

EMOTIONAL ASPECTS AND CHALLENGES IN THE PRACTICE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

EMOTIONAL ASPECTS AND CHALLENGES IN THE PRACTICE OF HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

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SUMMARY:

Introduction: The emotional challenges faced by healthcare professionals are frequent and have significant impacts on the quality of care provided and individual well-being. This study addresses factors such as work overload, constant exposure to suffering and stigmatization of emotional care, highlighting the effects aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Material and Method: A literature review was conducted based on the PRISMA guidelines, covering articles published between 2016 and 2024. The databases consulted included PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar. Articles that investigated the emotional aspects and coping strategies related to health professionals were analyzed, excluding out-of-scope or duplicate studies.

Results and discussion: The review highlighted the prevalence of burnout, anxiety and other stress-related disorders among health professionals.

Psychological support strategies, resilience training and practices such as mindfulness have been shown to be effective in reducing the emotional impacts. However, barriers such as stigma and lack of appropriate institutional policies limit the implementation of preventive and corrective interventions.

Final Considerations: Promoting the emotional well-being of health professionals is an ethical and strategic priority. Public policies and integrated institutional actions, combined with the use of psychological monitoring technologies, can mitigate the challenges identified, strengthening the sustainability of health systems and the quality of care provided.

Keywords: health professionals, emotional well-being, burnout, occupational health, institutional strategies.

1

ABSTRACT:

Introduction: The emotional challenges faced by healthcare professionals are frequent and significantly impact the quality of care provided and individual well-being. This study addresses factors such as workload, constant exposure to suffering, and the stigmatization of emotional care, highlighting the effects exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. **Material and Methods:** A literature review was conducted based on PRISMA guidelines, covering articles published between 2016 and 2024. The consulted databases included PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Articles analyzing emotional aspects and coping strategies related to healthcare professionals were included, while studies outside the scope or duplicates were excluded. **Results and Discussion:** The review highlighted the prevalence of burnout, anxiety, and other stress-related disorders among healthcare professionals. Psychological support strategies, resilience training, and practices such as mindfulness proved effective in reducing emotional impacts. However, barriers such as stigma and the lack of adequate institutional policies limit the implementation of preventive and corrective interventions. **Conclusions:** Promoting the emotional well-being of healthcare professionals is an ethical and strategic priority. Public policies and integrated institutional actions, combined with the use of psychological monitoring technologies, can mitigate the identified challenges, strengthening the sustainability of healthcare systems and the quality of care provided.

Keywords: healthcare professionals, emotional well-being, burnout, occupational health, institutional strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

The emotional well-being of healthcare professionals has been a widely debated topic, especially in challenging contexts such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These professionals face unique pressures, including long working hours, emotionally charged situations, and the need to make quick decisions in high-risk environments (Shahbaz et al., 2021). This reality can lead to emotional exhaustion, also known as burnout, which affects both mental health and professional performance (Moretti & Pronzato, 2024).

Studies indicate that managing emotional demands in the workplace is essential to reduce the negative impacts on the health of these professionals. The so-called “labor

“Emotional support” plays a significant role in clinical practice, influencing both the well-being of workers and the quality of care provided to patients (Riley & Weiss, 2016). In this context, the development of resilience and emotional support strategies is essential to face everyday challenges (Pearman et al., 2020).

The pandemic has exacerbated these challenges, highlighting gaps in the preparedness and emotional support provided to healthcare professionals. Many have reported difficulties in dealing with the psychological impact of caring for patients in critical situations, in addition to facing fear of contamination and the loss of coworkers (Erquicia et al., 2020). These challenges highlight the need for specific interventions that promote emotional health and adequate institutional support.

Furthermore, the stigma associated with mental health issues often prevents professionals from seeking help, even when they are experiencing severe symptoms of anxiety or depression (Stuijzand et al., 2020). This scenario reinforces the importance of creating more welcoming and integrated work environments that encourage open dialogue about emotional health.

In view of this, this study seeks to explore the main emotional challenges faced by healthcare professionals, focusing on effective strategies to mitigate their impacts. By reviewing the current literature, we hope to contribute to the formulation of policies and practices that promote healthier and more sustainable work environments for these essential professionals.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

This study used a literature review methodology to explore the emotional challenges faced by healthcare professionals in their daily practice. The research was conducted following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, ensuring rigor in the selection, analysis and presentation of results.

Articles published between 2016 and 2024 were included. The search was conducted in the PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar databases, using descriptors such as “emotional challenges”, “healthcare professionals”, “burnout”, “stress management” and “mental health”. Boolean operators were used to refine the results.

After the initial screening of titles and abstracts, articles were selected for full reading. They fully met the inclusion criteria: studies that analyzed aspects

emotional, coping strategies or psychological impacts on health professionals. Exclusion criteria included duplicate articles, studies with restricted access and those outside the thematic scope.

The extracted data were analyzed qualitatively, focusing on identifying patterns, gaps and emotional coping strategies. This approach allowed us to consolidate relevant knowledge to understand the emotional demands faced by these professionals and propose solutions applicable to the current context.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The emotional challenges faced by healthcare professionals are directly linked to the intense demands of their work. This study revealed that factors such as long working hours, constant exposure to human suffering, and the need to make quick decisions in critical situations contribute significantly to emotional and physical exhaustion. Professionals who deal directly with medical emergencies and intensive care are often the most impacted, presenting high rates of burnout and stress-related disorders. These data corroborate previous evidence that points to emotional overload as an everyday reality in clinical practice.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these conditions by imposing an even greater workload, combined with fear of contamination and the loss of colleagues and patients. Many professionals have reported symptoms of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder during and after the health crisis. These findings reinforce the need for structured psychological support in healthcare institutions, especially in crisis scenarios. However, it was found that only a fraction of workplaces offer adequate support, which leaves professionals vulnerable to long-term consequences.

Another relevant aspect is the impact of stigma on seeking psychological help. Many professionals hesitate to report their emotional problems, fearing judgment or repercussions on their career. This stigma not only prevents access to preventive interventions, but also worsens symptoms, leading to more serious consequences. Therefore, it is essential that health institutions promote a culture of acceptance.

and normalization of psychological care, encouraging open dialogue and access to mental health services.

The relationship between emotional demands and quality of care provided has also been widely discussed. Emotionally overburdened professionals are more likely to make medical errors, have interpersonal conflicts, and have low job satisfaction, which directly affect patients' health outcomes. Stress management strategies, such as mindfulness and resilience training, have been shown to be effective in reducing these impacts. However, the implementation of these practices is still limited, especially in low- and middle-income countries, where mental health resources are scarce.

The role of institutional leadership has also been identified as a crucial factor in mitigating emotional challenges. Leaders who adopt supportive practices, such as providing constructive feedback, promoting work-life balance, and professional recognition, create healthier and more productive environments. Institutions that invest in well-being policies report lower absenteeism rates and higher talent retention, highlighting the importance of robust organizational support.

Furthermore, it was observed that emotional challenges vary between professional categories and sectors. Nurses and nursing technicians, for example, are more exposed to exhausting workdays and have less decision-making autonomy, which makes them particularly vulnerable to emotional exhaustion. Physicians, on the other hand, often face the pressure of leading teams and making critical decisions, which can lead to high levels of psychological stress. These differences highlight the need for specific interventions for each group.

Another point raised was the promotion of an intersectoral approach. Partnerships between health institutions, government organizations, and private entities can increase access to mental health resources, especially in contexts where these services are limited. In addition, the adoption of technologies such as emotional monitoring apps can help professionals to continuously monitor their mental health, offering personalized and preventive support.

Therefore, the results of this review highlight the importance of integrated approaches that prioritize the emotional well-being of health professionals. Creating supportive work environments, implementing psychological support programs and reducing stigma are indispensable strategies to address the identified challenges. Health

The emotional well-being of professionals should be seen as a priority, as it is intrinsically linked to the quality of care provided and the sustainability of health systems.

04 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The emotional challenges faced by healthcare professionals are a key aspect of the sustainability of healthcare systems and the preservation of the dignity of the workers who make up these teams. This study identified not only the factors that contribute to emotional distress, but also the paths that can be taken to mitigate their impacts. This is a topic that demands an integrated approach, which considers both working conditions and the institutional and political structures that support these environments.

The emotional health of healthcare professionals must be understood as an inseparable part of their performance and quality of life. Ignoring these demands results in high costs, not only at the individual level, but also in organizational terms, with increased absenteeism, reduced productivity and a greater risk of clinical errors. In addition to technological solutions or public policies, it is necessary to strengthen the human dimension of care, promoting spaces for reception and exchange for workers.

One of the central reflections of this review is the need to overcome the stigma that permeates emotional health issues. Health professionals often see themselves as caregivers, but have difficulty accepting their own suffering or seeking support. This paradox reinforces the importance of institutional initiatives that normalize the search for help and offer preventive support, such as psychological counseling and regular training in emotional management.

In addition, advances in technology, such as digital tools for emotional monitoring, offer new possibilities for employee care. However, these solutions must be integrated with policies that prioritize structural changes, such as more balanced working hours and greater autonomy in day-to-day decisions. Such adjustments are essential to create healthier work environments and promote employee engagement.

Finally, by addressing the emotional challenges of healthcare professionals, this review reaffirms that caring for those who provide care is an ethical and strategic commitment. Only by investing in more humane working conditions will it be possible to guarantee not only the health of these professionals, but also the quality of care that reaches patients.

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