



REVIEWS

Professional moral identity in Nursing higher education: a Scoping Review

Identidad moral profesional en la formación superior de Enfermería: Revisión de Alcance

Identidade moral profissional na formação superior em Enfermagem: Revisão de Escopo

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ABSTRACT:

Introduction: Nurses' professional moral identity is continuously developed during academic training, being influenced by ethical, social and structural aspects. Understanding this process is essential to strengthen professional education and ethical Nursing practices.

Objective: To map the scientific production on professional moral identity in Nursing education, identifying concepts, influences, challenges and strategies discussed in the literature.

Material and Method: A scoping review conducted according to the Joanna Briggs Institute guidelines and the PRISMA-ScR checklist. The searches in 11 databases retrieved 2,543 studies, of which 58 met

the inclusion criteria. The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis. **Results:** Professional moral identity is shaped by academic training, professional socialization in health services and ethical dimensions experienced during undergraduate education. Integrated curricula, diverse clinical experiences and interaction with faculty and nurses foster moral identity development. Barriers such as the gap between theory and practice, faculty overload, fragmented curricula and lack of professional recognition hinder this process. Three thematic categories emerged: (1) Influencing factors for professional moral identity development; (2) Promoting professional moral identities; (3) The limited reality.

Conclusions: Nurses' professional moral identity construction process is dynamic and multidimensional. In order to strengthen this process, it is necessary to foster integrated curricula, adopt active learning methodologies, expand supervised clinical opportunities and implement educational policies that enhance the value of Nursing.

Keywords: Professional Identity; Nursing Ethics; Nursing Education; Nursing Role.

RESUMEN:

Introducción: La identidad moral profesional de la Enfermería se construye de manera continua durante la formación académica, influenciada por aspectos éticos, sociales y estructurales. Comprender este proceso es fundamental para fortalecer la formación profesional y la práctica ética en Enfermería.

Objetivo: Mapear la producción científica sobre identidad moral profesional en la formación de enfermeros, identificando conceptos, influencias, desafíos y estrategias abordados en la literatura.

Material y Método: Revisión de alcance según las directrices del Instituto Joanna Briggs y la lista de verificación PRISMA-ScR. La búsqueda en 11 bases de datos resultó en 2543 estudios, de los cuales 58 cumplieron con los criterios de inclusión. Los datos fueron analizados mediante Análisis Temático Reflexivo de Braun y Clarke.

Resultados: La identidad moral profesional está influenciada por la formación académica, la socialización en los servicios de salud y las dimensiones éticas vivenciadas durante la carrera de pregrado. Planes de estudio integrados, experiencias clínicas diversas e interacción con docentes y enfermeros favorecen la construcción moral. Obstáculos como desconexión entre teoría y práctica, sobrecarga docente, planes de estudio fragmentados y desvalorización de la profesión limitan este proceso. Categorías temáticas identificadas: (1) Influencias para el desarrollo de la identidad moral; (2) Promoción de identidades morales profesionales; (3) Desafíos estructurales que limitan su consolidación.

Conclusiones: La construcción de la identidad moral profesional en Enfermería es un proceso dinámico y multidimensional. Para consolidarla, se recomienda fortalecer planes de estudio integrados, adoptar metodologías activas, ampliar oportunidades de práctica supervisada e implementar políticas educativas que valoren la profesión de Enfermería.

Palabras clave: Identidad Profesional; Ética en Enfermería; Educación en Enfermería; Rol de la Enfermería.

RESUMO:

Introdução: A identidade moral profissional do enfermeiro é construída de forma contínua durante a formação acadêmica, influenciada por aspectos éticos, sociais e estruturais. Compreender esse processo é fundamental para fortalecer a formação profissional e a prática ética em enfermagem.

Objetivo: Mapear a produção científica sobre identidade moral profissional na formação de enfermeiros, identificando conceitos, influências, desafios e estratégias abordados na literatura.

Material e Método: Revisão de escopo conduzida conforme as diretrizes do Instituto Joanna Briggs e checklist PRISMA-ScR. A busca em 11 bases de dados resultou em 2.543 estudos, dos quais 58 atenderam aos critérios de inclusão. Os dados foram analisados por meio da Análise Temática Reflexiva de Braun e Clarke.

Resultados: A identidade moral profissional é influenciada pela formação acadêmica, socialização nos serviços de saúde e dimensões éticas vivenciadas na graduação. Currículos integrados, experiências clínicas diversificadas e interação com docentes e enfermeiros favorecem a construção moral. Barreiras como desconexão entre teoria e prática, sobrecarga docente, currículos fragmentados e desvalorização da profissão comprometem esse processo. Três categorias temáticas sintetizaram os achados: (1) influências para o desenvolvimento da identidade moral; (2) promoção de identidades morais profissionais; (3) desafios estruturais que limitam sua consolidação.

Conclusão: A construção da identidade moral profissional em enfermagem é dinâmica e multidimensional. Para consolidá-la, recomenda-se fortalecer currículos integrados, adotar metodologias ativas, ampliar oportunidades de prática supervisionada e implementar políticas educacionais que valorizem a enfermagem.

Descritores: Identidade Profissional; Ética em Enfermagem; Educação em Enfermagem; Papel do Profissional de Enfermagem.

INTRODUCTION

From the perspective of the Sociology of Professions, Nursing gained profession status thanks to certain attributes, such as dexterity in a specialized knowledge *corpus*, community service, professional autonomy and adherence to an ethics code⁽¹⁾. These attributes should be reinforced as foundational elements of the care quality that identifies the profession, with ethical-moral values that guide professional actions⁽²⁾.

Nurses' professional identity construction is a continuous process initiated in family and school socialization, consolidated in academic training and improved in the clinical practice. In addition to showing nurses' identity, this process also strengthens legitimacy of the profession before society^(3,4).

From a global perspective and despite the accentuated differences across health contexts and systems, Nursing enjoys positive recognition in its identity. This is especially true when it is recognized as autonomous and with a broad, complex and diversified knowledge *corpus*⁽²⁾.

By means of a scoping review, this study seeks to synthesize the main concepts and challenges addressed in the literature, providing insights to improve future nurses' training. Consequently, incorporating professional, cohesive and shared moral identities promotes collective understanding about who we are and how we should behave⁽⁵⁾, fundamental aspects to promote ethical-moral values, social responsibility and professional empathy^(3,6).

Despite the progress achieved by Nursing as an autonomous profession, nurses' professional moral identity development still faces challenges related to academic socialization and in practice fields, to teaching Ethics and to the structural conditions of training programs. Different approaches in the literature discuss this topic; however, there are still gaps on how professional moral identity is constructed throughout undergraduation and the factors that influence this process.

Given the aforementioned, this review study seeks to answer the following guiding question: Which is the current scientific knowledge about moral identity construction in nurses' training? Therefore, the objective is to map the scientific production about moral identity in nurses' training, identifying concepts, influences and challenges addressed in the literature.

MATERIAL AND METHOS

This study is a scoping review, with the objective of mapping the concepts that ground a research field, in addition to clarifying the definitions and/or delimitations of a specific topic. The Joanna Briggs Institute recommendations were followed to conduct the research, involving the following stages: Defining the research objective and question; Determining the inclusion criteria; Approach to searching, selecting and extracting data; Presentation of the evidence; Data analysis; Synthesis; and Presentation⁽⁷⁾.

The guiding question for this study was prepared using the PCC mnemonic strategy (Population, Context, Concept), where: P=Higher Education Nursing students; C=Moral

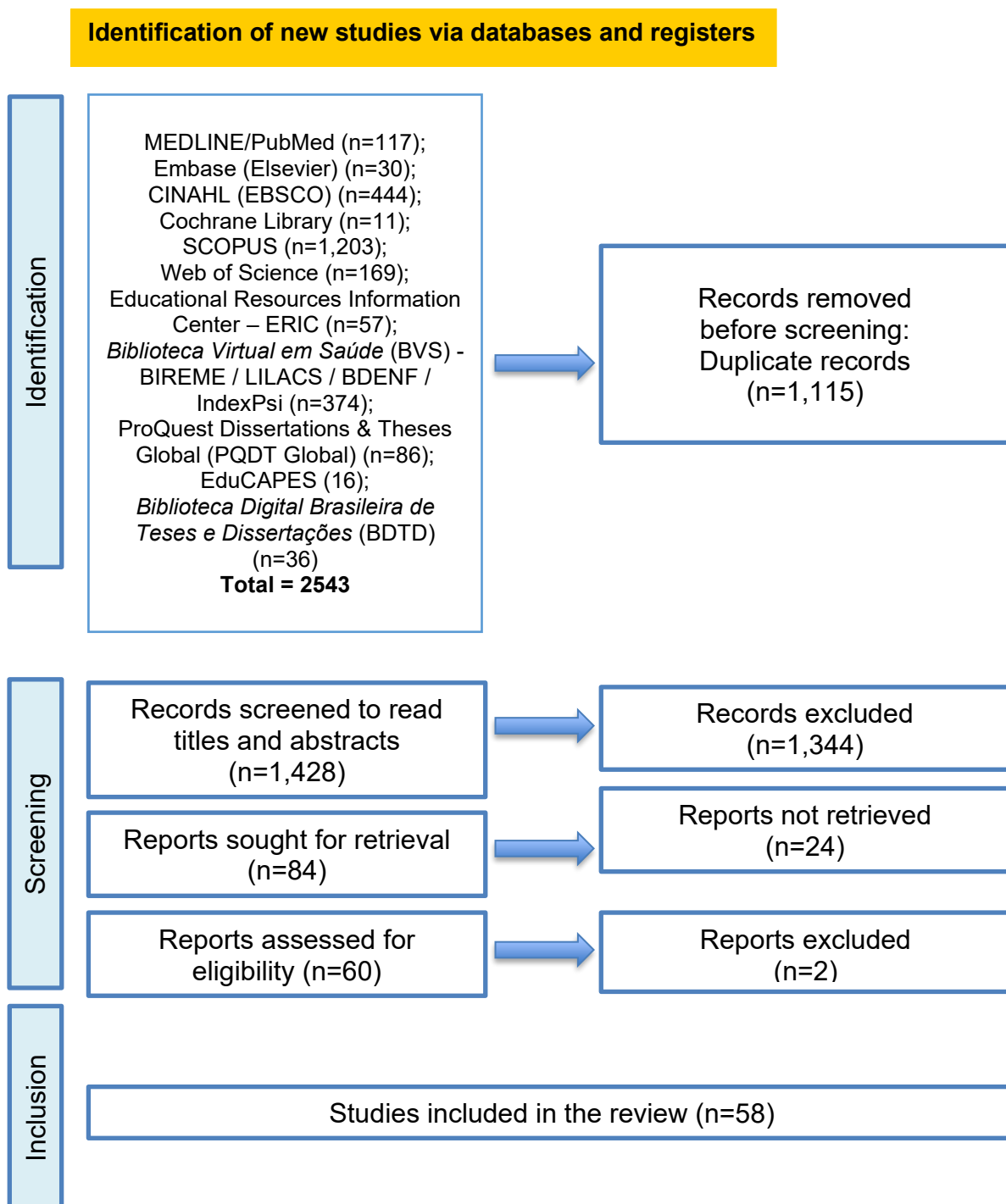
identity; and C=Professional Nursing undergraduate training. Thus, the following research question was formulated: “Which is the scientific production on professional moral identity in the training of Higher Education Nursing professionals?”

All the evidence was extracted from the following databases: MEDLINE/PubMed (via the National Library of Medicine); Embase (Elsevier); CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature – EBSCO), Cochrane Library, Scopus (Elsevier); Web of Science – Main Collection (Clarivate Analytics); Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC); *Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde* (BVS), including *Literatura Latino-Americana e do Caribe em Ciências da Saúde* (LILACS), *Base de Dados de Enfermagem* (BDENF) and IndexPsi, coordinated by *Biblioteca Regional de Medicina* (BIREME); ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global (PQDT Global); CAPES Journals Portal (EduCAPES); and *Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações* (BDTD).

The search was made in July 2024 via the UFSC Federated Academic Community (*Comunidade Acadêmica Federada*, CAFE) in the CAPES Journals portal, yielding a total of 2,543 studies. Descriptors in Health Sciences (*Descritores em Ciências da Saúde*, DeCS) were selected in Portuguese, English and Spanish, combined with Boolean operators (AND and OR) according to each database. The inclusion criteria corresponded to all studies available in full, with free access, in all languages and with no time restrictions. Duplicate studies and those not aligned with the scope of this review were excluded from the analysis, in addition to materials not available in full.

In order to organize the study inclusion and exclusion process, a flowchart (Figure 1) was prepared following the *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses – Extension for Scoping Reviews* (PRISMA-ScR) guidelines⁽⁸⁾, ensuring transparency in selecting the articles analyzed.

Figure 1: Flowchart showing the process to select the articles included in the study, according to PRISMA-ScR. Florianópolis, Brazil, 2024.



Source: Prepared in *Rayyan*®, adapted by the authors.

The search protocol was prepared with the help of a librarian, who also assisted in conducting the searches in the aforementioned databases, ensuring an encompassing search strategy. In addition to that, it was registered on the Open Science Framework (OSF) platform and can be accessed at the following link: https://osf.io/v6ksn/?view_only=6620774b7674479887253a873942d3ac.

The results obtained from the databases were exported to the *Rayyan*® reference manager (professional version) developed by the *Qatar Computing Research Institute* (QCRI) to remove duplicates and select/screen the studies. The screening process was performed independently and simultaneously by two researchers, solving any and all divergences by involving a third evaluator. The first phase consisted in reading titles and abstracts; the studies that met the inclusion criteria were forwarded to a second phase, which involved full reading. Finally, manual searches were made in the references of the studies included⁽⁹⁾.

The studies selected were thoroughly reviewed to identify and organize the most relevant aspects in *Microsoft Excel*® spreadsheets. The data extracted were organized to map the sample profile according to title, authors, country, language, publication year, study type and methodological approach, main characteristics and data collection techniques. It was also sought to identify which theories and concepts adopted in the studies anchored professional moral identity development, with more or less specific approaches, either isolated or in sets. Based on the objectives set forth in the studies, the scope trends for knowledge production were evidenced; in turn, the results and final considerations allowed defining which of the main findings directly or indirectly explored the object of this review. Specifically for the analysis of the results and final considerations/conclusions of the studies, Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis⁽¹⁰⁾ was used as methodological contribution, as it allows identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (topics) in the data.

RESULTS

A total of 2,544 pieces of evidence were identified; after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 58 of those studies were selected for this research. Table 1 presents a preliminary characterization of the studies.

Table 1: Characterization corresponding to the Scoping Review sample according to publication year, authors, title and source, country, study type, participants and data collection. Florianópolis, Brazil, 2024.

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
11	1983 Clay M, Povey R, Clift S. <i>Moral reasoning and the student nurse. Journal of Advanced Nursing</i>	England/ English	Review	N/A	N/A	Moral competencies	The study advocates incorporating moral training to Nursing curricula and discussing ethical dilemmas as a pedagogical strategy to stimulate moral reasoning in the students.
12	1988 Hilbert G.A. <i>Moral development and unethical behavior among nursing students. Journal of Professional Nursing</i>	USA/ English	Quantitative, observational and cross-sectional	Students attending first and last year	Short version of the Defining Issues Test (DIT) Hilbert's Unethical Behavior Survey (HUBS)	Moral development	A negative correlation is identified between moral judgment level and unethical behaviors in Nursing students. Better moral reasoning development is associated with lower incidence of unethical actions. Educational strategies are recommended to strengthen ethical conscience and/or moral judgment.
13	1990 Wehrwein TAC. <i>Moral reasoning and ethical decision-making in beginning baccalaureate nursing students. Wayne State University</i>	USA/ English	Quantitative, descriptive and correlational	Students attending the first and last semesters	Defining Issues Test (DIT) Judgments About Nursing Decisions (JAN D) Demographic profile	Moral development Moral competencies	Previous ethical training is associated with better ethical decision levels in Nursing students. Experience in the health area offers positive contributions to performance. There is no consistent relationship between schooling level and moral reasoning.

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
14 1992	Weber JR. <i>Teaching Moral Reasoning to Student Nurses. Journal of Holistic Nursing</i>	USA/ English	Reflection	N/A	N/A	Moral competencies	The challenge of integrating moral reasoning teaching to Nursing courses is noted, given overloaded curricula and complex clinical dilemmas. The use of active pedagogical strategies is advocated.
15 1994	Wrońska I, Baajer M. <i>Is Moral Education of Nurses Still Possible? Nursing Ethics</i>	Poland/ English	Qualitative, descriptive and exploratory	Nursing students attending 5 th year Nursing professors	Naire questionnaire with closed, multiple-choice and open questions	Professional moral identity Moral sensitivity	Associated with fear of unemployment, decreased motivation among Nursing students evidences the need for moral education that develops ethical conscience, independent thinking and personal responsibility in professional choices and training.
16 1995	Day RA, et al. <i>Students' evolving beliefs about nursing: from entry to graduation in a four-year baccalaureate programme Nurse Education Today</i>	Canada/ English	Qualitative, descriptive and longitudinal	Students attending 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd and 4 th year	Interviews following a semi-structured script	Professional moral identity	Nursing students undergo a professional socialization process throughout their undergraduate studies, shifting from a lay view to professional identity, preserving idealism but incorporating more realism.
17 1995	Phil DDTD. <i>A sociological analysis of the extent and influence of</i>	Australia/ English	Quantitative, descriptive and cross-sectional	Students attending 1 st and 3 rd year	Online questionnaire	Professional moral identity	Nursing students undergo an intense professional socialization process in which they internalize norms, values and characteristics

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
	<i>professional socialization on the development of a nursing identity among nursing students at two universities in Brisbane, Australia. Journal of Advanced Nursing</i>						inherent to the profession, resulting in a strong professional identity and in diverse evidence of high socialization levels in different university contexts.
18 1998	Arangie-Harrell PAM. <i>Moral development among college nursing students: Cognitive and affective influences. The University of Memphis</i>	USA/ English	Quantitative, observational and longitudinal	Students in general	<i>Defining Issues Test (DIT) How Is Your Logic? (HIYL test) Test Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal Form A (WGCTA) Measure of Emotional Empathy (MEE) Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (RSE)</i>	Moral development	Nursing curricula are associated with enhanced moral reasoning over time, possibly favored by exposure to ethical dilemmas; however, this progress takes place regardless of other cognitive variables and concomitantly to certain decline in critical thinking, suggesting tensions between moral training and prescriptive academic demands.

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
19 1998	Lewis MA. <i>An examination of the role of learning environments in the construction of nursing identity. Nurse Education Today</i>	United Kingdom/ English	Reflection	N/A	N/A	Moral development Professional moral identity	Professional identity construction in Nursing and shaping of concepts take place in an interactive and complex way, mediated by social relations in learning environments.
20 2001	Silva EV, Kirschbaum DI. <i>Elements that define the identity of nurses according to undergraduate students. Revista Gaúcha de Enfermagem</i>	Brazil/ Portuguese	Qualitative, descriptive and exploratory	Students attending 3 rd year	Interviews following a semi-structured script	Professional moral identity	Although not conceptually defined, the professional identity of nurses undergoing training processes is strongly associated with “doing” and with care, revealing weak understanding about “care”.
21 2004	Auvinen J, et al. <i>The development of moral judgment during nursing education in Finland. Nurse Education Today</i>	Finland/ English	Quantitative, observational and cross-sectional	Students attending first and last year	Defining Issues Test (DIT)	Moral development Moral competencies	Nursing students attending the last year present more developed moral judgment and greater use of principles-based reasoning when compared to those in first year, suggesting that Nursing training exerts a positive effect on moral judgment development.
22 2004	Lemonidou C, et al. <i>Moral professional personhood: Ethical reflections during initial clinical encounters in</i>	Greece/ English	Qualitative, with a phenomenological approach	Students in general	Experiences diary	Moral development Professional moral identity	Nursing students' ethical experience in their initial clinical practices involves progressive development of moral conscience, triggered by empathy with patients and

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
	<i>nursing education. Nursing Ethics</i>						culminating in shaping personal values and an emerging professional morality permeated by empathy, care and emotion.
23 2004	Kim YS, et al. <i>A longitudinal study on the development of moral judgement in Korean nursing students. Nursing Ethics</i>	South Korea/ English	Quantitative, observational and longitudinal	Students attending the first period	Defining Issues Test (DIT)	Moral development	A slight increase in Nursing students' moral judgment was noticed throughout undergraduation, suggesting a possible influence of such training on morality development.
24 2005	Stockhausen LJ. <i>Learning to become a nurse: Students' reflections on their clinical experiences. Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing</i>	Australia/ English	Qualitative, descriptive and exploratory	Students in general	Experiences diary Group debriefing	Moral development	Nursing students' learning in clinical contexts is mediated by their interaction with patients and nurses, as well as by the progressive construction of their professional identity, noting the central role of the emotional care experience and of nurses' performance in shaping "nurses-to-be".
25 2005	Grealish L, Trevitt C. <i>Developing a professional identity: student nurses in the workplace. Contemporary nurse: a journal for the</i>	USA/ English	Qualitative, descriptive and exploratory	Students in general	Interviews Focus groups Workshop	Professional moral identity	Nursing students undergo certain disharmony between theory and practice, face difficulties creating meaning in clinical practices and need support to develop their professional identity.

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
	<i>Australian nursing profession</i>						
26 2007	Wirtz EF, Palmer B. <i>The moral integrity development of nursing students in two-year colleges. Montana State University</i>	USA/ English	Quantitative, causal-comparative and cross-sectional	Students attending first and last year	Rest's Defining Issues Test - 2 (DIT - 2)	Moral development	Nursing students present differences in terms of moral judgment development between the first and last years of the course. They evidence influences exerted by age and previous academic experience; in turn, gender, experience in the health area and academic performance show no significant impact.
27 2011	Bang KS, et al. <i>Professional values in Korean undergraduate nursing students. Nurse Education Today</i>	South Korea/ English	Quantitative and cross-sectional	Students attending second and last year	Nursing Professional Values Scale (NPVS) Sociodemographic questionnaire	Moral development	The perception of professional values in Nursing students is higher among those who chose the area out of vocation and a genuine intention of undergoing advanced training.
28 2012	Park M, et al. <i>The relationship of ethics education to moral sensitivity and moral reasoning skills of nursing students. Nursing Ethics</i>	South Korea/ English	Quantitative, observational, cross-sectional and correlational	Students attending 1 st and 4 th year	Korean Moral Sensitivity Questionnaire (K-MSQ) Korean Defining Issues Test (KDIT)	Moral development Moral sensitivity	Nursing students in more advanced stages present greater moral sensitivity and principles-based reasoning, especially when exposed to heavier hour loads of ethical contents in the curriculum, indicating that Nursing training exerts a positive impact on moral development.

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
29 2012	Johnson M, et al. <i>Professional identity and nursing: Contemporary theoretical developments and future research challenges. International nursing review journal</i>	Australia/ English	Review	N/A	N/A	Professional moral identity	Professional moral identity in Nursing is a dynamic construct that is developed throughout life, strongly influenced by training and clinical experience.
30 2013	Worthington M, et al. <i>Predictive validity of the Macleod Clark Professional Identity Scale for undergraduate nursing students. Nurse Education Today</i>	Australia/ English	Quantitative, observational and longitudinal	Students attending 1 st year	Macleod Clark Professional Identity Scale (MCPIS-9)	Professional moral identity	The study assessed the predictive validity of the Macleod Clark Professional Identity Scale for undergraduate Nursing students. The results indicated an association between professional identity and intention to stay in the course/profession.
31 2014	Hensel D, Laux M. <i>Longitudinal study of stress, self-care, and professional identity among nursing students. Nurse Educator</i>	USA/ English	Quantitative, observational and longitudinal	Students attending 1 st and 2 nd year	Nurse Self-Concept Questionnaire (NSCQ) Health Promoting Lifestyle Profile II (HPLPII) Perceived	Moral development Professional moral identity	Professional moral identity development in Nursing students throughout training is associated with personal spiritual growth and with the perception regarding care competence. Care and spirituality remain central to the construction of "feeling as a nurse" when entering the professional practice.

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
					Stress Scale (PSS)		
32 2014	Oliveira MS. <i>Estudo sobre o desenvolvimento da competência moral na formação do enfermeiro.</i> FIOCRUZ/UFRJ/UFF/ UERJ	Brazil/ Portuguese	Quantitative, quasi-experimental and longitudinal	Students in general	Moral Judgment Test C-score Method of Dilemma Discussion (MD) Method of Dilemma Discussion (KM DD)	Moral competencies	Discussing moral dilemmas only promotes partial and inconsistent effects on moral competence development among Nursing students, with progression, regression and stagnation episodes in moral reasoning, indicating that dialogical pedagogical interventions are insufficient in the face of broader sociocultural factors that exert an influence on ethical training.
33 2015	Marañón AA, Pera PI. <i>Theory and practice in the construction of professional identity in nursing students: A qualitative study.</i> <i>Nurse Education Today</i>	Spain/ English	Qualitative and ethnographic	Students attending 3 rd year	Interviews following a semi-structured interview Observation Professional Identity Questionnaire for Nursing Students (PIQNS)	Professional moral identity	Professional moral identity construction in Nursing students depends on the articulation between theory and practice. Clinical internships and the professors' performance are central in the sense of theoretical knowledge and to favor the transition toward the professional reality.
34 2015	Burkhardt MS, et al. <i>Engagement and creation of</i>	Australia/ English	Mixed-methods, cross-	Students in general	Interviews following a	Professional moral identity	It was evidenced that an innovating institutional integration model involving students, teachers and

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
	<i>professional identity in undergraduate nursing students: A convention-style orientation event. Journal of Nursing Education</i>		sectional and evaluative		semi-structured script		representatives from the health sector favors engagement, motivation and strengthening of professional moral identity in Nursing, proving to be an effective strategy to promote community sense and academic guidance.
35 2015	Williams MG, Burke LL. <i>Doing learning knowing speaking: How beginning nursing students develop their identity as nurses. Nursing Education Perspectives</i>	USA/ English	Qualitative and descriptive	Students attending 2 nd year	Interviews following a semi-structured script	Moral development Professional moral identity	It was evidenced that professional moral identity in first year Nursing students is developed by means of the integration between doing, learning, knowing and communicating, representing a progressive “feeling as a nurse” process during training.
36 2015	Rennó HMS. <i>Desenvolvimento de competências ético-morais e o sofrimento moral na formação em enfermagem. Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais</i>	Brazil/ Portuguese	Qualitative, multiple case study	Nursing students attending all periods	Moral Competence Test-extended (MCT-xt) Semi-structured interviews Sociodemographic questionnaire	Moral development Moral competencies	The development of ethical-moral competencies in Nursing students during an internship is intrinsically related to facing moral dilemmas, with the possibility of both promoting moral growth and of triggering moral distress, with impacts on health, on staying in the course and on professional identity construction, highlighting the need for training environments that favor dialog and ethical care.

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
37 2015	Ostrogorsky TL, et al. <i>Becoming a nurse role formation among accelerated baccalaureate students. Nurse Educator</i>	USA/ English	Qualitative and longitudinal	Students in general	Narrative descriptions at the end of the semester and produced from written prompts (orders/instructions)	Moral development	The study identified four main topics related to shaping the professional role, namely: Evolution regarding the perception about nurses' role; Expanding the student-patient interaction; Engaging with health teams; and Understanding care systems.
38 2016	Sun L, et al. <i>The impact of professional identity on role stress in nursing students: A cross-sectional study. International Journal of Nursing Studies</i>	China/ English	Quantitative, observational and cross-sectional	Students after a 6-month internship in a general hospital	Role Stress Scale (RSS) Professional Identity Questionnaire for Nursing Students (PIQNS)	Professional moral identity	The study identified an association between professional identity and the stress inherent to the role in Nursing students after a 6-month sub-internship in a general hospital.
39 2016	Albar MJ, Sivianes-Fernández M. <i>Percepción de la identidad profesional de la enfermería en el alumnado del grado. Enfermería Clínica</i>	Spain/ Spanish	Mixed-methods and cross-sectional	Students attending 1 st and 4 th year	Questionnaire with social, demographic, profession- and career-related questions, in addition to 2 open questions	Moral development	The results showed differences between first and last year students regarding how they perceived the profession. The study asserts that academic training is important in the professional identity acquisition process.
40 2017	Hirsch CD. <i>Processos de desenvolvimento da sensibilidade moral</i>	Brazil/ Portuguese	Quantitative, cross-sectional and	Students in general	Moral Sensitive Questionnaire (MSQ)	Moral sensitivity	The study addresses the moral sensitivity development process in undergraduate Nursing students.

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
	<i>em estudantes de graduação em enfermagem. Universidade Federal do Rio Grande</i>		qualitative-exploratory-descriptive		Semi-structured interviews		
41 2017	Enderle CF. O desenvolvimento da competência moral em estudantes de graduação em enfermagem. Universidade Federal do Rio Grande	Brazil/ Portuguese	Quantitative, cross-sectional and qualitative-exploratory-descriptive	Students in general	MCT Questionnaire	Moral competencies Moral development	The study addresses moral competence development in undergraduate Nursing students.
42 2017	Dias JAA, et al. A moral e o pensamento crítico: competências essenciais à formação do enfermeiro. Revista Enfermagem da UERJ	Brazil/ Portuguese	Reflection	N/A	N/A	Moral competencies Moral development	The article asserts that critical thinking and ethical/moral thinking enable competent performance and highlights the need to rethink undergraduate Nursing curricula and to implement active, innovating and creative teaching methodologies and strategies; it also underscores critical thinking and moral as essential competencies for nurses' training.
43 2017	Neishabouri M, Ahmadi F, Kazemnejad A. <i>Iranian nursing students'</i>	Iran/ English	Qualitative, exploratory and descriptive	Nursing students	Interviews following a semi-structured script	Professional moral identity	The study indicates that the transition to professional identity in Nursing students takes place as a gradual process, influenced by

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
	<i>perspectives on transition to professional identity: a qualitative study. International Nursing Review</i>						educational experiences, interpersonal relations and clinical experiences. The students undergo changes in their self-perception as future professionals, especially after initiating the practice scenarios.
44 2017	Almeida ÉB, Silva LB, Lüdke M. <i>Contribuciones de la Etapa Supervisada para la Formación de la Identidad Profesional de las enfermeras. Cultura de los Cuidados</i>	Brazil/ Portuguese	Qualitative, exploratory and descriptive	Students attending the 8 th , 9 th and 10 th periods	Interviews following a semi-structured script	Moral development Professional identity	The study evidenced that supervised internships contribute to nurses' professional identity construction by means of experiences undergone in practice scenarios, of interpersonal relations and of getting closer to the professional routine. The authors highlight that the relationships between the idealized image of the profession and the work environment reality assist in understanding nurses' professional identity construction process.

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
45 2017	Ranjbar H, et al. <i>Becoming a nurse as a moral journey: A constructivist grounded theory. Nursing Ethics</i>	Iran/ English	Qualitative, Grounded Theory	Students in general	Interviews following a semi-structured script Memo writing	Professional moral identity	The authors describe that, in addition to clinical experience, moral training involves experiences related to professional responsibility, relationships with patients, reflections on actions and development of professional values. The study asserts that the students' moral development takes place dynamically throughout their professional training and is related to the experiences undergone in educational and clinical environments.
46 2018	Browne C, et al. <i>Understanding perceptions of nursing professional identity in students entering an Australian undergraduate nursing degree. Nurse Education in Practice</i>	Australia/ English	Qualitative, exploratory and descriptive	Students attending 1 st year	Workshop (concept and mind maps)	Moral development	The results indicated that first year students presented idealized and socially influenced perceptions about Nursing, mainly associating the profession with providing care and help to others. The study highlights that professional identity starts to be constructed already when entering undergraduation, and that is influenced by educational experiences and by previous perceptions regarding the profession.

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
47 2018	Mbalinda SN, et al. <i>Understanding and barriers of professional identity formation among current students and recent graduates in nursing and midwifery in low resource settings in two universities: a qualitative study. Nurse Education in Practice</i>	Uganda/ English	Qualitative and descriptive	Students and recent graduates	Focus groups	Moral development	The study identified that professional identity shaping is influenced by academic and clinical experiences, although it faces barriers related to scarce resources, limited infrastructure and professional devaluation. The authors highlight that these factors hinder strengthening professional identity in students and recent graduates.
48 2018	Casas LF, Ibáñez LE, Parra DI. <i>Desarrollo moral de los estudiantes de un programa de enfermería. Salud UIS</i>	Colombia/ Spanish	Quantitative and cross-sectional	Students in general	<i>Cuestionario de Opinión sobre Problemas Sociales (COPS)</i> , based on the classification proposed by Kohlberg and re-structured by Rest	Moral development Moral competencies	The study identified different moral development levels across the Nursing students assessed with COPS, evidencing different moral judgment stages among the participants. The authors described that the students presented variations in their way of analyzing and responding to social and ethical problems related to moral development during the Nursing training course.
49 2018	Avila LI, et al. <i>Construção moral dos estudantes de</i>	Brazil/ Portuguese	Reflection	N/A	N/A	Moral development	The article discusses that Nursing students' moral construction is related to the development of

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
	<i>graduação em enfermagem como fomento para a humanização do cuidado. Texto e Contexto Enfermagem.</i>					Moral competencies	ethical-moral competencies targeted at care humanization. The authors highlight the importance of ethical training, of critical reflection and of the experiences undergone during undergraduation to favor more humanized care practices.
50 2018	Ranjbar H, et al. <i>An Evolutionary Route for the Moral Development of Nursing Students: A Constructivist Grounded Theory. Journal of Nursing Research</i>	Iran/ English	Qualitative, Grounded Theory	Students in general	Multidisciplinary work group Interviews with a semi-structured script Memos	Moral development Professional moral identity	The study describes Nursing students' moral development as an evolutive process divided into stages, involving moral transition, moral reconstruction and professional identity internalization.
51 2019	Haghighat S, et al. <i>Evaluating the formation of professional identity in Iranian nursing students after implementation of a new curriculum. Journal of Nursing and Midwifery Sciences</i>	Iran/ English	Quantitative, descriptive and cross-sectional	Students attending the 6 th , 7 th and 8 th periods	Professional Identity Scale for Nursing Students (PISNS) Demographic questionnaire	Professional moral identity	The study identified different professional identity levels among Iranian Nursing students after implementing a new curriculum. The authors described that the assessment made with the PSINS scale showed how professional identity was shaped in the participating students, relating the training process to developing that professional identity.

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
52 2019	Lima RS. <i>A construção da identidade profissional dos alunos de enfermagem: um estudo à luz da abordagem histórico-cultural. Universidade de São Paulo</i>	Brazil/ Portuguese	Qualitative, historical-cultural	Students attending the 8 th and 9 th periods.	Interviews following a semi-structured script.	Moral development Professional moral identity	The study evidences contradictions between the idealized image of Nursing and the reality found in practice scenarios. Professors, clinical nurses and experiences undergone during undergraduation exert a strong influence on professional identity construction, both positive and negative.
53 2020	Tong R, et al. <i>Quality of contact counts: The development of interprofessional identity in first year students. Nurse Education Today</i>	Australia/ English	Quantitative, descriptive and analytical (pre- and post-test)	Students attending 1 st year	Three-Factor Model of Social Identity Scale Student Stereotype Rating Questionnaire Dimensions of Contact Scale	Professional moral identity	The study identified a small decline in professional identity and a large reduction in interprofessional identity throughout the program. Nursing students involved in clinical practices did not present that accentuated reduction. The quality of the contacts with students from other professions and the perception about their own profession predicted interprofessional identity strength. The authors highlight the importance of providing good-quality interprofessional contact opportunities and of enhancing understanding about their own profession during training.

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
54 2020	Haghighat S, Borhani F, Ranjbar H. <i>Is there a relationship between moral competencies and the formation of professional identity among nursing students? BMC Nursing</i>	Iran/ English	Quantitative, descriptive and correlational	Students in general	Demographic questionnaire Moral Development Scale for Professionals (MDSP) Professional Identity Scale for Nursing Students (PISNS)	Moral competencies Professional moral identity	A positive and statistically significant correlation was identified between professional morality and professional identity in Nursing students, indicating that strengthening professional values is associated with better development of moral competencies.
55 2020	Lima RS, et al. <i>Construction of professional identity in nursing students: Qualitative research from the historical-cultural perspective. Revista Latino-Americana de Enfermagem</i>	Brazil/ English	Qualitative, historical-cultural	Nursing students	Interviews following a semi-structured script	Professional moral identity	Professional moral identity is constructed as a dynamic and socially mediated process influenced by previous experiences, pedagogical interactions (especially with nurse-professors), historical-cultural conditions and contradictions across professional models.
56 2020	Martins V, Santos C, Duarte I. <i>Bioethics education and the development of nursing students' moral competence.</i>	Portugal/ English	Quantitative, longitudinal and quasi-experimental	Students attending 1 st year	Moral Competence Test extended (MCTxt)	Moral competencies	The study identified general stagnation in the students' moral competence after attending the Bioethics discipline, with inconsistent variations across ethical dilemmas, suggesting that

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
	<i>Nurse Education Today</i>						the current hour load and pedagogical strategies may be insufficient to promote consistent moral competence development in Nursing students.
57 2021	Nie S, et al. <i>The Professional Identity of Nursing Students and Their Intention to Leave the Nursing Profession During the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic. Nurse Education Today</i>	China/ English	Quantitative, descriptive and cross-sectional	Students after concluding an 8-month internship in a general hospital	Professional Identity Questionnaire for Nursing Students (PIQNS)	Professional moral identity	It was evidenced that Nursing students' professional moral identity during the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with the intention of staying in the profession and with a positive perception about the clinical practice. It was influenced by factors such as knowledge about the disease and exposure to information and cases, indicating that the pandemic context was capable of both strengthening and weakening professional identity.
58 2021	Güner Y, et al. <i>The formation of professional identity in nursing. Türkiye Biyoetik Dergisi</i>	Turkey/ English	Reflection	N/A	N/A	Professional moral identity	It is noted that professional moral identity in Nursing is a dynamic and continuous process that is initiated at training and influenced by individual schooling, experiences and expectations, emerging as a fundamental element for professional development and for the quality of health care interactions.

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
59 2021	Van Den Broek S, et al. <i>Professional and interprofessional group identities of final year medical and nursing students. Journal of Interprofessional Education & Practice</i>	Netherlands/ English	Quantitative, descriptive and cross-sectional	Students attending fourth and last year	Cameron's Three-Dimension Strength of Group Identification Scale was used to measure Social Identification Strength (SIS) 2 open questions.	Professional moral identity	The study identified greater moral satisfaction with the participants' own professional group (especially among Nursing students), although with favorable attitudes toward interprofessional work and openness to feedback across professions, suggesting that group identification does not necessarily impair the development of collaborative attitudes in health.
60 2022	Gilvari T, Babamohamadi H, Paknazar F. <i>Perceived professional identity and related factors in Iranian nursing students: a cross-sectional study. BMC Nursing</i>	Iran/ English	Quantitative, descriptive and cross-sectional	Students in general	PI (Professional Identity) questionnaire on the factors affecting PI	Professional moral identity	It was evidenced that Nursing students presented a strong perception regarding professional identity, which is significantly associated with having chosen the course out of interest, with better academic performance and with work experience during training, factors that favor strengthening professional moral identity.
61 2022	Rached CDA, et al. <i>Nursing students' professional values for reinforcing the professional identity.</i>	Brazil/ English	Quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional and correlational	Students in general	Nurses Professional Values Scale-3 (NPVS-3)	Moral development Moral competencies	It was evidenced that Nursing students confer more importance to care-related professional values. Learning based on professional values allows reflecting on

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
	<i>Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem</i>					Professional moral identity	professional moral identity and making decisions grounded on values.
62 2022	Wang Q, Cao X, Du T. <i>First-year nursing students' initial contact with the clinical learning environment: impacts on their empathy levels and perceptions of professional identity. BMC Nursing</i>	China/ English	Mixed-methods, quantitative, quasi-experimental, qualitative, descriptive and exploratory	Students attending 1 st year	Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) developed by Davis Experiences and feelings diary	Moral development Professional moral identity	It was evidenced that initial exposure to the clinical environment increases empathy levels and contributes to shaping professional identity in Nursing students, enhancing what they understand about nurses' role and about interprofessional relationships with patients.
63 2022	Fitzgerald A, Clukey L. <i>Factors influencing nursing professional identity development: A qualitative study. Nursing Forum</i>	USA/ English	Qualitative and phenomenological	Nursing students attending the last semester	Semi-structured interviews Focus group	Moral development Professional moral identity	Professional moral identity in Nursing students attending the final training phase is mainly strengthened by clinical experience and independent practice, followed by the influence exerted by mentors and professional role models, in addition to reflection, critical thinking and self-confidence development processes.
64 2023	Li F, et al. <i>Latent profiles of nursing students' professional identity and their relationship with stress</i>	China/ English	Quantitative and cross-sectional	Clinical internship students	Demographic questionnaire Intern Nursing Student Stressor Scale	Professional moral identity	It was identified that professional moral identity varies significantly according to experiences and psychosocial conditions during clinical internships.

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
	<i>and coping styles during clinical practicum. Nurse Education in Practice</i>				Simplified Coping Style Professional Identity Questionnaire and Scale for Nursing Students		
65 2024	Zhu H, et al. <i>The association between proactive personality and interprofessional learning readiness in nursing students: The chain medication effects of perceived social support and professional identity. Nurse Education Today</i>	China/ English	Quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional and correlational	Students in general	Readiness for Interprofessional Learning Scale (RIPLS) Proactive Personality Scale (PPS) Perceptive Social Support Scale (PSSS) Professional Identity Status Questionnaire Scale 5d	Professional moral identity	It was evidenced that readiness for interprofessional learning in Nursing students is positively associated with proactive personality traits, with perceived social support and with professional identity. The study indicates that strengthening social support and professional moral identity can increase willingness for interprofessional learning.

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
66 2024	Liao M, et al. <i>Self-efficacy mediates the effect of professional identity on learning engagement for nursing students in higher vocational colleges: A cross-sectional study. Nurse Education Today</i>	China/ English	Quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional and correlational	Students attending 1 st and 2 nd year	Professional Identity Questionnaire for Undergraduate Students (PIQUS) General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) Utrecht Work Engagement Scale for Students (UWES-S)	Professional moral identity	It was evidenced that professional moral identity exerts a positive influence on Nursing students' academic engagement, both directly and mediated by self-efficacy, indicating that it is fundamental to strengthen these factors to improve involvement in learning.
67 2024	Soerensen J, et al. <i>"Safety Means Everything": An ethnographic methodology to explore the formation of professional identity in nursing students Nurse Education in Practice</i>	Denmark/ English	Qualitative and ethnographic	Students attending the 5 th and 6 th semesters	Interviews following a semi-structured script Participant observation	Moral development Professional moral identity	It was evidenced that professional moral identity construction in Nursing students is influenced by sociocultural and educational conditions. The study underscores the presence of learning cultures and professional role models as core elements for the development of competent nurses.
68 2024	Lin S. et al. <i>Barriers and facilitators to the formation of</i>	China/ English	Qualitative and longitudinal	Nursing students	Serial interviews	Professional moral identity	It was evidenced that shaping Nursing students' professional moral identity is a dynamic process

Ref. Year	Author(s), title, source	Country/ Language	Study type/ Method	Participants	Data collection techniques	Concepts relevant to the Scoping Review objective	Main considerations
	<i>professional identity among nursing students: A four-year longitudinal qualitative study. Nurse Education Today</i>			attending 1 st year			that takes place throughout undergraduation, marked by different stages and influenced by conflicts between ideals, reality and stereotypes, as well as by motivation, professional role models and entering the clinical practice.

*N/A: Not Applicable
Source: The authors.

When reviewing the studies, it was sought to map theoretical frameworks used to sustain their objects. In this sense, it was identified that 37% of the studies fail to specifically define a theory to anchor their findings and reflections. They present various concepts associated with professional identity development and related to socialization, to Nursing as a profession and its legal bases and to Nursing as a health area profession (interprofessionality), in addition to concepts pertaining to the education area, the teaching-learning process and/or concepts in the knowledge fields of ethics, values, moral competencies, moral sensitivity and moral judgment^(14,15,17,27,29,31,33,38,39,43,44,46,47,51,54,57,58,60,61,64).

Among the studies that do include theories, 52% are anchored in Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development^(14,15,17,27,29,31,33,38,39,43,44,46,47,51,54,57,58,60,61,64). Others adopt the Theory of Human Cognitive Development, Piaget's Constructivism^(6,32,40,45,49,63), Lev Vygotsky's Learning Theory^(33,65) and Jenkins' Social Identity theories^(53,59). Among the theoretical contributions that were highlighted in only one article (from a total of eighteen authors in eight articles, we can mention the following: Gilligan's Moral development in women⁽¹⁶⁾; Parse's Human Development Nursing⁽²⁶⁾; Fiske's Big five personality traits⁽⁶⁵⁾; Bateman's Proactive personality⁽⁶⁵⁾; Victor Vroom's Expectation-based motivation⁽⁶⁵⁾; Davis' Doctrinal conversion⁽¹⁶⁾; Deci and Ryan's Self-determination⁽⁶⁶⁾; Bandura's Social Cognitivism⁽⁶⁶⁾; Edwin Locke⁽⁶⁶⁾; Frankfurt School's Critical Theory (Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Benjamim)⁽⁶⁷⁾; Cooper's Moral sense⁽³⁰⁾; John Dewey's Experience⁽²⁴⁾; Lind's Moral judgment and Dual aspect⁽¹⁹⁾; Habermas' Communicative action⁽³⁰⁾ and David Ausubel's Meaningful learning⁽²⁵⁾.

The objectives of the studies were analyzed in order to identify research trends in the scope of the productions. The first characteristic evidenced when analyzing the objectives is the drive to research the professional moral identity construction process considering the subjects' experiences throughout training. To such end, the studies aimed at exploring this object with students at different moments of the Nursing course, especially at the beginning and at the end^(13,23,31,37,39,46,48,52).

The students' experiences during their training are beacons in the procedural construction of their professional moral identity, as one of the professional identity dimensions. The studies were designed to understand the relationship between academic experiences associated with the curriculum, the theory-practice relationship and, especially, clinical experiences in health services^(18,19,24,33,44,62,63,66).

Studies with objectives outlined based on moral development stand out^(35,61,65,67), which can indicate an important concept implied in professional moral identity, especially for this Scoping Review. One study sought to determine associations of sociodemographic variables and the students' training experience with moral development⁽¹⁶⁾. Another concept associated in a cascade reaction from moral development is the one of moral competencies, professional moral values, moral dilemmas, ethical decision-making and moral judgment^(13,15,21,32,42,54,61). Also in the Ethics field, moral sensitivity is another concept recognized in the professional moral identity scope, included in three studies^(15,28,40).

Some studies sought to explore aspects related to professional moral identity development, from contextual and socio-cultural issues, stress and moral distress to the wish to not cease pursuing the profession^(15,31,36,38,52,57,67).

Given the aforementioned, the in-depth analysis of the results in this study allowed grouping them by topics, giving rise to the following main categories in order to achieve the objective proposed: 1) Influencing factors for professional moral identity development; 2) Promoting professional moral identities; and 3) The limited reality.

The analysis of the results and final considerations (conclusions) corresponding to the sample of the scoping review evidenced aspects related to nurses' professional moral identity development. Different ways of exploring these aspects were found in the studies; however, all of them undoubtedly acknowledged the procedural nature, which is initiated before professional training and will extend throughout the professional career.

Therefore, the first thematic category deals with the **“Influencing factors for professional moral identity development”** and is structured considering the following aspects:

- 1) **“Academic training”**, based on integrating theory and practice, on care experiences with users of health services and on exposure to real-world care situations^(18,19,24,33,44,46,62,63,66); also based on a curriculum that includes ethical contents and whose development balances technical and scientific competencies with critical and reflexive skills and on emotional experiences in the training process^(12,13,21,23,26,36,37,40,41,42,45,46,48,49,56).
- 2) **“Socialization”**, referring to professional moral identity development influenced by the educational spaces offered by training courses and health services in terms of infrastructure of the environments and their conditions for professional qualification; as well as, in the relationships scope, shared experiences with other Nursing professionals and from other professions, professors and people in general in care experiences. During this socialization process, the influences exerted by collaborative practices and effective communication also stand out, which favor the development of a shared moral responsibility sense^(15,18,19,24,28,31,33,36,38,44,52,57,62,66,67).
- 3) The **“Ethical dimension”**, related to principles and personal/professional values, commitment to the profession and to human relations and intersubjectivity. As the students undergo their training, they are exposed to knowledge, especially situations, that influence ethical-moral thinking^(13,15,21,28,32,40,41,54,61).

The second category, **“Promoting professional moral identities”**, emerges from the analysis of studies exploring training contexts in order to analyze and reflect on how to positively foster influencing factors. There was agreement with all three aforementioned categories; therefore, in order to promote shaping professional moral identities in Nursing, the studies listed strategies based on including ethical-moral disciplines and contents in the curricula^(11,12,13,21,23,26,36,37,40,41,42,45,46,48,49,56), as well as on an encompassing offer of clinical experiences to apply theoretical knowledge and develop the competencies inherent to the profession and moral skills^(22,23,35,39,43,51,62). Institutional support actions and assistance to students offered by professors, workers from health services and peers are added to these elements, also contributing to the students' moral security and confidence^(13,31,37,39,45,46,48,52), in addition to stimulating an empathetic student/professional-user relationship^(15,31,36,38,52,57,67).

In the various realities inherent to Nursing training, challenges and barriers faced during the process to develop professional moral identities were identified. Thus, the third category emerged (**"The limited reality"**), which unveils the barriers in the students' experiences during their training, associated with the way in which they recognize themselves as future professionals. There are still perceptions considering certain disconnection between theory and practice (clinical experiences)^(18,19,24,33,44,62,63,66) and limited curricula in terms of opportunities for theoretical and practical learning, both committed to ethical training; in other words, not including enough experiences for ethical development and impairing training^(11,12,13,21,23,26,36,37,40,41,43,44,45,48,49,56).

The students identify countless barriers in their professional training experiences in education settings, universities and health work, different health assistance types and services where they develop theoretical-practical activities and internships. Labor situations related to working conditions such as teachers' and professionals' work overload were listed in this category, exerting an influence on the students' teaching-learning process and disfavoring teaching quality and their professional socialization. There are also challenges arising from low professional appreciation that exert negative impacts on professional identity. Some studies considered having to face factors that demotivate and wear out the profession and have repercussions in the ongoing professional moral identity construction process. Non-recognition and the emotional impact of moral distress stood out among these factors as significant challenges for moral identity development in the profession^(15,31,36,38,52,57,67).

DISCUSSION

Nursing students' professional moral identity is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon resulting from a continuous process that is initiated before academic training and extends itself throughout the professional career. The diversity of data collection techniques used in the studies analyzed evidences the complexity inherent to constructing this identity. The methodological approaches vary according to the objectives set forth in each research study, encompassing quantitative and qualitative methods. However, scarcity of longitudinal studies and surveys combining different methods is observed; such studies might contribute to enhancing robustness and reliability of the findings.

Despite the diverse frameworks used to explore the phenomenon, the broad influence of Lawrence Kohlberg's thinking (referenced in 17 studies) stands out, in addition to authors that preceded him and exerted an influence on Education Psychology, such as Piaget and Vygotsky. Contributions from authors such as Carol Gilligan are also evidenced; she criticized the hegemony of masculine morality based on fairness and proposes appreciating the affective dimension and care ethics⁽⁶⁹⁾. Grounded on empirical studies and instruments to test moral reasoning, Kohlberg's theory expanded its use and inspired new tools and correlations⁽⁷⁰⁾, warranting its application in the field of morality in health professions, even in the assessment of educational interventions about Nursing students' ethical reasoning⁽⁷¹⁾. Despite the limitations pointed out, her theory continues to stimulate conceptual reflections and reviews⁽⁷²⁾.

The literature analysis identified three major categories that synthesize the main findings of the review, discussed in the light of the studies available and of the implications for professional moral identity construction throughout Nursing training.

Nursing professionals constitute the backbone of health services, working to expand universal health coverage, in health promotion and in coping with non-communicable diseases^(73,74). Despite this centrality and numerical predominance, structural inequalities still persist, especially regarding gender equality and career advancement^(75,76). The unequal distribution of professionals across regions and the forecast of a global shortage of 5.7 million nurses by 2030 are added to the above⁽⁷³⁾, factors that directly affect academic training and the moral identity of these future professionals.

Nursing training is heterogeneous worldwide, reflecting variations in terms of competencies developed, curricular structures and teachers' qualification. Such differences are influenced by socioeconomic factors, educational policies and specific demands pertaining to each health system, exerting impacts on professional identity and on quality of the assistance provided⁽⁷⁴⁾.

The moral and professional identity construction process is continuous and multifaceted, shaped by influences that begin even before academic training and are intensified when entering university⁽⁵⁶⁾. Since childhood, values and beliefs internalized in the family and school environments serve as the basis for this identity, which is strengthened when choosing Nursing as a career and with the university experience^(5,65).

During undergraduation, students assimilate professional norms and values, consolidating their identity by means of practical experiences and interactions with peers, teachers and professionals from health services⁽⁵⁾. Integrating theory and practice is essential to develop ethical judgment and moral responsibility, with supervised internships as a crucial moment in this process^(42,59).

Teachers and nurses are fundamental as mentors and role models, promoting autonomy and self-confidence in students^(46,54). The way in which they relate with patients, family members and health teams exerts an influence on the students' perception about the profession, reinforcing values such as empathy, care and leadership^(41,42). The support provided by professors eases the students' transition from dependence to self-regulation, promoting greater professional autonomy⁽⁶⁴⁾.

The studies analyzed indicate that curricula that balance technical, scientific and reflexive competencies are essential to consolidate professional moral identities. However, traditional models and the fragmented adoption of active methodologies still hinder proper articulation between technical and ethical dimensions⁽⁷⁷⁾. Thus, curricular re-structuring should prioritize strategies that favor critical reflection and ethical experiences from the first undergraduate years.

Professional socialization (the second subcategory identified) constitutes a determinant element in nurses' moral training. It is a continuous process of integrating experiences, objectives and interactions, articulating personal and collective dimensions⁽⁷⁸⁾. The relationship between Higher Education and health services enables internalizing essential values and practices, strengthening the sense of belonging and shared responsibility⁽⁵⁾.

The interaction among students, professors and professionals in internship fields deepens understanding about ethical challenges and reinforces the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in moral decision-making⁽⁵⁹⁾. Supervised internships are

decisive in the students' transition to the professional environment, promoting autonomy and consolidating their professional identity⁽⁴²⁾.

The third subcategory addresses the ethical dimension in Nursing education, advocating that it should go beyond merely conveying norms. It is fundamental to create reflection and discussion spaces for complex moral dilemmas, favoring the shaping of critical and socially committed professionals⁽²¹⁾. Teachers showing coherence between discourse and practice become ethical references, exerting a positive influence on the students' moral identity. Experiencing values such as empathy, respect and responsibility in their interactions reinforces their commitment toward the principles of the profession⁽⁵⁾.

Moral development is a structuring axis of nurses' training, guiding ethical decision-making and social responsibility. It sustains a practice based on human dignity, stimulating critical reflection and self-knowledge, indispensable competencies to face ethical dilemmas and for care quality⁽⁶⁸⁾. The professional identity construction process is parallel to moral development and is influenced by personal values, academic environments and teachers' performance. Diverse evidence indicates that the students' moral competence is strengthened throughout undergraduation, signaling the central pedagogical role of Nursing education in internalizing ethical principles^(29,33).

However, this process is not linear or homogeneous. Cultural, socioeconomic and political factors shape the way in which the profession is recognized and valued in different contexts, influencing the students' moral identity⁽⁷⁹⁾. Emphasizing professional values is essential for moral development. Programs integrating ethical competencies from the first training year prepare future nurses to face dilemmas with moral responsibility and sensitivity, ensuring ethical and humanized care^(23,44).

Thus, nurses' moral identity results from the articulation between technical-scientific dexterity and ethical reflection, consolidating a commitment that will guide their practice throughout their careers. Given the ethical challenges and power relations present in work environments, there is an urgent need to devise a curriculum that goes beyond traditional teaching, stimulating critical thinking, autonomy and reflexive skills⁽⁵⁴⁾.

A limitation of this study was the heterogeneity of the concepts, theoretical frameworks, methodological designs, and educational contexts across the included studies, which hindered the integration of the findings and the development of a coherent analytical synthesis. Furthermore, the lack of conceptual consensus regarding professional moral identity limited the direct comparison of findings across the included studies.

The main contribution of this study is having mapped the scientific production on professional moral identity, identifying factors that exert an influence on its construction and offering insights to strengthen future nurses' identity. The need stands out to devise curricula integrating theory and practice, with methodologies that promote critical reflection and moral autonomy, in addition to considering socioeconomic and cultural contexts in training. All this evidence expands what is known about the topic and point to paths for future research studies and more ethical and humanized educational practices.

CONCLUSIONS

Professional moral identity in Nursing is a dynamic and multifaceted process marked by continuous transformations and influenced by academic, social and structural factors. In contexts characterized by low autonomy and precarious working conditions, the sense of belonging and strengthening of the professional identity tend to be impaired.

Academic training is the central axis of this development, especially when it combines technical-scientific teaching with ethical reflection. Innovating pedagogical strategies such as active methodologies, clinical simulations and early experiences in practice fields enhance the students' autonomy and moral judgment. Interacting with teachers and Nursing professionals contributes to internalizing ethical values and the sense of belonging to the profession.

Professional socialization also plays a decisive role. Clinical environments, sharing spaces with multiprofessional teams and practical experiences favor consolidating moral identity, with supervised internships as key moments in this process. However, structural challenges (such as disconnection between theory and practice, fragmented curricula and work overload) still hinder identity development. Devaluing of the profession and labor market uncertainties can be demotivating elements and weaken future nurses' ethical commitment.

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