, 1 was not in open access.

Thus, the study sample consisted of 16 articles to be further analyzed, as can be seen in Chart 2.

Chart 2 - Authors, year of publication, objective and results of the 16 selected studies, 2020.

AUTHORS	YEAR	OBJECTIVE	RESULTS
Freire SKA, Santiago EJP. ¹	2017	Knowing the scientific production on occupational diseases in Brazil in relation to nursing workers	Factors such as stress, workloads and working conditions influence nurses' health
Dias MO, et al. ²	2019	Discuss the impact of gender and socioeconomic issues of nursing workers in coping with the precariousness of nursing work	The female predominance, double shift, social issues and cultural, professional devaluation, reduced participation in spaces of struggle and bureaucratic labor issues were presented as justifications for the low involvement at work
Souza KHJF, et al. ³	2020	Identify the associations between the variables associated with the nursing worker in a psychiatric hospital	The factors associated with the risks of illness were: complaints of insomnia, night work and working hours
Oliveira MM, et al. ⁴	2017	To verify the repercussions of occupational risks on nursing professionals working in the hospital area	The way nursing work is organized at the hospital level as well as its process, are the main causes of exposure to occupational risks for workers

Baldonado M, et al. ⁵	2018	To know and compare the stress levels of Spanish and Portuguese nurses working in Hospitals	The most stressful factors were work overload and difficulty in dealing with death
Macedo ATB, et al. ⁶	2020	Check for the presence of psychosocial stress and resilience scores in nursing professionals who care for adults with multidrug-resistant germs	It was observed that 69.23% (27) of the professionals had high psychosocial stress and 56.41% (22) low resilience
Machado MH, et al. ⁷	2015	Analyze the situation of the working conditions in which the nursing team operates, including variables in relation to working and relationship conditions	More than ¼ of the team see their distant, inaccessible bosses when they need help; high degree of insecurity and violence in the workplace; few are assisted, when they get sick, by the institution where they work; plus professional wear
Santos AP, et al. ⁸	2020	Understand the difficulties encountered by the nursing staff during Pre-Hospital Care	The main barriers to assistance were accessibility to service locations, scene safety and the occurrence of occupational violence against professionals
Costa KNFM, et al. ⁹	2017	Assess the quality of life related to the health of nursing professionals	Among the eight domains of the health-related quality of life instrument, three resulted in significant impairment of the scores. Those who obtained the lowest average were: Pain (22.4), General Health Status (25) and Social Aspects (22.5)
RB, Silva RM, Moraes-Filho IM. ¹⁰	2017	Analyze the scientific evidence on the main difficulties that the Occupational Health Nurse faces in preventing accidents and caring for diseases in the organizational environment	There are difficulties related to the labor market and internal problems, involving the relationship between companies and workers, mediated by nurses.
Oliveira CAFB, et al. ¹¹	2020	Analyze the repercussions of teaching work on the health of nursing teachers	Due to pressure from high labor demand and inadequate working conditions, this activity favors the illness of these professionals
Ferenc AVF, Brandão ACP, Braúna RCA. ¹²	2015	Analyze the teaching work conditions in a public university in Minas Gerais and its implications for professional development pathways	Teachers perceive the effects of the intensification processes, and the precariousness of their work, due to high pressure and high workload.
Marin J, Ribeiro CDM. ¹³	2020	Analyze the genesis and bioethical problems that emerge in the work process among teams of a basic health unit in Brazil	The reasons for this bioethical problem are associated with the collection of municipal management to increase production and achieve goals, the lack of appreciation of team workers and the efforts made by them in the work by management and asymmetric esteem.

Cardoso CML et al. ¹⁴	2016	Understand the experiences of Moral Suffering expressed in the daily life of the Family Health Strategy.	Daily health system issues lead professionals to experience a challenging practice in dealing with everyday situations that go against their ethical precepts and can compromise the quality of work, becoming triggers of Moral Anguish.
Worm FA, et al. ¹⁵	2016	Map the risk factors for illness related to the work of the Nursing professionals of the Mobile Emergency Service Team	The Indicators Pleasure and Suffering at Work pointed to freedom of expression for professionals, on the other hand there is a lack of recognition and professional exhaustion. For the evaluation of work-related damages, physical damages stand out.
Cunha LS et al. ¹⁶	2016	Identify the point of view of nursing professionals on the adaptation and improvisation of materials in hospital work and analyze the advantages and disadvantages of this practice for work in health and nursing	It was evident that the practice of adapting / improvising and dialectics, with feelings of suffering and pleasure. Because, while ensuring care, it also puts the safety of patients and workers at risk

Discussion

The work environment in all its context encompasses several situations that affect the quality of life of the employees who compose it, situations that are the responsibility of public health, such as the issue of violence in the daily lives of health institutions. The professional nurse in this condition is unprotected to attacks coming from both the team in which he is part and the population using the service. In a study where the perception of professionals regarding the feeling of protection against violence was obtained, only 29%, that is, less than 1/3 of the team feels safe at work, against 21.8% who feel 'sometimes' and 40.1% who do not feel protected.⁷⁻⁸

The high workload due to hospital shifts, shift changes and double jobs associated with low wages, significantly affects the quality of life of nurses.⁹ Situations of physical and psychological exhaustion leave no doubt as to the conditions experienced by the team in the institutions in which they operate, a survey reported that 65.9% of these workers consider their activity exhausting, with one of these factors triggering excessive hours.⁷

The work environment in which nursing operates is facing several elements that cause risks, due to the proportion of complex, collective and risky procedures as in confinement environments, which occurs in offshore oil platforms.¹⁰ Nurses face constant occupational diseases, capable of causing biopsychosocial damage, resulting from procedures performed by them, even producing various lesions at the cellular level (burns, skin and eye irritations, toxicity).³

Nursing works in the most diverse areas of health, with challenges and particularities. In a study addressing the work and health conditions in the reality of nursing professors, it was identified that 69.2% of these professionals reported the absence of rest breaks and meals during the working day, regarding space for rest in the institution 75 % of participants report that there is no suitable resting place.^{7,11-12}

Factors considered stressful surround the routine of these workers, being producers of potential injuries the health condition of these individuals and causing problems that compromise the physiological balance of the organism. Among these factors, there are barriers in communication between the team and management in health institutions, the unpreparedness of one member affects the other, in view of this, the manager when unable to perform his role efficiently is due to the lack of experience, knowledge or false authoritarian power relations, generate work overload and psychological pressure on the entire team.¹³⁻¹⁴ A recent study revealed the illness of nursing as a serious issue that affects more than half of the participants involved, their data show that 56.1% declared that they needed medical care in the first 12 months of service.⁷

Worm¹⁵, in his research on the risk of illness of nursing professionals at work in mobile emergency care, obtained a positive assessment when reporting the working conditions in this sector, having as protagonists factors the quality of materials and environment where this group works, in addition to good availability of equipment and materials to carry out their proposed activities. The study also concludes that disorganization and professional accommodation is what generates dissatisfaction and frustration at work, resulting in a negative balance in the performance of the work performed and in the quality of care.

When the environment and materials are precarious, there is a greater exposure to risks and suffering in nurses, as they cannot apply safe knowledge and techniques, limiting them in their own area. Improvisation is often entered into the activities performed, where rapid resolution of problems is required, further increasing the psychological pressure of workers, this adaptive capacity, despite increasing greater creativity in the task, has a greater negative charge because it is configured in dangerous practices for a profession that even when acted correctly already has great risks.¹⁶

Conclusion

During the research it was observed that the articles had themes that were often corroborated. These themes covered the working conditions of this class, exposure to occupational diseases in nursing, and several other causes of damage to workers' health such as excessive hours, occupational stress and accidents at work, which makes it essential to apply measures that alleviate those damages. It can expand from investments in the working conditions of these professionals, as well as adjusting the demands with a greater number of nurses. From the concern to offer integrative health practices for them in the work environment and encouraging healthy eating and physical activity.

Another point to be highlighted is the strengthening of the relationships of entities that protect this class, the development of in-service education actions that are capable of reducing the risks of exposure and guaranteeing the quality of life at work, encouraging greater autonomy for nurses.

Acknowledgment

This research did not receive funding to be done.

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