

## HIDDEN CHALLENGES OF BURNOUT SYNDROME IN NURSING PROFESSIONALS IN BRAZIL: RISK FACTORS AND IMPACTS – AN INTEGRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW (RIL)



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## **ABSTRACT**

Burnout Syndrome (BS) is a psychological condition associated with chronic occupational stress, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal fulfillment, which mainly affects health professionals. Nursing, because it involves a high degree of direct contact with patients and stressful situations, becomes one of the areas most susceptible to the development of this syndrome. This study aims to identify the scientific evidence available in the national literature, from 2019 to 2023, on the risk factors and impacts of Burnout Syndrome on nursing professionals in Brazil. This is an integrative literature review (RIL) followed by the PEO protocol (population, phenomenon of interest and results) carried out from August to December 2024 in the Virtual Health Library (VHL) based on the following descriptors in Health Sciences (DeCs): "Psychological Exhaustion", "Occupational Stress", "Nursing Professionals" and "Population at Risk", with a final sample of 15 articles. The results show that factors such as work overload, lack of emotional support, inadequate organizational conditions and lack of professional recognition are significant for the development of BS among nursing professionals. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated these conditions, further exposing professionals to an excessive workload, stress, and risk of developing the syndrome. The impacts of this condition transcend mental health, also compromising the quality of care provided to patients and negatively affecting organizational dynamics. It is concluded that the early recognition of risk factors and the implementation of psychological support strategies, as well as the improvement of working conditions to prevent the onset of BS.

**Keywords:** Nursing, Burnout Syndrome, Risk Factors, Impacts.

## INTRODUCTION

Nursing professionals play a fundamental role in the health system (ED), being essential for direct patient care, especially in hospital environments. However, their workload is intense and requires constant emotional dedication, often in adverse conditions, such as long shifts and scarcity of resources. This reality exposes nursing professionals to stressful factors that can trigger several health problems, especially Burnout syndrome, which has become one of the most prevalent conditions among these workers (Rodrigues, L. M. et al., 2024).

Burnout Syndrome is a chronic emotional disorder related to excessive occupational stress, characterized by three main dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal fulfillment (do Nascimento M. et al., 2024). This condition has been increasingly recognized in the context of health professionals, who often deal with high levels of stress due to the physical and psychological demands of their duties.

According to Jodas, Haddad (2009), the Burnout syndrome results from a gradual process of emotional and physical exhaustion, in which nursing workers lose the sense of their relationship with work, leading to a cycle of demotivation and exhaustion. In this context, organizational factors and interpersonal relationships in the workplace play a key role in the development of the condition, since constant pressures and lack of adequate psychological support aggravate symptoms.

The nursing team faces an exhausting work routine, with high demands, inflexible schedules, low remuneration, scarce support from colleagues and professional devaluation. These factors, combined with the intensive care provided to patients and their families, increase physical and mental exhaustion, resulting in negative impacts on the health of the professional. This favors the emergence of biopsychosocial problems, including symptoms of stress and even the evolution to Burnout Syndrome, characterized by physical and mental exhaustion, which reduces effectiveness at work and causes a feeling of incapacity, affecting the quality of care (Santos et al., 2021).

In view of this, Burnout Syndrome impacts not only the professional, but also the work environment and the quality of care for patients, as the affected nursing professionals have less empathy, which impairs the relationship with patients and the team, generating a cycle of stress and dissatisfaction.

These professionals are constantly exposed to a series of risk factors that can contribute to the development of Burnout Syndrome, so the stressful environment creates a

cycle of physical and psychological exhaustion, making professionals vulnerable to psychic disorders such as chronic occupational stress, which can eventually lead to the emergence of Burnout Syndrome. In addition, organizational factors, such as the lack of psychological support and the overload of responsibilities, also play a crucial role in the development of this condition, as highlighted by Rodrigues et al. (2024).

Burnout Syndrome is one of the main psychological sufferings faced by the nursing team, resulting from constant exposure to psychologically exhausting work environments. According to Perniciotti et al. (2020), this condition is directly related to occupational stress, with symptoms that manifest themselves both at the individual and organizational levels. The lack of motivation and the obstacles imposed by restrictive organizational policies, as well as internal conflicts in the team, contribute to the worsening of the situation, generating demotivation and, ultimately, depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. As highlighted by Caixeta et al. (2021), the recognition of risk factors and the implementation of strategies to mitigate them are essential to improve the health of professionals and ensure quality care for patients.

This leads us to reflect on the seriousness of the situation, which intensifies with the high demand for work and the scarcity of resources in hospitals, especially in times of health crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has aggravated the already precarious conditions faced by health professionals.

Despite the evidence on the negative impacts of Burnout Syndrome, there are still significant gaps in knowledge about the best practices for prevention and management of this condition in nursing professionals. The lack of specific studies on the most effective interventions for this group in hospital settings, in addition to the urgent need for public policies that reduce the workload and improve working conditions, are issues that require greater attention and intervention.

This study aims to identify the scientific evidence available in the national literature, from 2019 to 2023, on the risk factors and impacts of Burnout Syndrome on nursing professionals in Brazil.

This integrative literature review is justified by the need to fill important gaps in knowledge about the risk factors and impacts of Burnout Syndrome on nursing professionals in Brazil, and it is important to develop more effective strategies for the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of this condition.

## METHODOLOGY

It is an integrative literature review (RIL), a methodology that aims to gather and synthesize the available scientific evidence on a specific topic, allowing the analysis of different methodological approaches. This approach is especially relevant to the health area, as it allows for a broader understanding of the object of study. According to Mendes (2008), this type of review allows the identification of patterns, contradictions and gaps in existing knowledge, which contributes to the advancement of research and the application of evidence-based practices.

Still in relation to RIL, Dantas et al. (2021), emphasize that it must follow a systematic and well-defined process to ensure scientific rigor and the reliability of the conclusions, being a method structured in essential steps that ensure an organized and reasoned synthesis, contributing to the validation of the findings and their practical applicability.

The LRT was conducted in six distinct stages, as shown in Chart 1, with the objective of answering the guiding question: "What are the risk factors and impacts of Burnout Syndrome on nursing professionals in Brazil, according to the scientific evidence available in the literature between 2019 and 2023?".

Table 1 – Stages of the RIL.

Stage	Feature
1st stage	Identification of the theme and selection of the guiding question of the research.
2nd Stage	Establishment of eligibility criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies, sampling, or search of scientific literature.
3rd stage	Definition of the information to be extracted from the selected studies or categorized from the studies.
4th stage	Evaluation of studies included in the integrative review.
Stage 5	Interpretation of the results.
Step 6	Presentation of the review and synthesis of knowledge

Source: adapted from Mendes et al. (2008)

According to the proposed methodology and structured in the six steps described in Chart 1, the PEO protocol described in Chart 2 was used to guide the formulation of the guiding question and guide the process of searching for scientific evidence.

Chart 2 – Survey Question Component.

Description	Abbreviation	Question Component
Population or context of the study	P	Nursing Professionals in Brazil.
Exposure or phenomenon of interest	And	Exposure to risk factors related to Burnout Syndrome.

Results or effects associated with exposure	Or	Impacts on physical and emotional health and quality of care.
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Source: Moreira (2014).

To search for scientific articles, the following set of strategies was used in the Virtual Health Library (VHL) databases, as recommended by Koller, Couto and Hohendorff (2014), using the Boolean operators "AND" and "OR" through the following search: Burnout syndrome AND nursing professionals AND db:("BDENF") AND mj:("Nurses and Nurses" OR "Nursing" OR "Nursing Professionals" OR "Nursing Team" OR "Nursing Technicians") AND type\_of\_study:("risk\_factors\_studies" OR "prevalence\_studies" OR "observational\_studies" OR "qualitative\_research" OR "screening\_studies" OR "etiology\_studies" OR "diagnostic\_studies" OR "systematic\_reviews" OR "incidence\_studies") AND la:("pt") AND (year\_cluster:[2019 TO 2023]) AND instance:"lilacsplus".

Obtaining as a final sample a total of 15 selected articles, strict criteria for the eligibility of the manuscripts were applied, since these criteria ensured that the selected articles adequately answered the guiding question of the research and were aligned with the objectives of the study. The inclusion criteria applied were: articles published in national databases, with full texts available, published in Portuguese and in the period from 2019 to 2023, covering the theme of Burnout Syndrome in Nursing Professionals.

Articles that were not available in full, that were published in languages other than Portuguese, that were outside the established period, or that dealt with topics that did not directly fit the research theme were excluded. In addition, duplicate studies were discarded to ensure the exclusivity of the evidence selected for the analysis.

## RESULTS

Based on the 15 selected articles, a synoptic table was prepared (Chart 3) containing the year, the authors, the title, the objective, the type of study and the main results. The table was organized in a descending manner, according to the year of publication of the articles, allowing an in-depth discussion on the theme in the Brazilian context.

Chart 3 – Synthesis of the articles included in the Integrative Literature Review (RIL) - Brazil, 2024.

No.	Year	Authors	Title	Objective	Study Type	Main results
1	2019	Dutra HS, et al.	Burnout among nursing professionals in hospitals in Brazil.	To evaluate the occurrence of <i>burnout</i> among nursing professionals from three public hospitals.	Transverse	Most of them had a low level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and moderate levels of personal fulfillment, associated with age, type of employment and length of experience.
2	2019	Santos JLG, et al.	Burnout Syndrome among Nurses at a University Hospital.	To identify the levels of <i>burnout</i> syndrome among nurses at a university hospital.	Transverse	They had moderate levels of burnout in the subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal fulfillment.
3	2019	Oliveira APS, et al.	The physical exhaustion of nurses in the urgency and emergency sector: an integrative review.	Identify the presence of occupational burnout risks in performance of their work activities in an urgent and emergency unit.	RIL	Burnout, highlighting coping strategies of the affected professionals, their causes and effects.
4	2019	Paiva JDM, et al.	Triggering Factors of Burnout Syndrome in Nurses.	To identify the knowledge exposed in the literature about the triggering factors of Burnout Syndrome in nurses	Bibliographic, descriptive, integrative review type	It is noteworthy that the main factors responsible for Burnout Syndrome in nurses are excessive working hours, followed by professional dissatisfaction.
5	2019	Azevedo DS, et al.	Risk of Burnout Syndrome in Mental Health Nurses.	To assess the risk of Burnout Syndrome in nurses who work in mental health.	Quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional, and analytical	It was observed that 60.9% had low emotional exhaustion, 65.2% low depersonalization and 47.8% high professional fulfillment. Although they did not have Burnout Syndrome, 47.8% showed high risk for its development.



6	2020	Silva, Carneiro. Ramalho	Incidence of <i>Burnout syndrome</i> in professionals of nursing working in the Intensive Care Unit.	OBJECTIVE: To evaluate the incidence of <i>burnout syndrome</i> in nursing professionals working in the intensive care unit of a public hospital in João Pessoa, Brazil.	Field research with Quantitative Approach	Professionals are exposed to different occupational stressors that directly affect their well-being, such as long working hours, constant contact in caring for patients with pain, suffering and death.
7	2021	Faria MGA, et al.	Repercussions for the mental health of nursing professionals working in the fight against Covid-19: an integrative review.	To identify the repercussions on the mental health of nursing professionals working in the Facing Covid-19 in the first year of the pandemic context	RIL	The main repercussions involved in mental illness were: anxiety, depression, stress, Burnout syndrome, mental sleep disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder.
8	2021	Kirby EEF, et al.	Covid-19 and its psychic influences on the perception of the health care team Palliative oncology care nursing.	To identify the main psychic influences on the perception of the nursing team in palliative oncological care during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Interpretative qualitative approach	Discourses with negative and positive psychic influences of palliative oncology care during the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in the team's perception.
9	2021	Oliveira RFP, et al.	Religiosity in coping with Burnout Syndrome in nursing professionals.	To describe possible contributions of religiosity in coping with Burnout Syndrome (BS) in nursing professionals.	Literature Review	It was possible to identify that The work dynamics of nursing professionals causes stressful factors, hence the urgency of interventions.
10	2021	Silva, Vador, Barbosa.	Nurse x Burnout: the consequences of professional exhaustion syndrome in nurses in the urgent and emergency service.	To highlight the main stressors that dispose to the development of Burnout in nurses.	Descriptive literature review of a qualitative nature	It was possible to identify the incidence of the disease and its impact, which directly affects the health and personal and professional quality of life of the nurses of the service.



11	2021	Santos KMR, et al.	Depression and anxiety in nursing professionals during the covid-19 pandemic.	To analyze the prevalence of symptoms of depression, anxiety and associated factors in nursing team professionals during the Covid-19 pandemic	Sectional do tipo <i>web</i> <i>surve</i>	Symptoms of anxiety disorders, depression, and Burnout Syndrome were common in services with inadequate conditions during the pandemic.
12	2022	Vieira LS, et al.	Burnout and resilience in intensive care nursing professionals in the face of COVID-19: a multicenter study.	To analyze the relationship between the dimensions of <i>Burnout</i> and resilience in the work of intensive care nursing professionals in the COVID-19 pandemic, in four hospitals in Southern Brazil.	Multicenter, cross-sectional design	Resilience at work was inversely related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and directly related to professional fulfillment.
13	2022	Santos BLF, et al.	Burnout Syndrome among Nursing Professionals	To analyze the scientific productions available in the literature on the incidence of Burnout Syndrome in nursing team professionals	RIL	Burnout Syndrome has a high incidence among nursing professionals, with higher rates in mobile emergency care services, but it is also evidenced in primary health care.
14	2023	Sant'Ana JCP, et al.	Prevalence and Factors associated with Work-Related Stress and <i>Burnout Syndrome</i> among Nursing Professionals Working in Oncology.	OBJECTIVE: To evaluate the prevalence and factors associated with work-related stress and <i>burnout</i> syndrome among nursing professionals working in oncology.	Transverse	Burnout was identified in 38.9% of the professionals and moderate/intense stress in 75.8%. Age, history of accidents and aggression were associated with stress and burnout, with stress being a risk factor.

15	2023	Sousa EX, et al.	Burnout syndrome in nursing professionals: A literature review on determinants, consequences and prevention.	To identify in the literature what determines BS among nursing professionals.	Literature Review	Burnout, marked by emotional exhaustion, stress, and insecurity, compromises the effectiveness of professionals and negatively impacts patients.
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Source: Teixeira HC, et al. (2024)

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study revealed that Burnout Syndrome in nursing professionals in Brazil remains a significant problem, influenced by multiple risk factors and generating significant impacts on workers' health and the quality of care provided.

The analysis of the 15 selected articles showed that the COVID-19 pandemic emerged as a central element, intensifying the challenges faced by these professionals and enhancing the stressors already present in the work environment. These aspects gave rise to two main categories: the risk factors associated with Burnout Syndrome and the impacts of this condition on nursing professionals.

The categories reflect both the complexity of the theme and the relevance of the pandemic context, which amplified the structural precariousness and emotional demands faced by nursing, being discussed and seeking to broaden the understanding of the phenomenon and point out ways for effective interventions.

## RISK FACTORS FOR BURNOUT SYNDROME AMONG NURSING PROFESSIONALS IN BRAZIL

The risk factors associated with Burnout Syndrome in nursing professionals are influenced by organizational, personal, and also contextual variables. Dutra et al. (2019), highlight that the workplace, type of contract, shift, and length of experience directly influence levels of emotional exhaustion, especially among younger professionals. These findings dialogue with Sant'Ana et al (2023), who identify occupational violence and occupational accidents as factors related to occupational stress and a higher prevalence of Burnout in nurses over 40 years of age.

The pandemic context is another significant aspect. Faria et al (2021), highlight how the pandemic aggravated the emotional exhaustion of professionals, due to the precariousness of working conditions and inadequate institutional support.

Complementing this view, According to Santos et al (2021), professionals who worked in health services without a structure for COVID-19 had a higher prevalence of symptoms of anxiety, depression, and Burnout.

In view of this, Kirby et al (2021), add that, in addition to the emotional burden demanded by facing the pandemic, protective factors, such as support among teammates, can reduce the impact of occupational stress.

Psychosocial factors are also relevant. According to Azevedo et al (2019), irritability, loss of appetite, and mental fatigue are associated with the risk of burnout among mental health nurses. In parallel, Oliveira et al (2021), explore how religious experience can act as a coping mechanism to reduce the impact of stressors in the workplace.

This view is complemented by Vieira et al (2022), who point to resilience as an essential resource to deal with emotional exhaustion in intensive care teams. Additionally, Santos et al (2019) highlight that, even at moderate levels, Burnout is common among nurses and recommends qualitative investigations to explore factors not quantitatively evidenced.

## IMPACTS OF BURNOUT SYNDROME ON NURSING PROFESSIONALS IN BRAZIL

The consequences of Burnout Syndrome affect both nurses and the health system as a whole. Oliveira et al (2019) highlight that Burnout compromises the physical and psychological well-being of professionals, reducing the quality of care provided. Similarly, Sousa et al (2023) emphasize that the emotional and physical symptoms of the syndrome impair nurses' ability to meet demands efficiently, negatively impacting patients.

In addition, Silva, Carneiro, Ramalho (2020) address how Burnout Syndrome affects not only the work environment, but also the social and family life of nurses, pointing to the need for urgent interventions. This impact is particularly evident in high-pressure contexts, such as urgent and emergency services, as reported by Silva, Vador, Barbosa (2021), who proposes the creation of clear flowcharts to facilitate the identification and management of the syndrome.

Protective factors, such as mutual support in work teams, are also mentioned. According to Kirby et al (2021), maintaining cohesive teams during the pandemic was a key element in reducing the anxiety and fear associated with coping with challenging situations.

This perspective is expanded by Paiva et al (2019), when they emphasize the importance of healthy interpersonal relationships in the workplace to ensure the well-being of professionals.

In this sense, Santos et al (2022) reinforce the need for organizational restructuring that promotes discussions between managers and professionals, creating strategies aimed at promoting workers' health. Such measures, combined with continuing education (Sousa et al. 2023) and professional appreciation (Azevedo et al. 2019), are crucial to minimize the impacts of Burnout and ensure the sustainability of the health system.

Finally, Oliveira et al (2021), point out that the damage caused by the syndrome, if left untreated, can be fatal, highlighting the need for more robust preventive and organizational approaches.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This study revealed, based on the analysis of scientific evidence on the risk factors and impacts of Burnout Syndrome on nursing professionals in Brazil, that the development of this condition is closely related to multiple organizational and individual factors.

The impacts of the syndrome are wide-ranging, affecting not only the mental and emotional health of workers, but also compromising the quality of care provided to patients, generating a vicious cycle of stress and professional dissatisfaction.

It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly aggravated this situation, further exposing nursing professionals to an excessive workload, stress, and risk of developing the syndrome, in addition to generating a scenario of emotional instability. The pandemic context highlighted the fragility of working conditions and the urgent need for effective strategies to support health workers.

Based on the review carried out, it is concluded that mental health care for nursing professionals is fundamental not only to ensure their quality of life, but also to ensure the quality of care provided to the population, being a priority theme for future research and public policies in the health area.

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