

PRESSURES AND IMPACTS ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF NURSING STUDENTS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Universities play a crucial role in educating citizens committed to social transformation and the promotion of individual and collective rights. Health, defined by the WHO as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, should be a priority within educational institutions. Mental health, in turn, is essential for individuals to develop their skills and contribute positively to the community. **Objective:** The specific objective of this study was to analyze the influence of identity on the reframing of the demands of nursing students' lives in mental health. **Methodology:** The systematic review identified nine relevant articles on the mental health of nursing students, revealing a high prevalence of anxiety and depressive symptoms. **Results:** The analysis of these studies highlighted the urgent need for interventions to support students' mental health. **Conclusion:** The importance of therapies and coping strategies to reduce the prevalence of these problems and improve the well-being of students is understood.

Keywords: nursing; academics; mental health; university.

INTRODUCTION

Universities, as institutions of education, research, and extension, have played a fundamental role in training citizens who are active in social transformation and in the achievement of individual and collective rights (SANTOS, 2012). This training should be linked to the promotion of health, understood as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease (WHO, 2001). Mental health, in turn, was defined as a state of well-being that allowed individuals to develop their personal abilities and contribute to the community (WHO, 2001). Thus, the university, through its activities

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teaching, research, and extension, was able to promote the health and well-being of its students, community, and society in general (SANTOS, 2012).

Therefore, being inside a university represented a unique and indescribable character in the academic life of future professionals. On the other hand, it was also important to remember the issues involved during the training process, such as the mental aspect (ARINO, 2018). Within the variable involving their identity, there was a reframing of stages (adolescent-adult), with a higher rate of mental illness related to vulnerability (ARINO, 2018).

This vulnerability was a decisive factor. When we entered into this discussion, it was important to remember the demands that these academics had accumulated. According to Hersi's study, excessive workloads, the level of demands related to the training process, adaptation to a new context, new sleep routines, new demands for time management, and study strategies influenced the context/mental health, as they required students to develop a behavioral repertoire to organize themselves and cope with such demands (ARINO, 2018).

The specific objective of this study was to analyze the influence of identity on the reframing of the demands of nursing students' lives on mental health.

METHOD

This study used the systematic review method. The search was conducted between 2013 and 2024, consulting the following platforms: PubMed, Scielo, USP magazine, and REBEn magazine. In the electronic search for scientific articles, the following Health Science Descriptors and combinations in Portuguese were used: Mental health, Academics, and University.

Publications that, even if they reflected the criteria, did not address the objective of this study were excluded. When linked to the descriptors, 18,740 reference articles were found on the platforms mentioned above. Of these, 6,315 duplicate articles were found, resulting in a total of

n=12,425 articles. After screening, the titles and abstracts were read, excluding a total of n=5,420. In the eligibility stage, n=7,005 articles were found, of which n=5,932 were excluded due to a main outcome not analyzed, n=375 due to incompatible intervention, n=262 due to incompatible samples, n=219 due to incompatible comparisons, and n=208 due to incompatible study type. After this analysis, eligibility was confirmed by a detailed reading of the manuscript and considering its relevance to the guiding question of this study, a total of n=9 articles retrieved from the previously cited data sources were included.

To facilitate data analysis, the data were tabulated, starting with the author's perspective, date of publication of the article, and country of publication (Brazil). Among these issues, the main characteristics of the nine articles were carefully observed, seeking to find the interfaces between mental health and nursing academics.

RESULTS

Among the nine articles selected, most were national studies found on the platforms, reflecting a predominant trend in Brazilian academic production on the topic of mental health among nursing students. The analysis of the articles revealed that, in general, the authors agree on the severity of the mental health problems faced by these students, with great emphasis on the alarming prevalence of symptoms of anxiety and depression, as well as a strong correlation between academic stress and the deterioration of mental health.

Among the most evident contributions, most studies emphasized that the intense workload and demands of nursing courses significantly affect students' physical and mental health. This finding was unanimous among the authors, reinforcing the idea that the academic environment, with its high demands, can be a central factor in the deterioration of students' health. The stress generated by long study hours, combined with practical training and theoretical classes, was a common point identified by all the articles analyzed.

However, some authors disagree on the depth of the proposed solutions. While some studies emphasize the need for institutional interventions, such as psychological support programs, academic monitoring, and curricular adjustments, others highlight the importance of strengthening students' individual resilience and self-care skills. These authors believe that responsibility for addressing these issues should be shared between institutions and students, with greater emphasis on developing emotional and personal organizational skills to cope with stress.

Furthermore, there was some disagreement about the specific factors that aggravate mental health. While some authors point to practical training as the main stressor, others indicate that pressure to achieve good academic results, lack of emotional support, and the absence of a social support network are the biggest influences on the deterioration of mental health. Thus, although there is consensus on the seriousness of the situation, there are nuances in the approaches proposed to address the problems identified, revealing different perspectives on how to improve the mental health of nursing students.

These differences indicate the need for a more comprehensive approach, combining both institutional interventions and individual coping strategies, to mitigate the harmful effects that the academic environment has on the mental health of nursing students.

CONCLUSION

The present study sought to analyze the pressures and impacts on the mental health of nursing students through a systematic review based on a search conducted between 2013 and 2024.

Thus, to elucidate the final considerations of this study, we revisited the research problem, which is the prevalence of anxiety and depression symptoms among nursing students, with a significant portion presenting moderate and severe signs of these conditions.

The analysis revealed that the intense demands and exhausting workload of the nursing course significantly affect undergraduate students, especially due to the constant need for presentations and public speaking. This pressure contributes to the emergence of confidence deficits resulting from academic overload, which ultimately hinders students' full development throughout their undergraduate studies.

Finally, it is important to integrate mental health care into the routine of academics, promoting preventive therapies aimed at reducing psychological trauma. This approach is essential to minimize the prevalence of symptoms of anxiety and depression, contributing to the emotional well-being of students.

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