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SCOPING REVIEW

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THE CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP IN NURSING PRACTICE IN THE HOSPITAL ENVIRONMENT: A SCOPING REVIEW

*O conceito de liderança na prática de enfermagem no ambiente hospitalar: revisão de escopo**El concepto de liderazgo en la práctica de enfermería en el entorno hospitalario: revisión del alcance***Luciana Barbosa Passeri¹** **Frances Valéria Costa e Silva²** **Luciana Guimarães Assad³** **Fabiane dos Santos Ramos⁴** **Diana Amado Baptista dos Santos⁵** **Jessyca de Almeida Campos Rodrigues⁶** 

RESUMO

Objetivo: mapear o conceito de liderança na prática de enfermagem hospitalar. Método: revisão de escopo baseada nas diretrizes metodológicas Joanna Briggs Institute. Incluídos estudos primários, secundários, literatura cinzenta, sem restrição de idioma, com conteúdo completo, recorte temporal de 2019 a 2024 que respondessem à pergunta de revisão: Qual o conceito de liderança na prática de enfermagem no cenário hospitalar? Busca realizada em janeiro de 2024 nas bases de dados Medline/PubMed, BVS, Scielo, Embase, Scopus, CINAHL, Web of Science e Academic Search Premier. Resultados: dez estudos compuseram a revisão e revelaram diferentes conceitos de liderança e oito elementos-chave do perfil do enfermeiro. Conclusão: não foi identificado um conceito específico de liderança em enfermagem na prática hospitalar. Os conceitos estão associados aos diferentes estilos de liderança como transformacional, transacional, autêntica, rebelde, ressonante, eficaz, clínica e aos elementos-chave: prática profissional, comunicação, visão, trabalho em equipe, motivação, melhoria de resultados, empatia e tomada de decisão.

DESCRITORES: Enfermagem; Liderança; Hospitais; Revisão de escopo.

^{1,2,3,4,5}Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.

⁶Centro de Treinamento em Emergência do Sul Fluminense, Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.

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CORRESPONDING AUTHOR: Luciana Barbosa Passeri

E-mail: luciana.passeri@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to map the concept of leadership in hospital nursing practice. Method: scoping review based on Joanna Briggs Institute methodological guidelines. Primary and secondary studies, gray literature, with no language restrictions, with complete content, and time frame from 2019 to 2024 that answered the review question: What is the concept of leadership in nursing practice in the hospital setting? Search carried out in January 2024 in the Medline/PubMed, BVS, Scielo, Embase, Scopus, CINAHL, Web of Science, and Academic Search Premier databases. Results: ten studies comprised the review and revealed different concepts of leadership and eight key elements of the nurse's profile. Conclusion: no specific concept of nursing leadership in hospital practice was identified. The concepts are associated with different leadership styles such as transformational, transactional, authentic, rebellious, resonant, effective, clinical, and the key elements of professional practice, communication, vision, teamwork, motivation, improvement of results, empathy, and decision making.

DESCRIPTORS: Nursing; Leadership; Hospitals; Scoping review.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: mapear el concepto de liderazgo en la práctica de enfermería hospitalaria. Método: revisión exploratoria basada en las guías metodológicas del Joanna Briggs Institute. Estudios primarios y secundarios, literatura gris, sin restricciones de idioma, con contenido completo y marco temporal de 2019 a 2024 que respondieron a la pregunta de revisión: ¿Cuál es el concepto de liderazgo en la práctica de enfermería en el ámbito hospitalario? Búsqueda realizada en enero de 2024 en las bases de datos Medline/PubMed, BVS, Scielo, Embase, Scopus, CINAHL, Web of Science y Academic Search Premier. Resultados: diez estudios comprendieron la revisión y revelaron diferentes conceptos de liderazgo y ocho elementos clave del perfil de la enfermera. Conclusión: no se identificó un concepto específico de liderazgo de enfermería en la práctica hospitalaria. Los conceptos se asocian a diferentes estilos de liderazgo como transformacional, transaccional, auténtico, rebelde, resonante, efectivo, clínico y los elementos clave de la práctica profesional, comunicación, visión, trabajo en equipo, motivación, mejora de resultados, empatía y toma de decisiones.

DESCRIPTORES: Enfermería; Liderazgo; Hospitales; Revisión de alcance.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership in nursing is a topic of great relevance to healthcare organizations. The National Nursing Curriculum Guidelines (DCN/ENF)¹ emphasize that leadership is part of nurse training and is a competency for healthcare.

Leadership practices in nursing promote quality care, contribute to good organizational results, and create an environment of team collaboration,² and related studies can contribute to practice, justifying this review.

The concept of leadership can be understood in different ways, depending on the context and historical background.³ Given this diversity, the objective of this review was to map the concept of leadership in nursing practice in the hospital setting.

METHOD

Scope review study conducted according to JBI guidelines, an international research organization that guides systematic reviews.⁴ The review question was: "What is the concept of leadership in nursing practice in the hospital setting?", structured by the acronym PCC.

The review protocol was registered in the Open Science Framework (OSF) under DOI: 10.17605/OSF.IO/VUSKP and has not been published. To ensure the transparency and quality of the study, the guidelines of the Checklist Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA- ScR) were followed.⁵

A search strategy and management plan were developed for the extraction of research data by a librarian. The eligibility criteria were based on the acronym PCC. For the population (P), studies with nurses were selected; the concept (C) involved criteria on elements and concepts of leadership in nursing; and the context (C) included studies conducted in public or private hospitals, regardless of complexity.

Primary studies, systematic reviews, meta-syntheses, and case reports with a qualitative and quantitative approach were considered, in addition to gray literature submitted in indexed sources. Articles published only as abstracts were excluded as they were considered insufficiently consistent for analysis. There were no language restrictions. A time frame was established starting in 2019, considering the launch of the Nursing Now campaign, which encouraged investment in nursing leadership around the world.⁶

For data collection, a three-step search strategy was developed. The first step, in July 2023, involved identifying search terms using the controlled vocabulary DeCS (Health Sciences Descriptors) and MeSH (Medical Subjective Headings). The following terms were included: P (population) - Nursing/nurses/enfermagem/enfermeiros/enfermeiras; C (concept) - leadership/liderança; C (context) - hospitals/hospitais, combined with the use of Boolean operators OR, AND, and NOT.

The second stage was the database search, which took place on January 1, 2024. Information was extracted from MEDLINE/PubMed and adapted for: BVS, Scielo, Scopus, CINAHL, Embase, Academic Search Premier, and Web of Science (Table 1). Search key: ((Nurses[Mesh] OR Nurs*[tiab]) AND (Leadership[Mesh] OR Leadership[tiab]) AND (“nurse leadership”[tiab] OR “Nursing, Supervisory”[Mesh] OR “Supervisory Nursing”[tiab] OR “Nursing leadership”[tiab] OR Influentials[tiab] OR “Management Styles”[tiab] OR “Nursing Care Management “[tiab]) AND (hospitals[MeSH] OR hospital[tiab]))

The selection of studies was performed independently by two evaluators. On January 1, 2024, the titles and abstracts were read and selected. The free and open-access Rayyan Qatar Computing Research Institute software was used, which allowed for the selection of studies by peers and the removal of duplicate evidence by double-blind independent review. Cases of disagreement were resolved by consensus between both reviewers, dispensing with a third reviewer, taking into account the inclusion criteria pre-established in the review protocol. Studies that met the established selection criteria were selected for full reading, and those that did not meet the criteria were excluded.

The third step was an additional search on March 1, 2024, of the references of the studies included in the review to identify

publications that had not been identified by the initial search strategy, resulting in three articles being retrieved. One study identified in the title and abstract reading was not accessible for full-text reading. An attempt was made to contact the authors to obtain the full text, but without success.

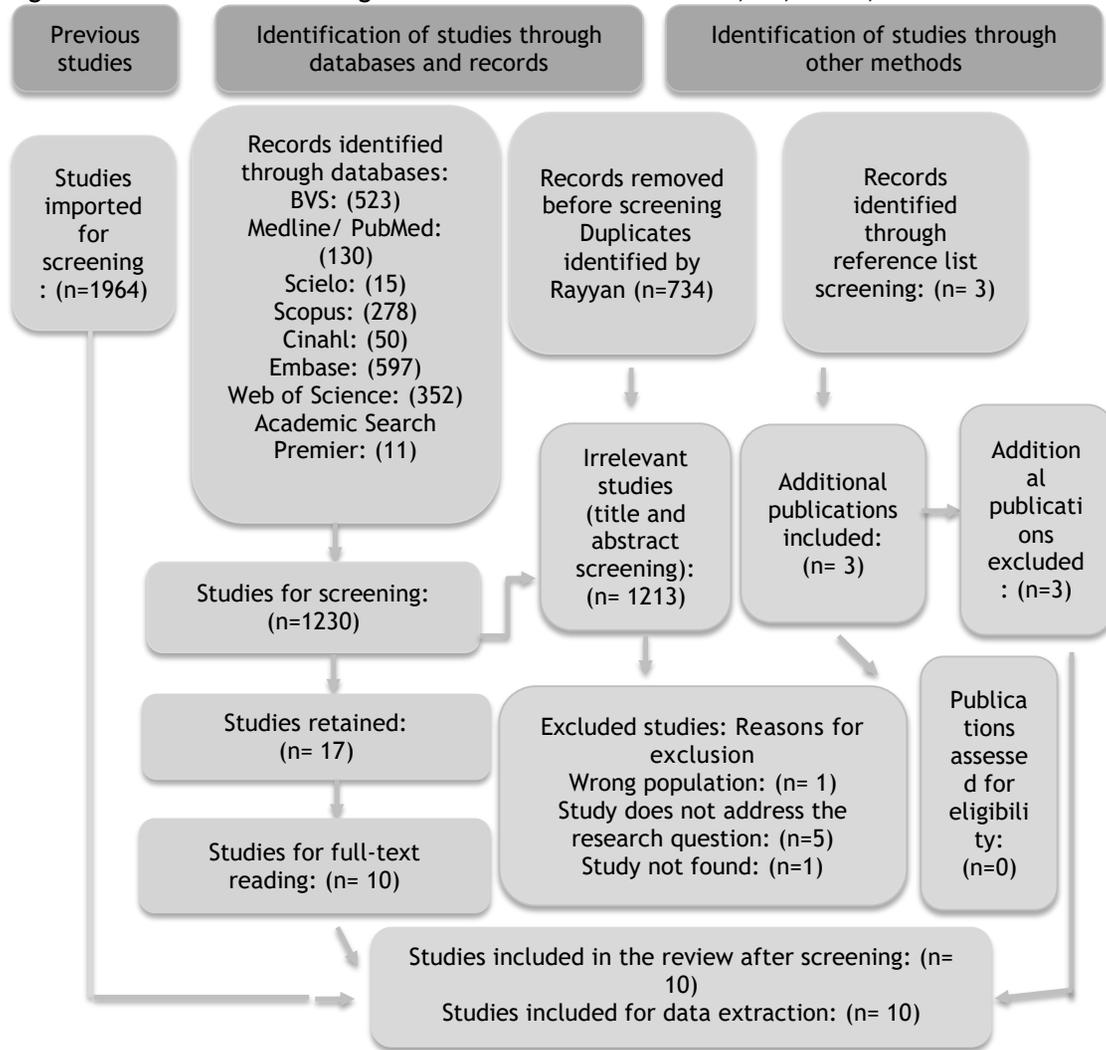
The selected texts were organized for data extraction, according to an instrument developed by the author and completed independently by the reviewers, where the following information was collected: study characteristics (title, year of publication, database, type of study, objectives, methodology, authors, type of publication, referenced authors, country of origin, and language) and concept of leadership and elements of leadership concepts. The extracted data were organized in a free online spreadsheet (Microsoft Office 365 Excel software).⁸

For data analysis, the recommendations of the Manual for Evidence Synthesis, 2020 version, were followed,⁴ following six steps: identification of the research question, identification of relevant studies, selection of studies, data analysis, grouping, synthesis, and presentation of data.

RESULTS

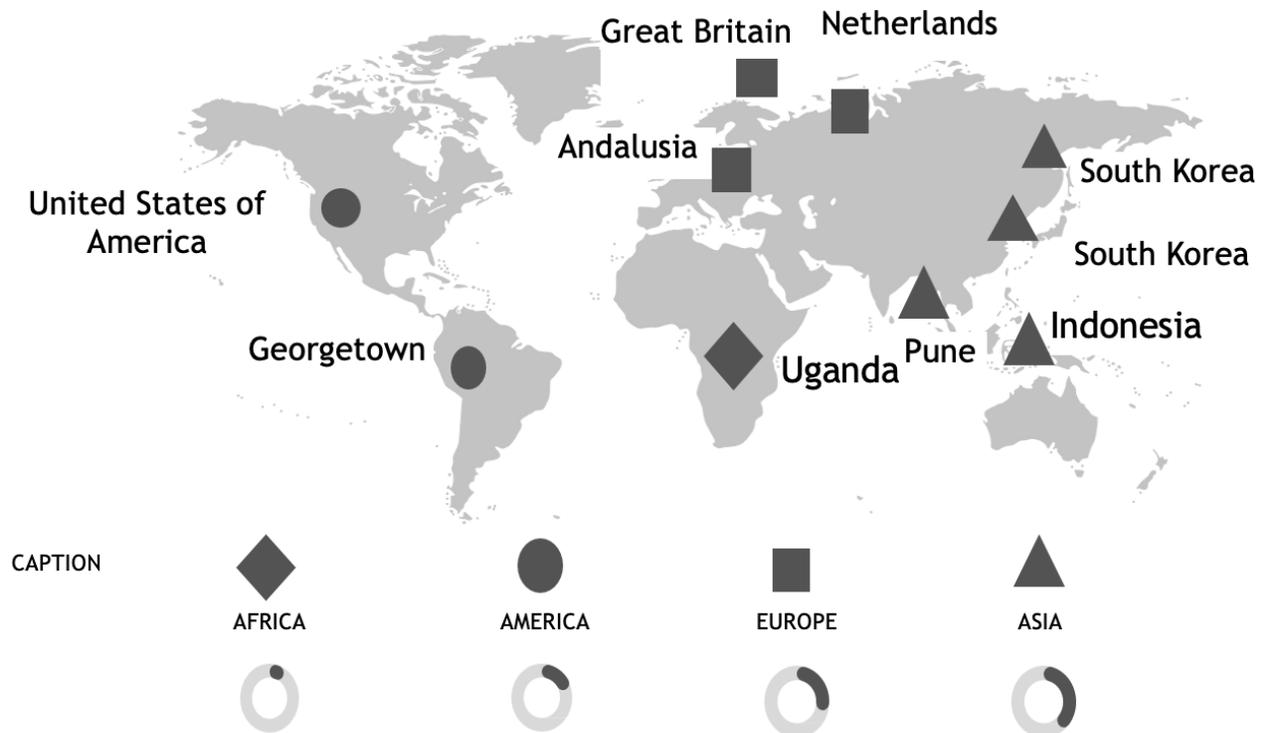
The search strategy identified a total of 1964 studies, including 130 in MEDLINE/PubMed, 523 in BVS, 15 in Scielo, 276 in Scopus, 50 in CINAHL, 597 in Embase, 11 in Academic Search Premier, 362 in Web of Science (Figure 1), 734 were duplicates and were excluded, resulting in 1230 for title and abstract analysis. Subsequently, 1213 publications were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria, 3 were retrieved by the snowballing technique and at the same time excluded for not meeting the eligibility criteria, thus, 17 studies were selected for full reading and 10 were chosen to compose this review.

Figure 1 - Flowchart according to PRISMA-ScR5 Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2024



Source: Adapted from PRISMA-ScR.5

Among the selected studies, none originated in Brazil, with Asia being the most prominent continent (Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Studies included in the scope review according to continent of origin. Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2024

Source: Own.

The selected studies were published in English (n=8) and Korean (n=2), and the publications covered the years 2019 (n=1), 2020 (n=2), 2021 (n=4), 2022 (n=1), and 2023 (n=2).

The selected studies included qualitative (n=7), quantitative (n=1), and mixed (n=2) approaches. Regarding methodological characteristics, one is a primary study, eight are secondary studies, and one is conceptual theory (Table 2).

Table 2- Characterization of studies included in the scoping review. Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2024

Authors	Methodological characteristics/year	Objective	Results related to the key elements of the concept of leadership
E1 Major, D. ⁹	Theoretical conceptual approach 2019	Identify and describe the leadership experience of advanced practice nurses.	Leadership reflects the development of a shared vision and can be described as visionary, innovative, values-based and strategic.
E2 Suji, M., Yadav, P., Devi, S., Mistry, M. ¹⁰	Experimental study, non-probabilistic convenience sampling 2020	Evaluate the transformational leadership style of nurses.	Transformational leadership as a process by which leaders raise the aspirations and motivations of others.

Authors	Methodological characteristics/year	Objective	Results related to the key elements of the concept of leadership	
E3	Nanyonga, R. C., Bosire, E. N., Heller, D. J., Bradley, E., Reynolds, N. R. ¹¹	Cross-sectional, quantitative, descriptive study 2020	To evaluate the leadership practices of nurses in leadership in Uganda (by self-report) and from the perspective of followers (direct subordinates, peers, coworkers, others); and to determine factors (positively) associated with leadership practices.	Inspire a shared vision; challenge the process; enable others to act; encourage the heart.
E4	Kim, J., Hong, S.K., Park, M.M., Yu, J.S. ¹²	Convenience sampling, mixed study 2021	Identify nursing leadership competence among new nurses through the perception of nursing managers.	Leadership as the standard of behavior exhibited by a leader and by the members of an organization in which the leader effectively performs all tasks; guides team members; influences.
E5	Reynolds, P. O. F. ¹³	Cross-sectional, mixed study 2021	Analyze the resonant leadership style among nursing managers at Georgetown Public Hospital from the perspective of nursing managers and registered nurses.	Focus on leaders' interaction with other individuals; demonstrate confidence; transform culture; improve the work environment; use training strategies; emotional intelligence; Resonant leadership promotes a creative and innovative environment, where resonant leaders are great leaders who are emotionally attuned, work harmoniously, focus on goals, are based on emotional intelligence, and consider it important to listen to the group.
E6	Wardani, E., Ryan, T., Yusuf, M., Kamil, H., Rachmah, R., Susanti, S.S. et al. ¹⁴	Exploratory, qualitative study, thematic approach 2021	Identify Indonesian nurses' perceptions and experiences of nursing leadership and leadership roles in the hospital setting.	The participants' perceptions and experiences of leadership were organized into three themes: the search for a description of leadership, the view of leadership and management as the same thing, and the experience of limited leadership opportunities. Impact statements: The study revealed little evidence that nurses were being trained to provide leadership within the organization. However, it showed that nurse leaders have the ability to make decisions, solve problems, guide daily activities; a leader as someone with authority.
E7	Booher, L., Yates, E., Claus, S., Haight, K., Burchill, C. N. ¹⁵	Convenience sampling, qualitative 2021	Explore the self-perception of leadership among clinical nurses at the bedside and their perception of leadership in patient care and outcomes.	Care nurses did not perceive themselves as leaders. They associated the terms "leader and leadership" with titled managers. Self-perception is the first step in developing leadership. Leadership is inherent in nursing practice and is not in the position, but in the role.
E8	López-Medina, I. M., Sánchez-García, I., García-Fernández, F. P., Pancorbo-Hidalgo, P. L. ¹⁶	Exploratory, qualitative study 2022	Describe the experiences of nurses and nursing managers with nursing leadership in implementing evidence-based practice.	Transformational leadership focused on democratic decision-making, clear roles for ward managers, effective teamwork, promotion of the role of natural leader, and empowerment of nurses.

Authors	Methodological characteristics/year	Objective	Results related to the key elements of the concept of leadership
E9 Kok, E., Schoonhoven, L., Lalleman, P., Weggelaar, A. M. ¹⁷	Case study 2023	To understand the context, dilemmas, and interactions in the leadership of rebellious nurses, we conducted a multiple case study in two Dutch hospitals.	Rebel leaders bring new ideas, advocate for patients and better processes and structures, and promote a more collaborative and participatory approach to decision-making.
E10 Kim, E. S., Kim, N., Choi, S. J., Kim, N., Kim, Y. H., Lee, J. Y. et al. ¹⁸	Exploratory, qualitative study 2023	Identify and describe the leadership experience of advanced practice nurses.	Leadership as mentoring; management; conflict mediation, goal setting; trust and support. Leadership roles in advanced practice as a trusted expert, team moderator, resource person, change agent to improve clinical practice.

Source: Own.

The concept of leadership in nursing in the practice of nurses working in hospitals is related to different leadership styles (Table 3) and key elements (the most common elements cited in the studies used in leadership development) (Figure 4).

Table 3 – Leadership concepts from the included studies. Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2024

Leadership Theories	Concept
Transformational leadership	It is a model that best suits nursing values. ⁷ It is one that creates a good working environment where the leader transforms their followers through motivation and inspiration. ⁵ It involves democratic decisions, effective teamwork, and a shared vision. ⁸ A style that inspires and enables followers to achieve good results, promoting personal and organizational change. ³ It is one that has the following principles: leading by example, inspiring and innovating, cultivating effective practice environments, empowering, shaping results. ³
Transactional leadership	It is one that focuses on leaders and followers achieving specific goals, with followers receiving a reward in return. ³
Authentic leadership	It is one in which the leader demonstrates transparency in relationships, self-awareness, seeks to act with balance, consistency in relation to values, and an ethical stance. ⁵
Rebellious leadership	It is the one that influences groups to achieve expected results where nurse leaders contribute innovative ideas, advocate for changes to improve processes aimed at quality of care. ⁴
Resonant leadership	It is one in which the nurse leader relates to people in a creative and emotionally positive way, inspiring their subordinates to work together toward a common goal. ⁵ It reflects the ability to listen to workers' opinions and feelings and to empathize with them. ⁵
Effective leadership	It is one in which the leader inspires confidence by relating to both the team and patients, and invests in self-knowledge. ⁵ It generates job satisfaction, team engagement, and patient satisfaction. ²
Clinical leadership	It is related to clinical competence, good relationships, and positive behaviors. ⁷ It focuses on care. ⁴

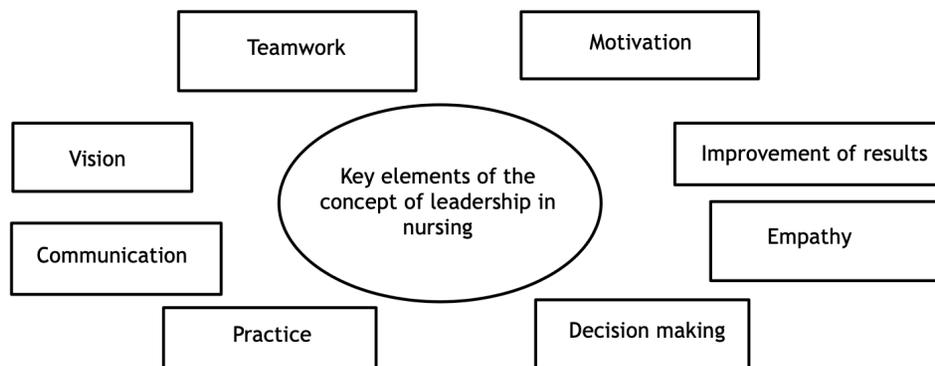
Source: Own.

The main concepts of leadership in nursing, according to their distinct characteristics and approaches, form a complex network of leadership styles, illustrating the behavior of the leader, the team, focus on results, prioritizing quality in patient care, which can make it difficult to identify a single concept in the exercise of leadership.

Leadership in nursing is expressed in different contexts, such as team management, direct patient care, and mediation

between health professionals. Distinct organizational cultures, differences in leadership styles, and the influence of hierarchies can also make it difficult to identify a single concept in the exercise of leadership. Eight key elements were found in the studies: professional practice, communication, vision, teamwork, motivation, improvement of results, empathy, and decision-making (Figure 4).

Figure 3 – Thematic map with key elements of the concept of leadership in nursing in hospitals. Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2024



Source: Own.

DISCUSSION

Concepts of leadership in nursing

The concepts of leadership in nursing in the hospital context brought up by the researchers have points in common and are related to leadership styles. Some leadership concepts reflect the idea of a process of influence, identified in transformational leadership, most frequently cited in studies (n=6) where authors support the idea that the concept involves a relationship between leaders and followers, being a model that inspires, motivates, and engages the team through a shared vision and common values.^{9-11,13,15,16}

On the other hand, rebellious leadership, also found in one of the studies, proposes significant changes, challenging norms and routines, presenting innovative and creative ideas to overcome challenges, creating a dynamic environment, and encouraging the team to achieve good health outcomes.¹⁷

Nurses' perceptions of leadership were presented in two studies and brought up the concept of clinical leadership as one that focuses on improving patient care, where nurses

use technical and scientific knowledge to make decisions, ensure safe practices, and promote a learning environment for the team.^{12,15}

Another study that aimed to analyze the resonant leadership style among nursing managers working in hospitals introduced the concept of resonant leadership as one that creates good relationships, promotes positive emotional connections with the team through empathy and effective communication, and promotes team engagement.¹³

Studies that aimed to analyze the leadership styles of nurses (n=2) conceptualized effective leadership as one in which the desired results are achieved efficiently, where the effective leader invests in self-knowledge in order to gain the trust of the team and make quick decisions.^{10,13}

Authentic leadership is based on transparency and integrity in relationships, where the nurse leader inspires confidence

among their team and creates a good working environment for everyone to express their ideas and opinions.¹³

Although transformational leadership is the most cited in studies, one study pointed to transactional leadership as being based on rewards and punishments as a way to achieve specific goals.¹³

In this review, no single, specific concept for leadership in nursing was found, but rather concepts that are associated with existing leadership theories.

Leadership in nursing is composed of essential elements that ensure the quality of patient care. Daily practice in hospitals requires nurses to have a range of technical and behavioral skills that, when combined, are essential to ensuring quality care and commitment to team development. Key elements of the concept of nursing leadership form the basis for nursing leadership in the practice of nurses in hospitals.

Key elements related to the concept of leadership in nursing

Key elements of the concept of leadership in nursing are related to the essential characteristics of the nurse leader profile presented in the studies.

Factors related to interpersonal skills, behavior, and competence were cited most frequently in the studies (n=10) and are associated with clinical practice that includes technical competence and scientific knowledge.⁹⁻¹⁸

Communication is an aspect cited in the studies (n=7), with emphasis on the ability to communicate effectively with staff and patients, which is fundamental for building a collaborative work environment and improving the care provided.^{9-10,12-15,18}

Studies (n=3) also pointed out the importance of nurses looking beyond their daily tasks in order to have a shared vision, innovate, plan strategies to achieve organizational goals, and improve results. ^{13,16,17} Outstanding teamwork (n=3) is another key element of the concept of nursing leadership considered an essential factor for the successful exercise of nursing leadership in hospitals.^{13,15-16}

Motivation to inspire and engage the team, the possibility of learning and an environment in which members feel valued, active listening, as well as effective communication with constructive feedback also appear as key elements of the concept of nursing leadership in the practice of nurses in hospitals (n=6).^{9-11,13,15,18}

Acting with empathy, supporting the emotions and needs of the group (n=4) was also found in the studies, bringing the idea of strengthening the team and promoting a culture for improving practices and attitudes.^{9,12,13,15}

Conscious and balanced decision-making, taking into account different situations and the impact on the people involved, was seen in the studies as a way of exercising leadership effectively.^{9,13,16,17}

During the mapping, no specific study was found that establishes the construction of a model of leadership concept in nursing in the practice of nurses working in hospitals. Thus, this gap indicates the need for further studies that highlight the concept of leadership in nursing.

The analysis of the studies provided a diverse view of the concept of leadership in nursing, identifying important aspects that require further investigation.

Contributions to nursing practice

With regard to the field of health, this review can contribute to greater professional investment, teaching, and research by identifying key elements that help to understand the concept of leadership in nursing that positively influence the dynamics of practice.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Leadership is a topic discussed worldwide in organizations. It requires nurses to develop their skills to act as leaders in hospitals where technological advances are growing every day.

Understanding the concept of leadership in nursing contributes to professional progress, process development, and improved outcomes in healthcare institutions.

The scope review allowed us to conclude that although leadership is a widely discussed topic in organizations and nursing worldwide, there was no standard concept for nursing leadership specific to hospital practice because the concept of leadership is related to multifaceted leadership styles and leader profiles.

The limitations of the study may be related to the small number of selected evidence, and it is noteworthy that many indirect citations of authors in these studies are more than ten years old. Another difficulty encountered was related to the different theoretical currents for analyzing the concept of leadership in nursing. Future investigations that include contexts other than hospitals and the development of primary studies on the concept of leadership in nursing are recommended.

It is proposed to develop studies that help identify the main characteristics of the concept of leadership in nursing to create a current concept of leadership in nursing through conceptual analysis, since concepts change according to contexts, situations, and time.

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