



Psychological well-being of higher education nursing professors: Scoping review protocol

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Workplace well-being is essential for professionals' health and satisfaction, influencing organizational success. Among lecturers, including nursing faculty in higher education, high demands and publication pressure compromise well-being, with high levels of emotional exhaustion identified. Promoting well-being is crucial for student success, professional performance, and healthy academic environments. Therefore, it is essential for institutions to integrate development programs that include well-being promotion strategies, recognizing the workplace as a strategic setting for health and disease prevention, thereby improving teaching quality and professional satisfaction.

Objectives: To map scientific evidence on the psychological well-being of higher education faculty.
Methodology: Scoping review protocol based on Joanna Briggs Institute and PRISMA-ScR®. Research conducted in August 2025 using the descriptors "psychological well-being", "mental health", "emotional well-being", "life satisfaction", "burnout", "stress", "resilience", "nursing faculty", "nursing professors", "nursing educators", "academic staff", "higher education", "university" and "college" in MEDLINE Complete® (via PubMed®), SCOPUS®, CINAHL Complete®, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews®, MedicLatina® (via EBSCOhost®), and Consensus®, Studies on the psychological well-being of nursing faculty in higher education, in English, Spanish, or Portuguese, available in free full text, were considered. Selection will be done in Rayyan® by two independent reviewers, with a third reviewer resolving disagreements. Data will be organized in tables by the authors. Registered in Open Science Framework® (DOI: 10.17605/OSF.IO/N7YHP).

Conclusion: This scoping review will map the available evidence on the psychological well-being of nursing faculty in higher education, highlighting key constructs, risk and protective factors, and knowledge gaps to support future research and institutional strategies.

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RESUMO

Introdução: O bem-estar no trabalho é essencial para a saúde e satisfação dos profissionais, influenciando o sucesso organizacional. Nos docentes, incluindo os de enfermagem no ensino superior, as elevadas exigências e a pressão para publicar comprometem o bem-estar, sendo identificados níveis elevados de esgotamento emocional. Promover o bem-estar é crucial para o sucesso dos estudantes, desempenho profissional e ambientes académicos saudáveis. Assim, é essencial que as instituições integrem programas de desenvolvimento que incluam estratégias de promoção do bem-estar, reconhecendo o local de trabalho como espaço estratégico para a saúde e prevenção de doenças, melhorando a qualidade do ensino e satisfação profissional.

Objetivos: Mapear a evidência científica existente sobre bem-estar psicológico dos docentes do ensino superior.

Metodologia: Protocolo de revisão de escopo, segue a metodologia do *Joanna Briggs Institute* e recomendações do PRISMA-ScR®. Pesquisa realizada em agosto de 2025 com os descritores “*psychological well-being*”, “*mental health*”, “*emotional well-being*”, “*life satisfaction*”, “*burnout*”, “*stress*”, “*resilience*”, “*nursing faculty*”, “*nursing professors*”, “*nursing educators*”, “*academic staff*”, “*higher education*”, “*university*” e “*college*” nas bases de dados: MEDLINE Complete® (via PubMed®); SCOPUS®; CINAHL Complete®, *Nursing & Allied Health Collection: Comprehensive®*, *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews®*, *MedicLatina®* (via EBSCOhost®) e Consensus®. Considerados os estudos relativos ao bem-estar psicológico dos docentes de enfermagem a exercerem funções no ensino superior, redigidos em inglês, espanhol e português, disponíveis em *free full text*. A seleção realizar-se-á no Rayyan® por dois revisores independentes, recorrendo a um terceiro nos casos de dúvida. Na extração dos dados, desenvolveu-se uma tabela construída pelos investigadores. Protocolo registado no *Open Science Framework®* (DOI: 10.17605/OSF.IO/N7YHP)

Conclusões: Esta revisão de escopo mapeará a evidência disponível sobre o bem-estar psicológico dos docentes de enfermagem no ensino superior, destacando principais constructos, fatores de risco e de proteção, bem como lacunas do conhecimento, para apoiar investigação futura e estratégias institucionais.

Introduction

Psychological well-being has been defined as a complex and multifaceted concept that has evolved over time. In the field of psychology, the different approaches to well-being encompass hedonic well-being, a subjective state of happiness and satisfaction, and eudemonic well-being as the development of one's true potential. This contrasts with the view of subjective well-being.¹ Well-being is closely linked to the concept of positive mental health and results from the balance between body, family, community and culture. For this reason, this construct includes dimensions such as self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth and life purpose.²

Well-being at work considers the healthy functioning of individuals in their workplace, but the work environment does not always provide satisfaction, fulfilment and happiness and can be the cause of physical and psychological exhaustion.¹ In recent years, higher education institutions have undergone significant structural changes, along with specific factors related to teaching staff and students. These

changes, coupled with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes it has imposed, have had profound effects on the well-being of these professionals.¹ The demanding work environment, the need to balance personal and professional tasks, the constant pressure for productivity, dealing with multiple responsibilities such as teaching, research, mentoring, meeting deadlines, professional development and service, significantly affect the well-being of teachers.³

In the data obtained from the National Survey on Living and Working Conditions in Education in Portugal, it is revealed that 76.4% of Portuguese teachers show signs of emotional exhaustion, where 20.6% show worrying signs of emotional exhaustion, 15.6% have critical signs of emotional exhaustion and 11.6% are in pronounced emotional exhaustion.⁴

Due to the characteristics of the profession, the need to work beyond the contractually established hours and the type of contract, it is to be expected that teachers will experience career instability. This, in turn, can jeopardize their well-being and personal satisfaction.⁵ We can say that

lecturers form the core of university institutions, taking on academic-type tasks, contributing to the development of the university and leaving their mark on students.⁶

Recognition of the importance of the relationship between work and health has been increasing on the part of institutions, where they identify the well-being of employees as fundamental to organizational success.⁷

In the case of nursing faculty, professional experience is shaped by specific demands such as the requirement of supervised clinical practice, the educational responsibility in high-complexity settings, and the pressure to integrate teaching, research, and clinical practice. These characteristics make the psychological well-being of nursing faculty a distinct issue that warrants focused analysis, setting them apart from other academic groups.⁸

It is of the utmost importance to address the well-being of nursing teachers in higher education, with the aim of identifying strategies that favor a balance between personal and professional life. This would make it possible to suggest effective interventions to improve their performance, quality of life and well-being.^{1,9}

For the purpose of this review, psychological well-being will be understood in a comprehensive manner, encompassing both positive states and indicators of psychological distress (such as burnout, stress, and exhaustion), provided they are related to the emotional and mental experiences of nursing faculty in higher education.

Despite the relevance of the topic, in the preliminary search carried out on PROSPERO® and Open Science Framework® (OSF®), no systematic reviews were found on the problem under study.

The aim of this scoping review protocol will be to map the scientific evidence on the psychological well-being of higher education nursing teachers. It aims to answer the following research question: What scientific evidence exists on the psychological well-being of nursing teachers in higher education?

Methodology

This review will be orientated according to the methodological framework of the Joanna Briggs Institute® (JBI®) for scoping reviews.¹⁰ which highlights the following operational steps: title; development of the title and question; introduction; inclusion criteria; search strategy; selection of information sources; data extraction; analysis of the evidence and presentation of the results, written according to the guidelines set out by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews® (PRISMA-ScR®).¹¹ The protocol is registered on the OSF platform® and can be consulted via the following link: <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/N7YHP>.

Eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria for this scoping protocol were defined according to the acronym PCC (Population, Concept and Context), which is used for this type of review.¹⁰ A description of these criteria can be found in table 1. The adopted definition of psychological well-being directly guided the construction of the PCC framework, ensuring that the included studies reflect multiple dimensions of the concept. Thus, the 'Concept' (C) encompasses both positive and negative indicators of psychological well-being. Studies written in English, Portuguese and Spanish and available in free full text with no time restrictions. Studies will be considered regardless of the nature of the methodology, namely quantitative, qualitative, mixed, exploratory, analytical, review and grey literature. All studies that do not respond to our acronym and study objective will be excluded.

Studies that employ the term 'psychological well-being' or related concepts (such as mental health, burnout, resilience, job satisfaction, or quality of life) will be included, provided they are centered on the psychological dimension of the faculty experience. Studies addressing only physical health or academic performance without a psychological component will be excluded. Studies that refer to faculty in general, without distinguishable data for nursing faculty, will also be excluded.

Table 1. Eligibility criteria for the scoping protocol.

PCC component	Description of criteria
Population	Nursing teachers
Concept	Psychological well-being
Context	Higher education
Types of Evidence Sources	Articles written in English, Portuguese and Spanish, available in free full text; no time restrictions.

Research strategy

A three-stage database search was planned to locate the studies relevant to the aim of this review, which consisted of: 1) In the initial stage, a preliminary search was carried out on MEDLINE Complete® (via PubMed®); SCOPUS®; CINAHL Complete®, Nursing & Allied Health Collection: Comprehensive®, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews® and Med-icLatina® (via EBSCOhost®) and Consensus®. The keywords of interest contained in the titles, abstracts and indexing terms of the relevant studies were used to draw up a general search strategy. The Boolean operators AND/OR will be used to identify studies between the themes, according to table 2. The following Boolean phrase was created: ("psychological well-being" OR "mental health" OR "emotional well-being" OR "life satisfaction" OR "burnout" OR "stress" OR "resilience") AND ("nursing faculty" OR "nursing professors" OR "nursing educators" OR "academic staff") AND ("higher

education” OR “university” OR “college”). 2). In stage 2, the search strategy developed in the previous stage was adapted for each source of information, according to the uniqueness of each one, recorded in table 2. 3) In stage 3, a search will be carried out in the list of references and in the citations of all the studies selected for data extraction, with the aim of identifying additional studies.

Table 2. Records of searches carried out on all information sources.

Source of information	Search	Records found
MEDLINE®	('psychological well-being' OR 'mental health' OR 'emotional well-being' OR 'life satisfaction' OR 'burnout' OR 'stress' OR 'resilience') AND ('nursing faculty' OR 'nursing professors' OR 'nursing educators' OR 'academic staff') AND ('higher education' OR 'university' OR 'college')	1204
Consensus®		35
Nursing & Allied Health Collection: Comprehensive®		238
Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews®		0
MedicLatina®		14
SCOPUS®	('psychological well-being' OR 'burnout' OR 'stress') AND ('nursing faculty') AND ('higher education' OR 'university' OR 'college')	3069
CINAHL Complete®	("psychological well-being" OR "mental health" OR "quality of life" OR "Burnout, Professional" OR "Stress") AND ("faculty, nursing" OR "nurse educators") AND ("Colleges and Universities")	19

Sources of information

The search strategy and identification of studies was carried out in August 2025 in the following electronic databases: MEDLINE Complete® (via PubMed®); SCOPUS®; CINAHL Complete®, Nursing & Allied Health Collection: Comprehensive®, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews® and MedicLatina® (via EBSCOhost®) and Consensus®.

Consensus will be used in a complementary manner, solely to identify grey literature and potential additional studies not indexed in other databases. To mitigate the limitations of this source, only studies published in peer-reviewed scientific journals will be considered eligible. Therefore, it will not be treated as a primary database but rather as a supplementary resource, ensuring broader coverage of the literature while maintaining both quality and reproducibility of the review process.

Study selection

The articles identified in the databases will be exported to the Intelligent Systematic Review platform® (Rayyan®),¹² where

the studies will be selected. The initial selection will be based on identifying and removing duplicates, followed by analyzing the title and abstract. The remaining studies from the previous stage will then be analyzed by reading them in full. The reasons for excluding full-text studies that do not fulfil the inclusion criteria will be recorded and described in the scoping review. The selection process will be carried out by two independent reviewers, with a third reviewer being asked to analyze in cases of disagreement. The selection process will be reported in full and presented using a PRISMA diagram^{®11}.

Data extraction

Data extraction will be carried out according to the recommendations of the JBI®.¹⁰ The data will be extracted from the studies using an instrument developed by the researchers with the aim of answering the guiding question of this scoping review. It consists of the following generic data items: authors; title; year of publication; geographical location and context; type and design of the study; objectives and research question; sample size and gender (Table 3).

In addition to the generic variables (authors, title, year, etc.), data will be extracted on the main psychological constructs investigated (e.g., burnout, stress, satisfaction, resilience, quality of life), the instruments used to measure well-being, and the key risk or protective factors identified. The extraction form will be pilot tested on five articles to ensure consistency among reviewers.

Subsequently, the extracted constructs will be organized into thematic categories, according to the conceptual diversity identified across studies, in order to enable a more systematic synthesis.

Table 3. Tool proposed by the researchers for extracting generic data.

Article title	
Authors	Name and surname of each author of the study
Year of publication	Year of publication
Country of origin	Country of origin of the main author
Context	Describe the context in which the study took place
Design	Describe the study design reported by the author
Objectives	Check the relevance of the objectives
Research question	Describe the research question
Sample	Significance of the sample and distribution of the sample according to gender

Data presentation

Four articles were identified and will be presented in descriptive and narrative form, according to the evidence frameworks constructed by the researchers, which may be altered during the course of the review in order to better interpret the results. The presentation and interpretation of the data will be guided by the recommendations of the JBI®¹⁰ for scoping reviews, using table 4, so that the mapping carried out in this evidence synthesis can be identified more directly. Finally, using table 5, the aim is to identify the most relevant thematic categories extracted from the selected articles.

Table 4. Summary of data for the guiding question.

Title	Type of study	Results
Article title	Methodology adopted	Describe the main results obtained, of interest in answering the research question

Table 5. Thematic categories.

Thematic categories	Main results

Conclusion

Taking care of the physical and mental health of teachers not only promotes their individual well-being, but also has a positive impact on the educational environment and the excellence of nursing teaching.

This review will enable the analysis and systematization of knowledge on the psychological well-being of higher education nursing teachers, promoting a detailed and comprehensive analysis that describes the challenges faced by these professionals.

It will also provide a basis for the development and implementation of programs aimed at promoting the quality of life and well-being of teachers.

It is hoped that the scoping review will contribute to the formulation of new research questions that will enable the development of systematic reviews on the psychological well-being of higher education nursing teachers.

Conflict of interest

No conflicts of interest were declared by the authors.

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