

## INTEGRATIVE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## Triggering factors of work-related stress in nursing: evidenced in literature

Fatores desencadeadores de estresse em profissionais de enfermagem no ambiente hospitalar: evidências da literatura

Factores desencadenantes de estrés en profesionales de enfermería en el ambiente hospitalario: evidencia de la literatura

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To reviews scientific literature regarding the factors that trigger stress in nurses in the hospital environment. **Method:** This is a qualitative study, a literature review, in the databases, BVS in its sub-bases LILACS and BDEFN, and in SCOPUS database. The articles were investigated in their entirety, in Portuguese, published between the years 2009 and 2013. **Results:** It was revealed that the most prevalent stressors in the hospital for nursing professionals are lack of professionalism, dissatisfaction with the profession, poor working conditions, lack of materials, scarce human resources and personal untrained, the division of labor, content of the task, the relations of power, hierarchy, and liability issues. **Conclusion:** To understand and analyze the factors that trigger stress is of great value to practitioners and institutions are essential for promoting worker health and improving the care provided by them. **Descriptors:** Nursing, Occupational health, Mental health, Psychological stress.

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Analisar a produção científica quanto aos fatores desencadeadores de estresse em profissionais de enfermagem no ambiente hospitalar. **Método:** Trata-se de estudo de cunho qualitativo, do tipo revisão da literatura, nas bases de dados BVS, em suas sub-bases LILACS e BDEFN, e na base de dados SCOPUS. Foram investigados artigos na íntegra, em português, publicados entre os anos de 2009 e 2013. **Resultados:** Revelou-se que os estressores mais prevalentes no ambiente hospitalar para os profissionais da enfermagem são a falta de profissionalismo, descontentamento com a profissão, falta de condições de trabalho, falta de materiais, recursos humanos escassos e pessoais não treinados, a divisão do trabalho, o conteúdo da tarefa, as relações de poder, a hierarquia, e as questões de responsabilidade. **Conclusão:** Conhecer e analisar os fatores desencadeadores de estresse é de grande valia para os profissionais e para as instituições sendo essenciais para a promoção da saúde dos trabalhadores e para a melhoria da assistência prestada por estes. **Descritores:** Enfermagem, Saúde do trabalhador, Saúde mental, Estresse psicológico.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Analizar la literatura científica acerca de los factores desencadena el estrés en profesionales de enfermería en el ámbito hospitalario. **Método:** Se trata de un estudio de carácter cualitativo, de revisión de la literatura, en las bases de datos BVS, en sus sub-bases LILACS y BDEFN, y la base de datos SCOPUS. Los artículos fueron investigados en su totalidad, en portugués, publicados entre los años 2009 y 2013. **Resultados:** Se reveló que los factores de estrés más frecuentes en el hospital para los profesionales de enfermería son la falta de profesionalismo, la insatisfacción con la profesión, las condiciones de trabajo deficientes, la falta de materiales, recursos humanos escasos y personal no entrenado, la división del trabajo, el contenido de la tarea, las relaciones de poder, la jerarquía, y las cuestiones de responsabilidad. **Conclusión:** Conocer y analizar los factores desencadenantes de estrés es de gran valor para los profesionales y las instituciones son esenciales para la promoción de la salud de los trabajadores y mejorar la atención recibida por estos. **Descritores:** Enfermería, Salud ocupacional, Salud mental, Estrés psicológico.

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## INTRODUCTION

The topic of Mental Health and Labor have been debated and studied in Brazil for a long time now however, the previously discussed problems persist. Today it is known that, the individual is exposed to various sociocultural factors, and that they are inserted a large world, therefore work is not excluded thus, consists of the same experiences. Changes in employment or in employment, such as promotions, transfers, restructuring, downgrades, shift supervisors, and additional responsibilities, often leads to anguish and anxiety, which are triggering factors of what is called stress nowadays.<sup>1,2</sup>

Stress is understood as the imbalance of the feeling of well-being that goes beyond the usual level of tolerance, as a result of work factors, and the imbalance between stress and support factors. It consists of the predisposition of the individual associated with environmental factors, in this study, work, which is an essential pathogenic determinant and situation of illness, and dismisses, often the individual's values, meanings, feelings, namely, subjectivity.<sup>1-5</sup>

The intense transformations experienced in the workplace, such as the increasing immateriality, the subjectivity of conduct and actions, and changes in the organizational work structure, contribute to the characteristic shape the quality of life of workers, for the construction of the ego and identity, obtaining pleasure, and feelings of belonging, triggering a multitude of activities in pursuit of recognition.<sup>6,7</sup>

In this context, we highlight the hospital environment as the trigger for mental suffering, by being identified as a painful and unhealthy environment. The nursing professional on a daily basis is faced with strenuous and stressful situations. It is known the need for interaction of  
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*Triggering factors of work-related stress...* factors and triggering events of stress, higher or lower quality, resulting from organizational structure factors with the coping resources as these would lead to improved patient stress or even its absence. Thus, focuses on the importance of detecting such inducing / triggering / trigger conditions effective for possible intervention.

Fears, struggles for power, long working hours, anxiety, coping with death, pain or suffering of others, which coupled with professional devaluation, low pay and poor conditions overwhelm coping resources of the professional precipitating physical and mental exhaustion. Experienced by the individual as a failure in adaptation to stress, causing physical exhaustion, reduced professional accomplishment depersonalization, and interfere with the quality of care provided to patients.<sup>8,9</sup>

Based on the object of this study, which is defined in the daily routine of nursing workers, and the factors that influence in their mental health, and on the considerations made has been drawn up the following guiding question: Which factors contribute to work-related stress in nursing? To answer this question it is proposed to carry out this review in order to examine the scientific literature regarding triggering factors of stress in nursing professionals within the hospital environment, in order to contribute to the construction of conditions and work environments with an emotional atmosphere committed to the professional's mental health.

Therefore, this study is justified by the fact that the work in addition to expressing the quotidian and be fundamental for the construction of subjectivity and identity of the individual and his collectivity, is also essential to social reproduction due be the main pillar of economic production of society. Contributing to the debate about the factors related to the mental suffering of the nursing worker enabling from the results

Sousa KHJF, Sales JCS, Fernandes AS, *et al.* obtained a more systemized knowledge of reality in which is inscribed the problem in question. Where we believe that the knowledge gained through this will subsidize decision-making, strengthening the health of the nursing staff, allowing the definition of actions that encourage interaction between public policy, research, business and practice, producing significant improvements in the area, as well as deepening their knowledge in this area.

## METHODOLOGY

This study has a qualitative approach aiming to establish the relationship of cause and effect between hospital environment and working conditions and psychological distress. The strategy used for this purpose was the bibliographic review of the literature that allows the perception of similarities and differences between the articles raised, providing a practice grounded in scientific evidence.<sup>10</sup>

This is integrative review, which was carried out in accordance with the following steps: selection of the thematic issue (elaboration of guiding question), establishment of criteria for inclusion and exclusion of articles, selection of items (sample selection), analyzing and interpreting the results.<sup>11</sup> The guiding question, the foundation of this study was: Which factors contribute to work-related stress in nursing?

The data collection was carried out in the database VHL (Virtual Health Library), in its sub-base LILACS (Latin American and Caribbean Literature in Health Sciences) and BDEF (Database of Nursing), using the descriptors controlled nursing, worker health, mental health and psychological stress, with the aid of Boolean algebra *and* ; and the SCOPUS using the descriptors controlled nursing, mental health and health of the worker, with the aid of the Boolean operator *J. res.: fundam. care. online 2013.dec. 5(6): 372-381*

*Triggering factors of work-related stress...* already mentioned; in the period of September to November 2013.

The sample selection criteria were addressing the thematic triggering factors of psychological distress in nurses, being complete and available in Portuguese, published in the last five years, from 2009 to 2013. Table 1 describes the progress made in the identification and selection of articles from the sample components. These were collected after the crossing of the descriptors mentioned above, in VHL 441 articles, which after refining, discarding those that were not complete, foreign language outside the period of five years, if remaining in LILACS-27, and 22 in BDEF after reading the summaries of them were selected for this scope, only, in Rev 07 and 04 in BDEF, because this study focused seek scientific evidence on the factors that trigger stress in professional nursing and the items excluded focused on another thematic that did not match our objective. The repeated Methodological Procedure was conducted in the SCOPUS database where by the crossing of descriptors, arose 316 articles, of which only 03 met the inclusion criteria described above.

**Table 1** - Search strategy in the database Sep/Nov, 2013

Databases	Descriptors	Articles found	Articles pre-selected	Sample
LILACS	Nursing; occupational health; mental health; psychological stress.	47	27	07
BDEF	Nursing; occupational health; mental health; psychological stress.	36	22	04
SCOPUS	Nursing, mental health, occupational health.	316	15	03
TOTAL		399	64	14

Source: Research data

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For the characterization of the selected studies, a data collection instrument was adapted<sup>4</sup><sup>5</sup>, containing items such as descriptors used, title, authors, and practice area, year of publication, language, outline, objectives, method, results, conclusion, recommendations, limitations and level of scientific evidence of the study, among others.

Subsequently, the critical reading in full of the 14 articles was done, and extraction of relevant information, which were organized in a concise form, to facilitate the access to the same, such as, year of publication, published journal, adopted method, geographic region and type of institution, whether public or private, in addition to the results and the main conclusions of each study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Within the period selected, the year 2010 was presented the most published papers, a total of 06, followed by the years 2011 and 2012 with 03 articles with 03 articles and 02 articles with 2009, respectively. Bringing to light the growing concern about the quality of health services, also constituted by the health of nurses, as well as expressing interest in investigating the working conditions and operating, promoting improvements in work environments.

Among the scientific journals that have published on the subject, the Journal of School Nursing of USP stood out, with 03 articles, followed by Latin American Journal of Nursing and Gaucho Journal of Nursing, totaling for both 04 articles. Other journals have stood out, among them, Electronic Journal of Mental Health, Alcohol and Drugs, Aquichán, Journal of Care Survey is Fundamental (online), Journal of Nursing UFPE (online), Mineira Journal of Nursing, Journal of Nursing Text Context, and Brazilian Journal of J. res.: fundam. care. online 2013.dec. 5(6): 372-381

*Triggering factors of work-related stress...* Epidemiology, together totaled 07 publications. Table 2 presents the items according to year of publication and scientific journal.

**Table 2** - Distribution of articles according to the year of publication, and scientific journal - BRAZIL - 2009 to 2013

No.	Year of Publication	Periodical
E1	2011	Latin American Journal of Nursing
E2	2012	Research Journal Care is Fundamental (online)
E3	2010	Gaucha Magazine Nursing
E4	2010	Aquichan
E5	2010	Journal of Nursing UFPE (online)
E6	2010	Journal of the USP School of Nursing
E7	2012	Mineira Journal of Nursing
E8	2011	Latin American Journal of Nursing
E9	2009	Journal of Nursing Text Context
E10	2011	Journal of the USP School of Nursing
E11	2009	Brazilian Journal of Epidemiology
E12	2010	Journal of the USP School of Nursing
E13	2010	Electronic Journal of Mental Health, Alcohol and Drugs
E14	2012	Gaucha Magazine Nursing

Source: Research data

In relation to the authors and type of study, it was observed that the authors have published more than one Article involving the same thematic, as the methodological approach the predominance is the qualitative (06), followed by cross-referencing (03), theoretical reflection (01), literature review (01), quantitative (01), cohort study (01), explanatory exploratory qualiquantitative (01). Therefore, it is important to emphasize that the majority of publications about stress triggers from the subjective and abstract viewpoint, rather than from the point of view measured in part by being the work, in contemporary times, devoid of objective behaviors and actions, and only, material. The results are shown in table 3.

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In qualitative studies, the topics most discussed were the relationship between work, health and illness, the triggering factors of work-related stress in nursing, and the importance of identifying and analyzing the triggering factors of stress and coping mechanisms.

**Table 3** - Distribution of selected articles, second authors and type of study - Brazil - 2009 to 2013

No.	Authors	Type of Study
E1	Mininel VA, Baptista PCP, Felli VEA	Qualitative
E2	Silvino ZR, Silva de Paula G, Silva JLL, Braga ALS	Qualitative
E3	Prestes FC, Beck CLC, Silva RM, Tavares JP, Camponogara S, Burg G	Qualitative
E4	Silva de Paula G, Reis JF, Dias LC, Dutra VFD, Braga ALS, Cortez EA	Explanatory exploratory qualiquantitative
E5	Martins CC, Valente GSC	Qualitative
E6	Martins JT, Robazzi MLCC, Bobroff MCC	Theoretical Reflection
E7	Rodrigues TDF	Literature review
E8	Urbanetto JS, Hoffmeister E, Negri BS, Pinheiro da Costa BE, Poli de Figueiredo CE	Transversal
E9	Kirchhof ALC, Magnago TSBS, Camponogara S, Griep RH, Tavares JP ET AL	Transversal
E10	Guido LA, Linch GFC, Pitthan LO	Quantitative
E11	Robaina JR, Lopes CS, Rotenberg L, Faerstein E, Fischer FM, Moreno CRC, Werneck GL, Chor D	Cohort Study
E12	Hanzelmann RS, Passos JP	Qualitative
E13	Secco IAO, Robazzi LCC, Souza FEA, Shimizu DS	Qualitative
E14	Versa GLGS, Murasaki ACY, Inoue KC, Melo WA, Faller JW, Matsuda LM	Transversal

Source: Research data

The majority of the articles are from the Southeast (05), demonstrating the concentration of publications on this topic in this region, and one article takes its as a study object 05 university hospitals, one in each region, plus another article studies two hospitals, one in the southern region, and another in the southeast, and the other 02 articles are only theoretical in nature, without reference to geographic region. These data allow us to infer that some peculiarities can be identified in some studies, such as the presence of endemic diseases in some professionals from the northern region; however, the triggers of stress are felt in

*Triggering factors of work-related stress...* any area, whether to a greater or lesser extent, and short or long-term consequences.

Regarding the differences between private and public institutions, only 01 study sought to identify the differences in public or private environmental stressors; emphasizes the number 10 articles against the backdrop of public institutions, and the context of an article convening the private institution SUS (Unified Health System), beyond, as cited in the previous variable 02 articles this condition does not apply, because these are theoretical studies.

In table 4, the triggering factors of work-related stress in nursing are presented.

**Table 4** - Triggering Factors of stress in nursing professionals within the hospital environment - Brazil - 2009 to 2013

No.	Triggering Factors of stress in nursing professionals in the hospital environment
E1	Regarding the hospital beds and the number of nursing staff, high demand and low availability of human and material resources, aggressive offensive posture and patients to staff, monotonous and repetitive work, anxiety, insecurity during performance of certain tasks, reducing the time of breaks, lack of autonomy and creativity, controlling attitude of leadership.
E2	Lack of professionalism, dissatisfaction with the profession, lack of incentives, lack of companionship and good judgment of colleagues.
E3	Suffering from another, coexistence with the death, feelings of impotence, aggressiveness and hostility of patients, disunity among colleagues, lack of involvement of some team members.
E4	Psychological Pressure, disunity of the nursing team, productivity per quantity of procedures, dissatisfaction with the job.
E5	Accumulation of functions, reduction of personal involvement in the work, the precarious working conditions, disabilities in the number of employees of the team, difficulty of coexistence with their colleagues.
E6	Bureaucracy/lack of professional autonomy, separation between inside and outside of work, dealing with the pain and suffering of individuals, daily contact with death.
E7	Reduced Number of employees and of material, work overload, many days of work without play, poor attendance and punctuality of colleagues, preparation of monthly scale, interpersonal relationships, coping with death, complex activities, exposure to biological hazards, dissatisfaction with work, precarious environment, changes imposed by innovation, inadequate remuneration, lack of time, lack of job security.
E8	Intense work pace, excessive demand for hospitalized patient's time to perform tasks, complexity of care, low levels of social interaction with colleagues and bosses.
E9	High demand work, income, multiple jobs, night work, low job control, low self-esteem, everyday situations work, concern with executing activities on time, physical demand.
E10	Time working at the same hospital, interpersonal relationship, distribution of tasks, personnel dimensioning.
E11	Stability in employment, socioeconomic status, work environment.
E12	Scenario of the nursing practice, working conditions, lack of materials, human resource scarce, untrained personnel, division of labor, hierarchical system, power relations, liability issues, feeling of dissatisfaction at work, lack of recognition, physical wear.
E13	Lack of recognition, relationships of power, duration of employment at same hospital, low autonomy, double shifts, exposure to biological materials.
E14	Satisfaction with income, night work, care activities of high complexity, working conditions, physical exhaustion.

Source: Research data

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This session intends to present the product of this review highlighting the main results and conclusions obtained from articles found; all 14 articles are detailed, by means of a synthesis, mentioning those most important considerations about the triggering stress factors of nursing professionals in the hospital environment.

The work has a psychological function and is one of the great foundations on the constitution of the subject and its network of meanings. This enables the construction of an armature for psychopathological decompensation (rupture of psychic equilibrium manifested by the appearance of a mental illness), therefore, the subject becomes able to control the pain through their defenses, and coping supports such as coworkers, without allowing decompensation.<sup>2,6</sup>

In studies concerning factors related to mental health worker, were revealed through the information extracted, which resentments, work pressure, fatigue, ambiguity in the relationship with their bosses, fear, distrust, depersonalization, feeling of worthlessness, are the major villains when it comes to mental health.<sup>4,6</sup>

Applying these concepts and factors for the hospital, has been among the stressors, the ones shown were the lack of professionalism, dissatisfaction with the profession, poor working conditions, lack of materials, scarce human resources and personal untrained, the division of labor, content of the task, the relations of power, hierarchy, and liability issues.

More than half of the sample of this research, articles E1, E2, E3, E6, E9, E06, E07, E08, E12, and E13, highlights the lack of recognition as one of the biggest stressors, being considered as a crucial element for professional satisfaction. It is blatantly obvious the influence of income on mental health, became evident the smaller the higher income is the prevalence of mental  
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*Triggering factors of work-related stress...* disorders, the latter being related to dissatisfaction with their salary, in the majority, causing another promoter, which is the search for other jobs, thus increasing the emotional load, generating wear in the biopsychosocial context, culminating in depersonalization and personal dissatisfaction.

The studies E2, E4, E5 and E7 emphasize, also, that the disunity among the professionals, in addition to be a stressor, it is an aggravating factor, when the co-existence of others, therefore, causes dissatisfaction regarding the care provided. Thus, the lack of communication, unethical conduct, use of defense mechanisms inadequate, and lack of cooperation, good sense and interest by the collectivity, make it difficult to satisfaction with the job, generating an environment conducive to the development of stress.

The studies E6, E7 and E14 showed that the ICU (Intensive Care Units) deserve special attention, because it is the biggest stressors among all units of hospitalization. They state, unit management issues, such as the small number of employees, days worked without clearance, poor attendance and punctuality of colleagues, also interpersonal relationships, whether between professionals or between professionals and families, where it is evident that the care of the family becomes a burden more on the mental health, while E3, E6 and E7 cite the studies dealing with death as one of the most difficult situations in the ICU, because professional experience them afraid that the same situation can happen with these. Thus, to added labor, critical and closed sector, disease severity, and management activities, as well as emotional and psychosocial aspects make the ICU a doubly critical sector, because it is a critical environment or through producing critical conditions for professionals who work in them.

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Another sector, shown by this sample, mainly in studies E5, E6, and E8, were the emergency units. With this study, it was observed that in emergency services to prevent or minimize the illness professional is necessary to identify the risks. It becomes evident from the studies, which the nurse's work is not only care, but also, bureaucratic, which is crucial factor for the mental health of nursing professionals. The precarious conditions of work, relationship difficulties with their colleagues, the reduction of feelings of success with the job, and above all, the minimum time for completion of the service, because it is an environment in which the accelerated pace is crucial to saving lives, are factors that cause damage to the mental health of professionals.

Study E3 stated that the work of nursing aims to care central to human being and his family, and thus, needed a complexity of actions and especially the love of work, aspects that go beyond the physical-organizational structure. They even cite that for the work in nursing, are necessary some priorities, first among them being the love that motivates and satisfies the professionals, recognition at work, the experiences of pleasure, the pleasure in helping the patient by means of pain relief, and the suffering, the pleasure of tranquility, and a duty free of complications; that will be ways of living and minimize the feelings of helplessness in the face of the suffering of another.

Comparing public and private services, study E14 evidence through the application of the Bianchi Stress Scale(BSS) in a sample of 26 nurses intensivists, being 14 of public institutions and 12 private institutions, that the working conditions of play important role in the development of stress, showing as being of low level stress direction in private institutions and medium-level in public institutions, this was also highlighted in studies E5, E11 and E12, highlighting that the precarious

*Triggering factors of work-related stress...* structures, favor the a reduced the pleasure, and development of stress among nursing professionals.

Several factors intrigue the minds of professionals. Thus, according to Dejourian perspective, one must consider many aspects when it comes to stress in nurses, i.e. break the Taylorist principles seeking new ways of working in the health of healthcare professionals. Therefore, to solve this problem or to prevent that this will not happen, it is necessary to consider the stress of nurses in order to understand their causes, contributing to create mechanisms for coping with effective, as is evident in study E6.

They are cognitive and behavioral efforts, educational actions, or collective reflections, as cited in the studies E10 and E11, providing not only a transfer of knowledge, but, above all, create strategies concerned with interpersonal relations, therefore, these influence in the nursing care. Thus, one sees that one of the best strategies to deal with the triggers of stress would be the meetings systematized of nursing staff, where they should be pointed out the feelings, the pleasures, the anxieties, conflicts and troubles, thus propitiating the minimization of stress and psychological distress.<sup>8,19</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Although the mental health of nursing professionals is, still a reality that generates many questions it is present in the Brazilian healthcare scenario. The bibliographic findings allowed us to say that this issue has been debated in recent years, proving by the number of twelve (12) publications between the years of 2010 and 2012, which, is the Journal of the USP School of Nursing, with 03 publications, and a qualitative methodological approach, with 06 publications, evidencing the interest of researchers and

Sousa KHJF, Sales JCS, Fernandes AS, *et al.* professionals of nursing by feelings and experiences meanings in their work environment.

The findings evidenced in studies, even being subjective information, represent experiences and experiences of workers, which enabled to identify the aspects that have been contributing to the stress, characterized by resentment, fatigue, fear, mistrust, depersonalization, feelings of worthlessness, in their majority of times come from unfortunate organization of work, and of their conditions.

In this regard, the work developed by the nursing staff, filled with ambiguous feelings, sometimes with experiences of pleasure and suffering, conducive to the emergence of emotional exhaustion, come from such practices, requiring being detected. Thus, to understand and analyze the factors that trigger stress is of great value to practitioners and institutions are essential for promoting the workerhealth of and to improve the care provided by them. These Actions that prioritize the mutual dialog and collective activities, strengthening the feeling of pleasure, and of the union, because it is well known that the interpersonal relationship negative in nursing team, and this with the multi professional team is one of the biggest contributors to the development of stress, because, besides being stressor, does not allow the creation of coping mechanisms, through active communication in the professional environment.

Thus, it is hoped that this study can contribute to the production of knowledge and in developing research counterparts that focus on the multidimensionality of insults to mental health of nursing workers.

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