



Factors associated with job satisfaction among nurses in an emergency department: a scoping review protocol

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Nurses' job satisfaction is an essential indicator of the functioning of healthcare systems, being associated with professionals' well-being, quality of care, and patient safety. In emergency departments, characterized by high complexity, workload pressure, clinical unpredictability, and resource constraints, nurses are particularly exposed to stressors and professional strain, which may compromise their job satisfaction.

Objective: To map and synthesize the existing scientific evidence on factors associated with job satisfaction among nurses working in emergency departments.

Methods: A scoping review will be conducted in accordance with the methodological guidance of the Joanna Briggs Institute and reported following the PRISMA-ScR checklist. The research question will be structured according to the PCC framework: population (nurses), concept (job satisfaction), and context (emergency departments). The scoping review will be carried out between January and March 2026 (provisional timeframe). The search will be conducted in the APA PsycInfo, PubMed, Scopus, Web of science, Lens.ORG and CINAHL databases. Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies addressing nurses' job satisfaction in emergency department settings will be included. Study selection will be performed by two independent reviewers, with data extraction and narrative synthesis of the results.

Results: This review is expected to identify individual, professional, and organizational factors associated with job satisfaction, as well as gaps in the existing literature.

Conclusion: This scoping review will try to contribute to an integrated understanding of the determinants of job satisfaction among emergency department nurses, supporting improvements in management practices, working conditions, and the quality of nursing care.

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RESUMO

Introdução: A satisfação profissional dos enfermeiros constitui um indicador essencial do funcionamento dos sistemas de saúde, estando associada ao bem-estar dos profissionais, à qualidade dos cuidados e à segurança dos doentes. Nos serviços de urgência (SU), caracterizados por elevada complexidade, pressão assistencial, imprevisibilidade clínica e escassez de recursos, os enfermeiros encontram-se particularmente expostos a fatores de *stress* e desgaste profissional, o que pode comprometer a sua satisfação profissional.

Objetivo: Mapear e sintetizar a evidência científica existente sobre os fatores associados à satisfação profissional dos enfermeiros que exercem funções em serviços de urgência.

Métodos: Será realizada uma *scoping review*, de acordo com as orientações metodológicas do Joanna Briggs Institute, e será reportada segundo a *checklist* PRISMA-ScR. A questão de investigação será estruturada segundo a estratégia PCC: população (enfermeiros), conceito (satisfação profissional) e contexto (serviços de urgência). Esta será conduzida entre janeiro e março de 2026 (período temporal provisório). A pesquisa será efetuada nas bases de dados APA PsycInfo, PubMed Scopus, Web of science, Lens.ORG e CINAHL. Serão incluídos estudos quantitativos, qualitativos e de métodos mistos que abordem a satisfação profissional dos enfermeiros em serviços de urgência. A seleção dos estudos será realizada por dois revisores independentes, com extração e síntese narrativa dos dados.

Resultados: Espera-se identificar fatores individuais, profissionais e organizacionais associados à satisfação profissional, bem como lacunas existentes na literatura.

Conclusão: Esta revisão de escopo irá tentar contribuir para uma compreensão integrada dos determinantes da satisfação profissional dos enfermeiros em SU, apoiando a melhoria da gestão, das condições de trabalho e da qualidade dos cuidados de enfermagem.

Introduction

Nurses' job satisfaction is widely recognised as a relevant indicator of professional well-being and is closely associated with the quality and safety of healthcare, as well as with professionals' motivation, performance, and retention within healthcare organizations.^{1,2} It is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that arises from the interaction of individual, professional, and organisational factors, and it is particularly salient in care settings characterised by high levels of demand.

Within the hospital context, emergency departments (EDs) are distinguished by their organisational and clinical specificity, being characterised by high clinical unpredictability, intense workload, sustained time pressure, and substantial emotional demands. These conditions expose nurses to elevated levels of occupational stress, physical fatigue, and psychological strain, which may compromise job satisfaction and, in turn, negatively affect the quality of nursing care delivered.

Available evidence indicates that nurses working in EDs experience high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout, with significant repercussions for their job satisfaction. International studies report that 47.2% of nurses experienced severe to extremely severe stress, 23.1% reported symptoms of anxiety, and 14.1% symptoms of depression.³ Available evidence indicates that nurses working in emergency departments experience high levels of stress, burnout, and psychological strain, with significant repercussions for job satisfaction. Recent studies highlight that job dissatisfaction among emergency nurses is frequently associated with

high workload, critical decision-making pressure, and exposure to adverse clinical outcomes. Additionally, burnout and occupational stress have been consistently identified as key factors negatively influencing nurses' job satisfaction in emergency settings.⁴⁻⁶

The literature further suggests that nurses' job satisfaction in EDs is influenced by a range of factors, including working conditions, workload, relationships with management, professional recognition, remuneration, and staffing levels.⁷ However, these studies are scattered throughout the literature and exhibit considerable heterogeneity in methodological designs, contexts, and assessment instruments, thereby limiting the integration and practical application of their findings.

Although job satisfaction among nurses has been widely studied, the available evidence in emergency department settings remains fragmented and conceptually heterogeneous. Studies differ substantially in terms of methodological designs (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods), populations, and measurement instruments used to assess job satisfaction, which limits comparability and the feasibility of conducting a systematic review with meta-analysis.

Furthermore, there is no comprehensive synthesis specifically focused on emergency department contexts that maps the range of factors influencing job satisfaction and identifies existing knowledge gaps. Given this variability and the exploratory nature of the topic, a scoping review is the most appropriate approach, as it allows mapping the breadth, nature, and distribution of the evidence and identifying gaps for future research, rather than

evaluating the effectiveness of interventions or producing pooled estimates.

Therefore, this review aims to provide a structured overview of the existing literature to map the scope, nature, and characteristics of the available evidence and to identify key factors and research gaps. From a theoretical perspective, job satisfaction can be understood through established organisational and occupational health models. In this review, the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model will serve as a guiding framework, allowing factors to be categorised into personal resources, job demands, and job resources. This model is widely used in healthcare settings and provides a robust framework for analysing how various factors influence nurses' professional well-being and job satisfaction.

In this context, the present review is guided by the following research question: *What factors are associated with nurses' job satisfaction in emergency departments?* By clarifying the current state of knowledge and identifying research gaps, this review aims to provide an informed basis for reflection in management contexts and for developing organisational strategies that promote professional well-being and the quality and safety of nursing care.^{8,9}

Methodology

The research question was structured using the Population, Concept, and Context (PCC) framework, considering nurses as the population, job satisfaction as the concept, and emergency departments (EDs) as the context.

Prior to developing the search strategy, an initial exploratory search was conducted in PubMed, CINAHL (via EBSCO), Scopus, Web of science, Lens.ORG and APA PsycInfo (via APA PsycNet) to identify relevant keywords, controlled vocabulary, and indexing terms used in publications addressing job satisfaction among nurses working in emergency departments. This exploratory phase supported the refinement of terminology and informed the development of a sensitive, comprehensive search strategy tailored to the specific characteristics of each database. This preliminary search, conducted in January 2026, also confirmed the absence of recent and comprehensive reviews on the topic, thereby reinforcing the relevance of the present scoping review. Additionally, the Open Science Framework (OSF) and PROSPERO databases were consulted to identify ongoing or completed reviews on the topic and to avoid duplication of efforts.

The scoping review will be conducted in accordance with the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) methodological guidance for scoping reviews and reported using the PRISMA-ScR checklist.¹⁰ The review protocol has been registered in the Open Science Framework (OSF) with the DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/7NP8R>.

Based on the preliminary analysis, a systematic and comprehensive search strategy was developed to map the extent, diversity, and nature of the available scientific evidence. The search strategy

was constructed around the key concepts of the research question and applied to the PubMed, CINAHL (via EBSCO), Scopus, Web of science, Lens.ORG and APA PsycNet databases.

Search strategies combined controlled descriptors and free-text terms, linked using Boolean operators (AND, OR). Controlled vocabulary was adapted to the indexing systems of each database: Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) were used in PubMed, CINAHL Headings in CINAHL (via EBSCO), and free-text terms were prioritized in APA PsycInfo, in accordance with its indexing structure. This approach ensured conceptual consistency while respecting the specific requirements of each database.

Free-text terms were used in conjunction with controlled descriptors and included synonyms, terminological variations, and expressions identified in the titles and abstracts of relevant studies. This strategy aimed to maximize search sensitivity and minimize the risk of omitting potentially relevant evidence.

The controlled descriptors and free-text terms used in the search strategy are presented in Table 1, organized according to the key concepts of the research question and adapted to the specific characteristics of each database.

The use of the JD-R model also supports the identification of gaps in the exploration of different dimensions of job satisfaction in the literature.

Table 1- Terms Mesh/No Mesh.

PCC		P	C	C
APA Psycinfo	Mesh	Nurse	Job Satisfaction	Emergency Service,
	No Mesh	Nurses nursing staff nursing personnel	professional satisfaction career satisfaction	emergency department emergency unit
Pubmed	Mesh	Nurses	Job Satisfaction	Emergency Service, Hospital
	No Mesh	Nurse* Nursing personal Nursing Staff	Professional satisfaction career satisfaction	emergency department* emergency unit*
CINAHL	Mesh/CINAHL Headings	Nurses	Job Satisfaction	Emergency Service, Hospital
	No Mesh	Nurse* Nursing Staff,	work satisfaction employee satisfaction	emergency department* emergency unit*
Scopus	No Mesh	nurse nurses nursing staff nursing personnel registered nurses	ob satisfaction professional satisfaction career satisfaction work satisfaction employee satisfaction	emergency department* emergency unit* emergency service* emergency room* hospital emergency service

Web of science	No Mesh	nurse Nurses nursing staff nursing personnel registered nurses	Job satisfaction professional satisfaction career satisfaction work satisfaction employee satisfaction	emergency department* emergency unit* emergency service* emergency room* hospital emergency service A & E
Lens.ORG	No Mesh	nurse Nurses nursing staff nursing personnel registered nurses	Job satisfaction professional satisfaction career satisfaction work satisfaction employee satisfaction	emergency department* emergency unit* emergency service* emergency room* hospital emergency service

Study selection

All records retrieved from the selected databases will be imported into Rayyan for study selection. Duplicate records will be identified and removed prior to screening. Titles and abstracts will then be screened according to the predefined eligibility criteria.

For the final reporting of the review, the items identified in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) will guide transparency and completeness. The review protocol has been registered in the Open Science Framework (OSF).

Eligibility criteria

Eligibility criteria were defined to ensure the relevance and methodological adequacy of the studies included in this scoping review.

Population: Registered nurses working in emergency departments. Studies involving nursing students or other healthcare professionals will be excluded unless data for nurses are reported separately.

Concept: Job satisfaction, including its definitions, determinants, and associated factors.

Context: Emergency departments in hospital settings. Pre-hospital emergency services and urgent care centers will be excluded unless clearly integrated within hospital emergency systems.

Types of sources: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies published in peer-reviewed journals.

Exclusion criteria will include: studies not focused on nurses or involving nurses working exclusively in other healthcare settings; studies that did not address nurses' job satisfaction or that focused exclusively on other outcomes, such as patient satisfaction, quality of care, or organizational performance, without a clear relationship to job satisfaction; and other documents not published in peer-reviewed journals. Studies without full-text access were also excluded. Preprints, institutional reports, and technical documents not subject to peer review will not be considered for inclusion.

Search strategy

The search strategy will follow the three-step approach recommended by the Joanna Briggs Institute: (1) an initial limited search to identify keywords and index terms; (2) a comprehensive search across all included databases using identified terms; and (3) screening of reference lists of included studies.¹¹

Table 2 provides a detailed description of the search strategies for each database, including the controlled descriptors and synonyms used, the Boolean operators used to combine terms, and the filters applied.

There will be no temporal restrictions. However, the significance of older studies will be considered in light of changes in emergency department organization and nursing roles. There will be no language restrictions. Studies published in languages other than English and Portuguese will be translated where possible, and any exclusions due to language will be reported. All initial searches were carried out in January 2026, as specified for each database.

Table 2 - Descriptors and synonyms used across the databases.

Database	Search String
Psyinfo	(Astract: nurse* OR Abstract: nurses OR Abstract: "nursing staff" OR Abstract: "nursing personnel") AND (Abstract: satisfaction OR Abstract: "job satisfaction" OR Abstract: "career satisfaction" OR Abstract: "professional satisfaction") AND (Abstract: emergency OR Abstract: "emergency unit*" OR Abstract: "emergency department*" OR Abstract: "emergency service")
	Filters: none applied
	Number article: 245
	Access: 26/03/2026
PubMed	((("Nurses"[MeSH Terms] OR nurse*[Title/Abstract] OR "nursing staff"[Title/Abstract] OR "nursing personnel"[Title/Abstract]) AND ("Job Satisfaction"[MeSH Terms] OR "job satisfaction"[Title/Abstract] OR "professional satisfaction"[Title/Abstract] OR "career satisfaction"[Title/Abstract] OR "work satisfaction"[Title/Abstract] OR "employee satisfaction"[Title/Abstract]) AND ("Emergency Service, Hospital"[MeSH Terms] OR "emergency department*" [Title/Abstract] OR "emergency unit*" [Title/Abstract] OR "emergency service*" [Title/Abstract] OR "emergency room*" [Title/Abstract]))
	Filters: none applied
	Number articles: 252
	Access: 26/03/2026
CINAHL	(MH "Nurses" OR MH "Nursing Staff" OR MH "Nurse*") AND (MH "Job Satisfaction" OR MH "Work Satisfaction" OR MH "Employee Satisfaction") AND (MH "Emergency Service, Hospital" OR XB "Emergency Department*" OR XB "Emergency Unit*")
	Filters: none applied
	Number articles: 95
	Access: 26/03/2026
Scopus	(nurse OR nurses OR nursing staff OR nursing personnel OR registered nurses AND job satisfaction OR professional satisfaction OR career satisfaction OR work satisfaction OR employee satisfaction AND emergency department* OR emergency unit* OR emergency service* OR emergency room* OR hospital emergency service AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBAREA, "NURS"))
	Filters: none applied
	Number article: 3,719
	Access: 26/03/2026
Web of science:	(nurse OR nurses OR nursing staff OR nursing personnel OR registered nurses AND job satisfaction OR professional satisfaction OR career satisfaction OR work satisfaction OR employee satisfaction AND emergency department* OR

	emergency unit* OR emergency service* OR emergency room* OR hospital emergency service or A & E)
	Filters: none applied
	Number article: 1,412
	Access: 26/03/2026
Lens.ORG	(nurse OR nurses OR nursing staff OR nursing personnel OR registered nurses AND job satisfaction OR professional satisfaction OR career satisfaction OR work satisfaction OR employee satisfaction AND emergency department* OR emergency unit* OR emergency service* OR emergency room* OR hospital emergency service)
	Filters: none applied
	Number article: 2,550
	Access: 26/03/2026

The detailing of search strategies ensures process transparency and methodological reproducibility, both of which are fundamental pillars of a scoping review protocol.

Study selection process

After the search is complete, all identified records will be exported to Rayyan® 12 for reference management and removal of duplicate studies.

Study selection will be carried out in two distinct phases. In the first phase, titles and abstracts will be screened against predefined eligibility criteria to identify potentially relevant studies. In the second phase, full-text articles of the selected records will be assessed to confirm their eligibility for inclusion in the scoping review.

The study selection process will be conducted independently by two reviewers to ensure methodological rigour and minimise potential bias. In cases of disagreement between reviewers, a third reviewer will be consulted to reach a final decision.

The results of the study selection process and the synthesis of the evidence will be reported in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR®).¹³

The study selection process will be documented and presented using a PRISMA flow diagram (Table 3), ensuring transparency and methodological reproducibility.

For each included study, data will be extracted on authorship and year of publication, country in which the study was conducted, study objectives, methodology, population and sample characteristics, main factors associated with nurses' job satisfaction, and the key results and conclusions reported by the authors.

Table 3 – Data extraction and charting framework.

Title of Scoping Review	Factors associated with nurses' job satisfaction in emergency departments
Objective	To analyze, map, and synthesize the available scientific evidence on the factors associated with job satisfaction among nurses working in emergency departments, as well as to identify gaps in the existing knowledge.
Research Question	What factors are associated with job satisfaction among nurses working in emergency departments?
Inclusion/Exclusion criteria	Inclusion criteria: Population: Registered nurses working in emergency departments. Studies involving nursing students or other healthcare professionals

	will be excluded unless data for nurses are reported separately. Concept: Job satisfaction, including its definitions, determinants, and associated factors. Context: Emergency departments in hospital settings. Pre-hospital emergency services and urgent care centers will be excluded unless clearly integrated within hospital emergency systems. Types of sources: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies published in peer-reviewed journals. Exclusion criteria: studies not focused on nurses or involving nurses working exclusively in other healthcare settings; studies that did not address nurses' job satisfaction or that focused exclusively on other outcomes, such as patient satisfaction, quality of care, or organizational performance, without a clear relationship to job satisfaction; and other documents not published in peer-reviewed journals. Studies without full-text access were also excluded. Preprints, institutional reports, and technical documents not subject to peer review will not be considered for inclusion.
Population	Nurses
Context	Emergency Department
Concept	Job satisfaction
Type of evidence	
Source of evidence	
Details and characteristics of the source	
Autor	
Year of publication	
Country of origin	
Study objectives	
Population and sample size	
Main Results	
Relevant conclusions	

Synthesis of results

The analytical framework of this review will be informed by the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model. Within this framework, factors influencing job satisfaction will be interpreted as personal resources (individual factors), job demands, and job resources (professional and organizational/contextual factors). This approach provides a theoretically grounded structure for data synthesis and interpretation.¹⁴

This scoping review protocol outlines a comprehensive approach to examining the factors associated with nurses' job satisfaction in emergency departments (EDs). This review systematically analyses the available literature to map and synthesize the scientific evidence on the factors associated with job satisfaction among nurses working in EDs. It is anticipated that this synthesis will also identify underexplored areas.

The synthesis of results will be conducted using a descriptive and narrative approach, supported by the development of summary tables and schematic representations, in accordance with the methodological guidance provided by the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI). Consistent with recommendations for scoping reviews, no critical appraisal of the methodological quality of the included studies will be undertaken, as the primary objective is to map the existing evidence and identify research gaps.

Based on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, factors associated with job satisfaction will be categorized into three analytical dimensions:

- (i) individual factors, corresponding to personal resources;
- (ii) professional factors, reflecting job demands; and
- (iii) organizational and contextual factors, representing job resources.

This theoretically grounded categorization ensures a structured and conceptually consistent approach to data synthesis. Individual factors will include variables related to nurses' personal and psychosocial characteristics, such as age, gender, professional experience, motivation, resilience, and perceived well-being. Professional factors will encompass aspects inherent to nursing practice, including workload, shift organization, professional autonomy, recognition, interpersonal relationships, and opportunities for professional development. Organizational and contextual factors will comprise elements related to the structure and functioning of healthcare institutions, such as working conditions, staffing levels, leadership support, organizational climate, institutional policies, and safety culture.

In addition, the planned synthesis will describe the contexts and settings in which the included studies were conducted, as well as the methodological designs employed. This will enable the mapping of the extent, diversity, and nature of the existing scientific evidence. This approach is intended to ensure methodological transparency and to facilitate the identification of knowledge gaps, thereby informing future research and interventions to improve nurses' job satisfaction in emergency department settings.

Results

This review is expected to provide a comprehensive systematisation of the scientific evidence concerning the factors associated with nurses' job satisfaction in emergency departments (EDs), a setting characterised by high clinical and organisational demands. By mapping individual, professional, and organisational factors, this review will contribute to an integrated understanding of the determinants of job satisfaction, highlighting critical areas that influence nurses' well-being and the quality of care delivered.

Conclusion

This scoping review protocol proposes a structured, methodologically rigorous approach to mapping the scientific evidence on factors associated with job satisfaction among nurses in emergency departments. Considering the complexity and demands of emergency care settings, understanding the determinants of nurses' professional satisfaction is essential for promoting well-being, improving retention, strengthening organizational environments, and ensuring the quality and safety of healthcare delivery.

By synthesizing evidence from quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies, this review is expected to provide a

comprehensive overview of the individual, professional, and organizational factors associated with nurses' job satisfaction in emergency departments. The use of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model as a theoretical framework will support a more structured and conceptually grounded interpretation of the evidence, facilitating the identification of relevant dimensions and existing gaps in the literature.

Furthermore, the findings of this review may inform the development of evidence-informed management strategies and organizational interventions to improve working conditions, promote professional well-being, and enhance nursing practice in emergency care contexts. It is also anticipated that the review will identify underexplored areas requiring further investigation, thereby supporting future research in occupational health and emergency nursing.

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