

## Mental Health Status Of Nursing Professionals Working In The Surgical Center

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### Abstract:

**Background:** In Brazil, nursing professionals, including Nurses, Nursing Technicians, and Nursing Assistants, represent the majority of healthcare workers. As of April 2024, there are over 2 million nursing professionals registered in the country. These workers face increasing stress levels, with mental disorders related to work activities now accounting for 30% of global mental health issues. Nursing professionals in surgical centers provide critical psychological support to patients, offering comfort, stress relief, and care throughout the surgical process. This proposal aims to conduct a literature review to assess the mental health of nurses working in surgical blocks.

**Materials and Methods:** This research is a Systematic Literature Review focused on the mental health of nursing professionals in the surgical block, analyzing studies from the past five years. Searches were conducted in databases like LILACS, MEDLINE, and Scopus, using specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. Articles were selected based on relevance, and data from these studies were extracted and critically evaluated.

**Results:** This study reviewed seven articles on mental health issues among nurses in surgical centers, identifying stressors like work overload, lack of resources, and emotional strain. Key factors include poor work environment, long shifts, and insufficient support. Findings emphasize the need for better staffing, improved management, and emotional support to reduce burnout. The research advocates for structural interventions to improve nurses' well-being and patient safety.

**Conclusion:** Stress and mental illness among nurses in surgical centers are influenced by organizational factors and workload. The review highlights the urgent need for interventions to improve their mental health and hospital efficiency.

**Key Word:** Nursing; Surgical Center; Mental Health; Care; Well-being.

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### I. Introduction

In Brazil, nursing professionals represent the majority of healthcare workers, divided into three categories: Nurses, Nursing Technicians, and Nursing Assistants. The practice of these professionals is regulated by LAW No. 7.498/86 and Decree No. 94.406/87<sup>1</sup>.

According to the Federal Nursing Council<sup>1</sup>, the most recent data from April 2024 shows that there are 738,121 Nurses, 1,795,540 Nursing Technicians, and 466,758 Nursing Assistants registered in Brazil. These professionals are working in all Brazilian states, in various sectors of healthcare institutions.

All the problems faced within their labor activities ultimately lead to a level of stress. This phenomenon is increasing worldwide<sup>2</sup>. According to the Pan American Health Organization<sup>3</sup>, a report issued by the institution found that mental disorders related to labor activities now account for 30% of mental health problems, which already represents four of the 10 leading causes of disability worldwide. These figures continue to rise year after year, creating a concerning situation and a public health issue.

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In this context, some authors point out that nursing professionals working in the Surgical Center perform various functions that go beyond physiological care<sup>4,5</sup>. The nursing team is the primary psychological support for surgical patients, both before and after surgery. From the moment the patient enters the surgical center until their discharge, it is the nursing team who spends the most time alongside the patient, seeking to bring comfort to their pain, reduce stress, clarify doubts, and, most importantly, listen to them<sup>6</sup>.

In light of the above, this proposal aims to outline a literature review study to assess the mental health status of nursing professionals working in the surgical block.

## II. Material And Methods

The mentioned research is characterized as a Systematic Literature Review, through the study of literature from the last five years, addressing the topic: mental health of nursing professionals working in the surgical block.

The Systematic Literature Review follows several steps to ensure the synthesis of scientific evidence. First, a clear and specific research question was defined for the study: “What is the mental health status of nursing professionals working in the Surgical Block?”. Subsequently, systematic searches were conducted in selected databases (Regional Portal of BVS, LILACS, MEDLINE, Science Direct, and Scopus) using keywords and inclusion and exclusion criteria. After the search, the studies were selected based on the established criteria, and the articles were represented in a table. The relevant data from the included studies were then extracted and organized for analysis followed by a critical evaluation.

### Inclusion criteria:

The inclusion criteria were scientific articles published in the last five years (2020 to 2024) that fit within the theme proposed in this research. The searches for these articles were conducted on the websites of the Regional Portal of BVS, LILACS, MEDLINE, Science Direct, and Scopus.

### Exclusion criteria:

The exclusion criteria were scientific articles that addressed the topic from the perspective of professionals other than nursing, scientific articles published outside the websites of the Regional Portal of BVS, LILACS, MEDLINE, Science Direct, and Scopus, as well as scientific articles published in years outside the period of 2020 to 2024.

### Procedure methodology:

The database was represented in a table (Table no 1), which was created using Microsoft Excel 2019, containing a summary of the main information from each selected study. Next, an attempt was made to detail the main points of each study and the main factors associated with causes of stress and burnout in the mental health of nursing professionals working in the Surgical Center.

## III. Result And Discussion

The database was represented in a table, which was created using Microsoft Excel 2019, and contains a summary of the main information from each selected study. Next, an attempt was made to detail the main points of each study and the primary factors associated with causes of stress and mental health burnout among nursing professionals working in the Surgical Center.

A total of seven scientific articles were obtained that met the proposed theme and the inclusion criteria of this research. Below, in Table 1, the characteristics of each selected study can be observed.

**Table no 1:** Database of Articles Collected for Literature Review

Article	Authors/ Year	Title	Journal	Objective
1	(Munhoz et al, 2020).	Factors Associated with Stress in the Nursing Team of a Surgical Clinic Unit	Health Journal (Sta. Maria)	“Analyze the association between biopsychosocial and work characteristics and the stress level of a nursing team in a Surgical Clinic Unit”.
2	(Sillero-Sillero & Zabalegui, 2020).	Analysis of the Work Environment and Perioperative Nurses' Intention to Leave Their Jobs	Latin American Journal of Nursing	“The objective of this study was to investigate how the perioperative work environment affects job dissatisfaction”.
3	(Fraga; Calvetti & Lazzarotto, 2020).	The Quality of Life of Nursing Professionals Working in the Surgical Center	Barbarói Journal	“Analyze the domains of quality of life of nursing professionals working in the surgical centers of four hospitals in the state of Rio Grande do Sul”.

4	(Ramos et al, 2021).	Occupational Stress in the Activities of the Nursing Team in the Surgical Center: Integrative Review	Research, Society and Development	“Describe the scientific evidence found in the literature from 2015 to 2020 regarding stressors and their consequences for nursing professionals in their work in the surgical center”.
5	(Barcelos et al, 2021).	The Mental Health of Surgical Center Nurses: An Integrative Review	Research, Society and Development	“Identify in the scientific literature the factors that impact the mental health of nurses working in surgical centers”.
6	(Sabino et al, 2022).	Destructive Behaviors Among Professionals in the Surgical Center: An Integrative Literature Review	Nursing in Focus	“Identify the evidence on destructive behaviors manifested or witnessed by professionals in the surgical center”.
7	(Pontes & Georgia, 2024).	Surgical Center: Factors Affecting Nurses' Health Related to Professional Experience in the Surgical Center	FT Nursing Journal	“The main objective is to present the factors that affect the health of nurses in the surgical center”.

Article 1 analyzed the association between biopsychosocial and work-related characteristics and the stress levels of a nursing team in a Surgical Clinic Unit. A cross-sectional study was conducted with 52 nursing professionals, using a questionnaire that assessed biopsychosocial variables and the Work Stress Scale (WSS)<sup>7</sup>. The results of this study showed that 50% of participants had moderate stress levels, 25% low, and 25% high<sup>7</sup>. Although no statistically significant association was found between stress and biopsychosocial variables, the study highlighted that the surgical clinic environment is prone to stress due to physical and emotional demands.

The main stress factors identified in the research of article 1 include work overload, lack of time to complete tasks, frequent interruptions, and pressure to avoid mistakes. These factors can compromise the mental and physical health of nurses, as well as affect the quality-of-care provided<sup>7</sup>. The study also mentioned that discrimination and favoritism in the workplace exacerbate tension among professionals, increasing dissatisfaction and the risk of burnout. These results are consistent with research conducted by other authors, who obtained similar findings in their studies, and they reinforce the need to improve the work environment, ensuring that professionals have adequate support to cope with daily pressure<sup>8,9</sup>.

Article 2 by authors Sillero-Sillero & Zabalegui investigated the organizational factors influencing burnout among perioperative nurses. Using the Nursing Work Index-Revised and the Maslach Burnout Inventory, the study collected data from 136 nurses at a university hospital<sup>10</sup>. The results indicated that 43% of nurses suffered from emotional exhaustion, 21% experienced depersonalization, and 53% had reduced personal accomplishment. Furthermore, three organizational factors—management capability, staffing adequacy and resources, and nursing fundamentals—were significantly associated with these dimensions of burnout<sup>10</sup>.

The researchers concluded that the lack of resources and adequate staffing exacerbates dissatisfaction and emotional exhaustion, leading to intentions to leave the profession among perioperative nurses. These findings complement studies by other authors, who recommended organizational interventions, such as improving the work environment and investing in resources, to mitigate these issues. They also suggested creating more positive work environments<sup>10,11,12</sup>.

Article 4 by Ramos and collaborators conducted a scoping review on the factors affecting the health of nurses working in the surgical center, highlighting the psychosocial and physical risks these professionals face. The findings indicated that work overload, combined with constant pressure to perform procedures with high precision, significantly contributes to chronic stress and mental illness among nurses<sup>13</sup>. The study also showed that a lack of emotional and technical support can lead to job dissatisfaction and emotional exhaustion, increasing the risk of developing serious mental illnesses, such as anxiety and depression—findings that were also observed in other studies<sup>13</sup>.

Article 5 addresses a study that identified, in the scientific literature, the factors impacting the mental health of nurses working in surgical centers. Using an integrative literature review, the authors conducted searches in databases such as LILACS, MEDLINE, Science Direct, and Scopus. The review included articles published between 2018 and 2021. Of the 172 studies retrieved, 22 were selected for full reading, and three studies were chosen for final analysis<sup>14</sup>. The research revealed that the main factors affecting the mental health of perioperative nurses include poor interdisciplinary relationships among professionals, work environment organization, lack of support, and inadequate surgical center infrastructure<sup>14</sup>.

In Study 6, the authors, in analyzing the mental health of the nursing team working in the surgical block, found that this is a highly stressful environment characterized by high pressure and physical and emotional demands. Factors such as work overload, long shifts, fast-paced activities, and the constant risk of errors were found to contribute to the illness of nursing professionals<sup>15</sup>. Furthermore, other authors highlight

that a lack of effective communication between nursing teams and other professionals intensifies stress. The studies also suggest that poor management and lack of adequate leadership are key elements in increasing levels of burnout and mental illness among nurses<sup>12,16</sup>.

Finally, the research by Pontes & Georgia (Article 7) revealed that the work environment in the surgical center is characterized by an exhausting routine, marked by long shifts and high-risk interventions. The constant pressure to provide fast and efficient care to patients in critical situations creates a considerable emotional burden, resulting in high levels of stress and mental fatigue. The study suggests that implementing occupational health policies and creating a more collaborative and less hierarchical work environment are essential to reducing the impact of these factors on nurses' health<sup>17</sup>.

Stress and mental illness among nurses working in surgical centers are multifactorial issues, deeply influenced by organizational conditions, interpersonal relationships, and workload. The literature review highlights the urgent need for structural and managerial interventions to improve the mental health of these professionals, ensuring not only the well-being of the workers but also patient safety and the overall efficiency of the hospital system.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The mentioned study highlights the importance of understanding and addressing the challenges faced by nursing professionals working in the Surgical Block, especially regarding mental health. The literature review revealed that workload overload, lack of resources, and emotional stress are recurring factors that deeply affect these workers. The impact of these conditions is not limited to the well-being of the professionals but also compromises the quality of care provided and patient safety.

The data obtained points to the urgent need for workplace interventions, such as the implementation of psychological support policies, improvements in organizational management, and the provision of adequate resources so that nurses can perform their duties more efficiently and with less emotional strain. Creating a more welcoming and collaborative work environment is crucial to promoting a better balance between professional demands and personal well-being.

Therefore, the mental health of nursing professionals is an issue that requires priority attention, especially in the surgical context, where the pressures are intense. Investing in better working conditions and emotional support will not only benefit nurses but also raise the standard of care in healthcare units, resulting in a safer and more efficient system for all involved.

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