

# Human resources in nursing and quality of care in public hospitals: a systematic review

*Recursos humanos en enfermería y calidad de atención en hospitales públicos: una revisión sistemática*

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## Abstract

The quality of care in public hospitals is closely related to the management of human talent in nursing. Factors such as staffing, workload, and leadership directly influence the quality of patient care. In this context, the objective of this article was to analyze studies published between 2020 and 2025 on the relationship between human resource management in nursing and the quality of care in public hospitals in Latin America. To this end, a systematic review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 protocol guidelines, consulting databases such as PubMed, Scopus, SciELO, and Web of Science, and applying the PICO strategy to delimit the studies. A total of 56 articles that met the established inclusion criteria were selected. The findings were grouped into five thematic areas: staffing and workload, leadership, burnout, motivation, and perceived quality. The results showed a positive relationship between adequate nursing staff management and improved patient care, as well as an improved organizational climate. In conclusion, effective human talent management in nursing contributes significantly to strengthening the quality of care. It is recommended to promote leadership, continuing education, and improved working conditions as strategic pillars for optimizing public health services in the region.

**Keywords:** quality of care, human talent management, hospital nursing.

## Resumen

La calidad de la atención en los hospitales públicos está estrechamente relacionada con la gestión del talento humano en enfermería. Factores como la dotación de personal, la carga laboral y el liderazgo influyen directamente en la calidad del cuidado brindado al paciente. En este contexto, el presente artículo tuvo como objetivo analizar los estudios publicados entre 2020 y 2025 sobre la relación entre la gestión de los recursos humanos en enfermería y la calidad de la atención en hospitales públicos de América Latina. Para ello, se realizó una revisión sistemática conforme a las directrices del protocolo PRISMA 2020, consultando bases de datos como PubMed, Scopus, SciELO y Web of Science, y aplicando la estrategia PICO para la delimitación de los estudios. En total, se seleccionaron 56 artículos que cumplieron con los criterios de inclusión establecidos. Los hallazgos se agruparon en cinco ejes temáticos: dotación y carga laboral, liderazgo, burnout, motivación y calidad percibida. Los resultados evidenciaron una relación positiva entre una gestión adecuada del personal de enfermería y la mejora en la atención al paciente, así como en el clima organizacional. En conclusión, una gestión efectiva del talento humano en enfermería contribuye significativamente a fortalecer la calidad asistencial. Se recomienda

promover el liderazgo, la formación continua y la mejora de las condiciones laborales como pilares estratégicos para optimizar los servicios de salud pública en la región.

**Palabras clave:** calidad de atención, gestión del talento humano, enfermería hospitalaria.

## Introduction

The quality of healthcare is defined as the extent to which health services enhance the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes and meet professional standards. In this context, human resources in nursing play a vital role in ensuring safe, efficient, timely, and humane care. Factors such as clinical leadership, organizational climate, staffing levels, workload, and burnout are significant due to their impact on clinical performance and patient perception, although barriers that hinder optimal staff performance remain.

Internationally, institutions such as the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC, 2022) have proposed models of excellence, like the Magnet Model, which guide the management of safe, patient-centered care and are significant for training and professional development in nursing. Watson (2021) argues that nursing practices transcend technical aspects, embodying an ethical and humanistic commitment. Labrague and De los Santos (2021) emphasize that job motivation is key to optimal performance and high-quality care.

In various international contexts, Alilyyani et al. (2022) demonstrated that nurse satisfaction is related to the quality of care, while Alshammari et al. (2024) showed that trust, empathy, and cultural competence influence user satisfaction. In the Eastern Mediterranean, Isfahani et al. (2024) highlight that motivational and work-related factors are associated with service quality, and in Turkey, Karaman et al. (2024) underscore empathy and therapeutic communication as essential. In Australia and the United Kingdom, Shi et al. (2025) reported improvements in intensive care. In Brazil, Barreto et al. (2021) linked workload and the nurse-patient ratio to clinical outcomes, revealing deficits in safety and quality.

In Latin America, particularly in public hospitals, challenges persist, such as staff shortages, contractual instability, adverse working conditions, and lack of recognition, all exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted structural deficiencies in planning and sustaining human resources (Chávez Ordinola et al., 2024; Vergara et al., 2024). This results in staff burnout, a higher incidence of adverse events, and diminished quality of care.

Addressing this relationship is crucial for guiding public health decisions, formulating nursing employment policies, and promoting institutional improvement strategies that align hospital practice with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3 and SDG 8). Shanafelt et al. (2023) warn that healthcare worker burnout threatens the sustainability of health systems. Ríos and Mosca (2021) indicate that high turnover adversely affects organizational climate and patient safety. Rodríguez and Pérez (2022) highlight the importance of adequately planning human resources in Latin America, where gaps in staffing and management exist. Gonzales et al. (2023) demonstrate that transformational leadership positively impacts organizational culture and care quality.

Almeida and Torres (2021) confirm that burnout affects the quality of hospital care. Alejo (2024) and Verduga et al. (2024) assert that transformational and participative leadership styles enhance staff motivation and performance. Espinoza and Viteri (2022) and Ángel et al. (2020) provide evidence that organizational climate affects service quality, while García et al. (2025) link nursing leadership to safety culture. Regarding workload and emotional exhaustion, Carvajal et al. (2025), Narbona et al. (2025), Pérez and Bendezú (2025), and Cárdenas and Velasco (2023) agree that overload results in burnout and reduced care quality.

At the national level, Gallegos (2020) identified that insufficient staffing in MINSA hospitals affects care quality. Goicochea (2024) confirms gaps in nurse allocation. Vergara et al. (2024) and Guzmán et al. (2025) relate overload to adverse events, while Carvajal et al. (2025) and Quiñones et al. (2022) maintain that absenteeism and stress diminish hospital responsiveness.

Organizational climate and job satisfaction are also critical factors. Rodríguez and García (2023) and Chávez et al. (2023) show that a positive environment enhances quality perception; Ángel et al. (2020) confirms its correlation with care quality. Gómez et al. (2022) and Cañarte et al. (2025) indicate that professional burnout has increased, affecting care quality. Tapia et al. (2025) and Alkhalwaldeh and Albashtawy (2025) conclude that job satisfaction and incentives influence productivity and staff retention.

In the post-pandemic context, Chávez et al. (2024) and Del Valle (2021) underscore the need for public policies to ensure equity and fair distribution of human resources in nursing. Gonzales et al. (2023) highlight that adequate staffing impacts quality perception, while López (2023) argues that institutional incentives promote retention. Ojeda and Aguirre (2025) emphasize the importance of contractual stability; Martínez et al. (2023) discuss the influence of extrinsic motivation; and Ruiz et al. (2020) present a multidimensional view of quality as perceived by staff.

Various authors (Ríos and Mosca, 2021; Ponce and Franco, 2025; Puertas et al., 2020; Bracamonte and González, 2022; Fernández et al., 2022; Morales et al., 2025; Cabrera et al., 2024; Anderson et al., 2022) agree on the significance of continuous education, clinical leadership, and a humanistic approach as strategic pillars to strengthen hospital management and improve care quality.

The primary objective of this article is to analyze the scientific evidence published between 2020 and 2025 regarding the relationship between human resource management in nursing and the quality of care in public hospitals in Latin America, identifying the critical factors that influence this relationship.

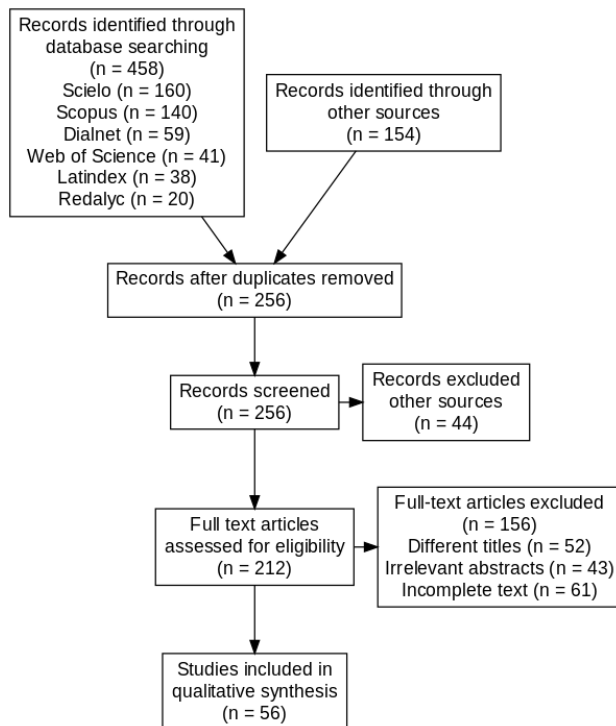
## Methodology

A systematic review was conducted following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, aiming to identify, classify, and analyze recent evidence concerning the relationship between human resource management in nursing and the quality of care in public hospitals in Latin America from 2020 to 2025. This methodological design ensured transparency, reproducibility, and rigor in the search and analysis process.

The search was performed across six reliable databases, initially identifying 612 articles: SciELO (26), Scopus (15), Dialnet (8), Web of Science (4), Latindex (2), and Redalyc (1). MeSH and DeCS descriptors in both Spanish and English were used to optimize the identification of the most relevant studies. After eight phases of refinement and selection, 56 articles that met the established criteria were included.

**Figure 1**

*Selection method using the PRISMA model*



The search string utilized was as follows:

“nursing” OR “nurse” OR “enfermería” OR “personal de enfermería”) AND (“human resources management” OR “gestión de recursos humanos” OR “recursos humanos en salud”) AND (“quality of care” OR “calidad de atención” OR “calidad asistencial”) AND (“public hospitals” OR “hospitales públicos” OR “servicios de salud pública”) AND (“burnout” OR “estrés laboral” OR “carga laboral” OR “clima organizacional” OR “satisfacción laboral” OR “rotación de personal”) AND (“Latin America” OR “América Latina” OR “Perú”).

Regarding the sources of the studies, research from various countries was included, with Peru having the highest representation at 18 articles. Studies were also incorporated from Chile (3), Argentina (2), Brazil (1), Colombia (2), Ecuador (6), Mexico (5), Jordan (1), the United Kingdom (2), Turkey (19), England (1), Saudi Arabia (1), the United States (2), and Spain (2). In total, 32 articles corresponded to international research, while 24 were from national studies, allowing for a comparative and contextualized view of the addressed topic.

The inclusion criteria were as follows:

1. Publications from 2020 to 2025, in either Spanish or English.
2. Studies with full text and peer review.
3. Articles of thematic relevance that explicitly analyzed nursing staff management and its impact on care quality.
4. Qualitative, quantitative designs, or integrative reviews.

Exclusions included:

1. Editorials, letters to the editor, brief communications, and theses.
2. Duplicate articles or those lacking methodological rigor.
3. Studies with approaches unrelated to the objectives of this work.

**Table 1**

*Description of the number of publications by year*

| Year of Publication | Quantity  |
|---------------------|-----------|
| 2020                | 8         |
| 2021                | 8         |
| 2022                | 7         |
| 2023                | 9         |
| 2024                | 10        |
| 2025                | 14        |
| <b>Total,</b>       | <b>56</b> |

The selection process was carried out in three phases:

1. Title review,
2. Abstract analysis, and
3. Full-text reading.

Two reviewers conducted the evaluation independently and blindly, resolving discrepancies through consensus. Zotero software was used for bibliographic management, and data organization was performed using thematic matrices in Microsoft Excel.

The analysis was developed qualitatively, considering the objectives, findings, and thematic categories of each study. The emerging categories were organized around five main analytical axes:

1. Staffing and workload,
2. Leadership and organizational climate,
3. Burnout and absenteeism,
4. Motivation and recognition, and
5. Perception of quality.

These axes facilitated the systematization of available evidence and the understanding of the critical factors linking human resource management in nursing to care quality in public hospitals in Latin America.

## Results

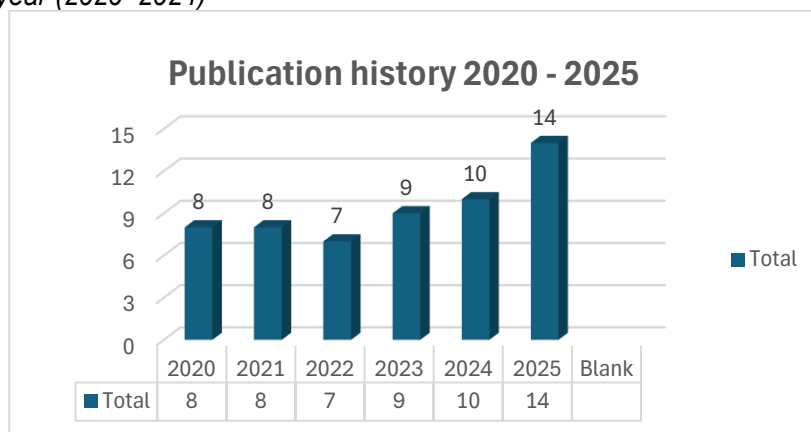
This systematic review included a total of 56 scientific articles, selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria defined in the methodology. The findings were organized into five main thematic categories, identified through content analysis:

1. Staffing and workload,
2. Leadership and organizational climate,
3. Burnout and absenteeism,
4. Motivation and institutional recognition, and
5. Quality as perceived by users and professionals.

A concentration of publications was observed between the years 2020 and 2024, with a peak in production in 2023, indicating a growing interest in the topic in the post-pandemic context. This increase reflects heightened institutional concern regarding the effects of working conditions on the quality of healthcare (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Frequency of articles by year (2020–2024)*



Concerning thematic distribution, the category with the highest number of studies was burnout, work stress, and care quality, followed by staffing and workload. This pattern clearly shows a trend towards exploring the effects of workload overload and emotional exhaustion on nursing staff performance and its impact on patient care (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Frequency of articles by thematic category*

| Thematic category   | Quantity  |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Hospital management | 3         |
| Human talent        | 5         |
| Care quality        | 10        |
| Satisfaction        | 8         |
| Burnout             | 12        |
| Workload            | 9         |
| Work stress         | 10        |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>56</b> |

Additionally, the analysis allowed for the grouping of studies by publication source, highlighting that the SciELO database contained the largest number of articles published in 2023 and 2024, while Scopus registered a notable increase in 2025 (see Table 3).

**Table 3.**  
*Articles published by year in databases*

| Year         | SCIELO    | SCOPUS    | Dialnet  | Web of Science | Latindex | Redalyc  | Total     |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 2020         | 4         | 1         | 1        | 1              | 1        |          | 8         |
| 2021         | 4         | 3         |          | 1              |          |          | 8         |
| 2022         | 2         | 1         | 2        | 1              |          | 1        | 7         |
| 2023         | 6         | 3         |          |                |          |          | 9         |
| 2024         | 6         | 3         |          |                | 1        |          | 10        |
| 2025         | 4         | 4         | 5        | 1              |          |          | 14        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>26</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>4</b>       | <b>2</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>56</b> |

Finally, the results indicate that 2024 and 2025 were the years with the highest percentage of publications related to the study variable, confirming an upward trend in scientific production concerning human resource management in nursing and its relationship with the quality of care in public hospitals in Latin America.

### Discussion

The results of this systematic review reveal a direct correlation between human resource management in nursing and the quality of care in public hospitals in Latin America. The five identified categories—staffing and workload, leadership and organizational climate, burnout and absenteeism, motivation and recognition, and perceived quality—reinforce previous findings while providing updated post-pandemic evidence regarding structural challenges and opportunities for institutional improvement.

The high frequency of studies on burnout and work stress aligns with existing literature that warns of health staff's emotional exhaustion due to excessive workload, lack of rest, and precarious contractual conditions (Shanafelt et al., 2023; Cueva et al., 2022). This situation intensifies when staffing levels are insufficient, as it is associated with a higher incidence of adverse events and lower user satisfaction (Goicochea Tipismana, 2024; Santander & Palma, 2025).

Regarding leadership, transformational leadership is observed to protect against professional burnout and improve the organizational climate (Alejo, 2024; González et al., 2023). Hospitals that promote participative leadership and continuous training achieve greater commitment, motivation, and retention among staff (Ríos & Mosca, 2021; Verduga et al., 2024), in line with international models such as the Magnet Model from ANCC (2020), which encourages empowerment and innovation in management.

As for motivation and recognition, non-monetary incentives—such as professional acknowledgment, autonomy, and participation in decision-making—foster staff retention and strengthen the sense of belonging (Martínez et al., 2023; Alkhaldeh & Albashtawy, 2025), demonstrating that a healthy work environment depends on the overall well-being of human resources, not merely on physical or technological resources.

The quality perceived by both users and professionals emerges as a cross-cutting category, influenced by the aforementioned factors. In contexts characterized by a balance between workload, effective leadership, and contractual stability, improvements are reported in patient experience and the perception of care received (Ángel et al., 2020; Ruiz et al., 2020), aligning with user-centered care and the objectives of SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being).

Overall, the results underscore the need to strengthen institutional policies aimed at emotional well-being, burnout prevention, and enhancement of working conditions. Institutions must offer stable jobs, efficient organization, and close, motivating leadership. Valued and supported professionals provide more humane, safe, and quality care.

Finally, this study opens new lines of research on human resource management models adapted to Latin American contexts, considering the sociocultural, organizational, and structural particularities of each country.

## Conclusions

The findings of this systematic review indicate that burnout, excessive workload, and staff turnover continue to be critical challenges compromising both patient safety and the professional performance of nursing staff. These issues are exacerbated in contexts lacking clear institutional strategies aimed at emotional well-being or sustainable psychosocial support policies.

Moreover, the evidence demonstrates that transformational and participative leadership approaches have a positive impact on motivation, retention, and commitment within the nursing team, especially when accompanied by continuous training programs, institutional recognition, and effective communication. These elements emerge as protective factors against emotional exhaustion and promote an organizational culture based on trust, respect, and collaboration.

The perceived quality of health services does not solely depend on physical or technological resources but fundamentally on the commitment and well-being of nursing staff, whose attitudes and performance are directly influenced by how they are managed, valued, and supported within the work environment. In this regard, human resource management should be viewed as a strategic axis of hospital policy, rather than merely an administrative or operational function.

Ultimately, the findings illustrate that burnout, excessive workload, and poor organizational climate are not mere statistics but realities that profoundly affect the health, motivation, and lives of nursing professionals. The case of Peru, with 18 identified studies, reflects greater visibility of the problem and a growing concern for improving working conditions in the public sector. In contrast, countries such as Ecuador, Mexico, and Spain present fewer studies, even though they face similar structural challenges.

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