



# IJS

## International Journal of Sciences

Published online 03 20, 2022  
ISSN 2763-5392



# Occupational stress and burnout syndrome among nurses: an integrative review of the literature

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### To cite this article:

Souza, A.R.C.; Santos, W.S.B.; Lima, T.M.; Bezerra, R.M.A.; Nascimento, C.V.F.; Ferreira, M.I.; Costa, L.F.S.; Lima, B.G.M.; Silva, V.S.; Melo, N.F.B.; Silva, W.A.M.; Torres, M.E.S.; Sousa, J.V.A.; Lima, M.C.S.; Souza, A.C.A. **Occupational stress and burnout syndrome among nurses: an integrative review of the literature**. *International Journal of Sciences*. Vol. 3, No. 2, 2022, pp.63-68. ISSN 2763-5392.

**Received:** 03 02, 2022; **Accepted:** 03 04, 2022; **Published:** 03 20, 2022

**Abstract:** Stress is conceptualized by nurses as an occupational risk, which has led increasingly to physical, psychological illness and impairment of work results, directly impacting organizations due to increased interpersonal conflicts and the installation of signs and symptoms. To analyze the triggering factors of burnout syndrome among nurses. This is an integrative review of the literature, carried out between January and April 2021, through electronic databases: Scientific Electronic Library

Online (SciELO), Medline, PubMed using the following descriptors: "Burnout" "Nursing" and "Stress". After the crossing of the descriptors and the application of the eligibility criteria, 09 articles were selected in the final sample. The present study shows that the most common causes for burnout syndrome among nurses are: work overload, poor support and lack of professional recognition, experience with pain, sadness and death of patients, poor working conditions. Therefore, measures to keep intensive care nurses healthy should be carried out, from improving working conditions to obtaining resources to provide care, adequate training, optimizing of exhaustive working hours and a means conducive to the rest of professionals. It is necessary to implement interventions that promote better quality of life.

**Keywords:** Burnout. Nursing. Occupational Stress.

## 1. Introduction

Stress is the state of tension that causes changes in the inner balance of the body. Initially, they can be recognized through psychosomatic manifestations such as palpitation, gastrointestinal diseases, cardiovascular alteration and sleep disorders. For this reason, to regulate balance, an adaptive stimulus or response is unintentionally performed in relation to stressors (PRADO, 2016). In view of this, an inappropriate adaptation of the organism, for a time-consuming time, may favor the emergence of physical and psychological manifestations of stress and illness, if no intervention is made by the person (FABRI et al., 2018).

The work of nurses is based on complex activities that cover not only patient care, but also teamwork, conflict resolution, activity management and leadership to direct conduct and interventions with the purpose of achieving objectives, and it is up to them to observe and legal commitment regarding the activities of the nursing team (REIS et al.; 2020).

Included in shift work, nursing professionals have a fractional work method, sometimes conflicting interpersonal bonds, low salaries, high patient demand, anxiety, routine coexistence with pain and death. Therefore, it differs by discouragement and isolation, as they constantly deal with triggering factors of occupational stress, which interferes in mental health and the work process (VIDOTTI et al.; 2018).

It is possible to understand that the current demands within modern life, as well as in the general sphere of the labor market in recent decades have truly consumed the physical and mental energy of workers, this physical and emotional exhaustion due to work has become an increasingly common situation within organizations today (ADRIANO et al., 2017).

In view of the pandemic, we can highlight that the stressors related to the care of intensive care nurses have increased and can be identified through the way in which they began to be recognized by the fact that they work with patients with COVID-19, the distancing of the family for protection and precaution for fear of transmitting the disease as a result of the work performed, the need for hypervigilance, accompanied by a loss of autonomy and spontaneity. (ZORZAL, 2020).

In view of the above, analyzing the triggering factors of burnout syndrome among nurses becomes quite relevant since this theme has been something frequent, but little known in our reality. This research will provide information that will

enable changes in the support and care that has been provided to these professionals, as well as intervention strategies that will produce satisfactory results in reducing the physical and mental health problems of nurses.

## 2. Methodology

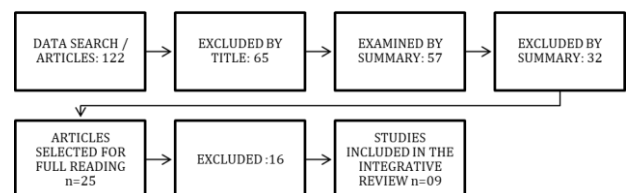
This is a systematic review of the literature conducted between January and April 2021, this type of research aims to synthesize the information available at a certain time on a given theme in an objective and reproducible way. The search was performed considering the following guide question: What are the triggering factors of burnout syndrome among nurses?

The databases used were SciELO, LILACS, MEDLINE, PUBMED, using the descriptors: Burnout, Nursing and Occupational Stress.

**Table 1 - Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

| Inclusion Criteria  | Exclusion Criteria   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Articles with abstracts and texts.</li> <li>○ Full articles.</li> <li>○ Articles available for full analysis</li> <li>○ Articles Published in Portuguese.</li> <li>○ Articles Published between 2016 and 2021</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Theses</li> <li>○ Dissertations</li> <li>○ Summaries</li> <li>○ Manuals</li> <li>○ Opinions.</li> <li>○ Research published without the opinion of a Research Ethics Committee involving human beings.</li> <li>○ Repeated articles in one or more cited databases.</li> <li>○ Articles and abstracts that did not provide sufficient information.</li> <li>○ Articles that did not meet the objective of the guide question.</li> </ul> |

SOURCE: Own Authorship



### 3. Results and Discussion

From the crossing of the descriptors, 122 articles were found, after reading the titles and abstracts, using filters and eligibility criteria, 09 articles were included in the present study.

**Table 2.** Distribution of studies that evaluated the triggering factors of Burnout syndrome among nurses.

| Year | Title  | Goal  | Methodology  | Findings  |
|------|--|---|--|---|
| 2017 | Occupational Stress in Health Professionals working in the Mobile Emergency Care Service of Cajazeiras - PB. | Assess the level of occupational stress of the health team working in the Mobile Emergency Care Service.                          | This is a descriptive study with a quantitative approach,                    | 16.7% of professionals are affected by stress in the work environment,  |
| 2018 | Occupational stress in pediatric nurses: Physical and Psychological Manifestations.                          | Check the presence of occupational stress in pediatric nurses and analyze the physical and psychological manifestations of stress | Quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional study                             | The sample presented a high level of stress whose illness is already present, considering the manifestations in the exhaustion phase. |
| 2018 | Occupational stress among health workers in a university hospital.   | Assess occupational stress among health workers of a university hospital.   | Cross-sectional study  | The participants presented high demand and high control of work and low social support, indicating an active work.                    |
| 2019 | Impacts of Burnout Syndrome on the quality of life of primary health care nursing professionals              | To identify the impact of Burnout Syndrome (BS) on the quality of life of primary health care nursing professionals.              | Exploratory and descriptive study, with a quantitative-qualitative character | 13.5% of the professionals studied manifested characteristics related to BS and 30.8% were predisposed to its                         |

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|------|--|--|--|---|
|      | ls   |  |  | development   |
| 2019 | Repercussions of covid-19 on the mental health of nursing workers              | Reflect on the repercussions of Covid-19 on the mental health of nursing workers.                      | Study of theoretical-reflexive approach.   | Insufficient human resources dimensioning, care complexity, increased workload, fear of contamination in the use of personal protective equipment and unhealthy conditions of health services are situations that can cause illness. Of these, Occupational Stress, Burnout syndrome, Minor Psychic Disorders and Moral Distress may be accentuated during this period of the pandemic and have a negative impact on the physical and psychological health of the nursing team. |
| 2021 | Prevalence of Burnout syndrome among health professionals working in intensive | to evaluate the prevalence of Burnout syndrome among health professionals working in the ICU, describe | The method used to identify the prevalence of Burnout syndrome was the Maslach Burnout | 40% in their average level, with the MBI dimension being more significant, the lack of  |

4 Souza, A.R.C.; Santos, W.S.B.; Lima, T.M.; Bezerra, R.M.A.; Nascimento, C.V.F.; Ferreira, M.I.; Costa, L.F.S.; Lima, B.G.M.; Silva, V.S.; Melo, N.F.B.; Silva, W.A.M.; Torres, M.E.S.; Sousa, J.V.A.; Lima, M.C.S.; Souza, A.C.A. Occupational stress and burnout syndrome among nurses: an integrative review of the literature...

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|------|--|---|--|--|------|---|---|---|--|
|      | care units   | the signs and symptoms of Burnout Syndrome among intensive care professionals; identify the occupational factors associated with the components of BS; relate the total workload of intensive professionals to BS | Inventory (MBI).   | professional achievement (80%). They have a double working day 70% and the most frequent symptoms are: muscle pain (100%) and mood changes (90%).  |      |   |   |   | reported passive work and high wear and tear, while men were equally divided between the active and passive profile with low wear and tear.  |
| 2020 | Factors associated with occupational stress among nursing professionals in medium complexity health services | To analyze the factors associated with occupational stress among nursing workers in medium-complexity health services.  | Epidemiological, cross-sectional, exploratory study.             | The prevalence of occupational stress among nursing professionals was 77%. Occupational stress was associated with the professional category of nursing technician (p=0.01).   | 2021 | Satisfaction, stress and professional exhaustion of nurse managers and care takers of Primary Health Care | Correlate the indicators of job satisfaction, occupational stress factors and professional exhaustion among nurse managers and primary health care workers. | Field study, descriptive, exploratory in nature | Participants were 122 nurses (47.5% managers and 62.5% care workers), 32% presented considerable stress level, indicators of emotional exhaustion, dehumanization and disappointment at work at moderate to high levels. The indicator satisfaction with the physical work environment did not present significance with the variables of professional exhaustion, but satisfaction with hierarchical and intrinsic relationships to work are strongly |
| 2020 | Occupational stress of nurses of the Mobile Emergency Care Service   | To evaluate stress by associating it with the sociodemographic and clinical aspects of nurses from the Mobile Emergency Care Service.   | This is an observational, cross-sectional and quantitative study | the results indicated that the majority were women, from 20 to 40 years old, married, without another employment relationship and with specialization. They had low control, low demand at work and performed work considered passive. Women |      |   |   |   |  |

|  |  |  |  |             |
|--|--|--|--|-------------|
|  |  |  |  | correlated. |
|--|--|--|--|-------------|

Source: Author

The research has evidenced in several studies the predominance of females, a remarkable characteristic among Brazilian nurses in primary, secondary and/or tertiary health services, and strong scientific evidence on the relationship between the variable sex and the development of Burnout syndrome is strong.

It is understood that people who experience Burnout syndrome are not simply exhausted or burdened with workload, but have lost a psychological connection with their work and feel discouraged, with a desire to leave the profession, no longer envisioning at work a source of accomplishment presenting feelings of discomfort, mental disorder diagnosed by a psychiatrist and emotional tension. It is understood that occupational stress can be one of the reasons for triggering various pathologies or being associated with others, in which it determines the absence of the nursing professional causing harm to both the worker and the employer. (SON; ALMEIDA, 2016).

The results of this study corroborate other studies in which occupational variables related to organization, process and working conditions are strongly correlated with professional exhaustion and an environment with a negative organizational climate. Furthermore, the increase in workload interferes in the process of labor wear, associated with reduced perceptions of control over the environment, autonomy and organizational support.

In the study conducted by FABRI et al (2018), the results showed the need for occupational stress prevention measures both collectively and organizationally, with the intention of providing a safe workplace with essential resources for quality care. It is inferring that the tactics, when adopted, in addition to favoring the well-being and satisfaction of the team, result in performance improvements and minimize the social and financial burden on for the individual and the organization, given the possibility of risks of illness.

In the context of a pandemic, the study of DAL'BOSCO corroborates the study of DAL'BOSCO, highlighting that in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted the mental health of nursing workers, the results demonstrated important points of the work process and highlighted signs of anxiety and depression, indicating a psychic suffering beyond that already intrinsic of the profession. Depression among nursing professionals is higher in certain sectors, and the Intensive Care Unit is one of them, requiring professionals to perform their activities, often exposing them to risks.

The study of REIS et al. 2020, enabled an analysis of coping with the routine stress of professionals in the work experience. However, it was seen that they do not present high levels of stress. In the analysis, the most stressful circumstances that prevailed as the greatest stress factor in the work environment were: short term to meet the

requirements, perform different activities several times and work with disqualified professionals.

It is notorious that the role played by professionals can generate positive reactions to stress, and the most affected points are related to mental and physical overload, which if not avoided will aggravate the loss of workers' health, productivity, organization of services, especially assistance to people. All research members who developed stress (16.7%) are in the Resistance phase. Thus, it is understood that these employees have been under the effects of stressors for some time, which may be linked not only to work planning but also to social reasons (ADRIANO et al., 2017).

One study stated that the work environment generated suffering for nurses, highlighting that overcrowding and work overload, feeling of frustration, feeling of insecurity and conflicts between professionals are the main triggering factors for physical and emotional exhaustion, making work exhausting and stressful. The workers showed responsibility for their profession and care, however, faced with the limitations and complexity of the work, generating frustration. Concomitantly with this feeling, another feeling arises, insecurity. The work context exposes professionals and patients to greater care risks. This makes them realize that the quality of care is impaired and interferes with the mental health of nurses. (DAL'BOSCO, 2020).

## 4. Conclusion

Therefore, this study made it possible to expand the knowledge showing the work stressors that most trigger occupational stress reported by the nursing team professionals, which directly favors the implementation of improvements in terms of working conditions, as well as to minimize the suffering of workers, strategies being specialized psychological support, telephone care for differentiated listening, confidential and free, realization of integrative and complementary practices, performance of work and relaxing gymnastics, guidance on the availability of public mental health services, training on interventions in crisis situations in a systematic way, enabling intensive care nurses to identify stress responses, as well as learn how to conduct emotions during work processes (EMERICH, 2020).

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