

Background:

Building a well-balanced care team that is adapted to patients' specific contexts and needs can be challenging due to the complex interactions between a team's capacity, culture, context, and job demands. However, decision-makers lack effective tools to address these interactions, and there is limited knowledge on how to optimally compose a balanced care team.

Aim:

To bridge this gap, we conducted a systematic scoping review of literature from 2009 to 2022, aiming to identify influencing factors that significantly impact the work environment, team performance, nursing outcomes, and patient outcomes.

Method:

We conducted a comprehensive search of relevant literature published between 2009 and 2022. We used predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to select studies for review. After identifying eligible studies, we extracted data and analyzed the findings to identify influencing factors related to building well-balanced care teams.

Results:

363 studies were included for data extraction and qualitative synthesis. We found that most of the research was conducted in the acute hospital care setting and in residential care. A descriptive cross-sectional design was used in nearly seventy percent of studies. In contrast, an experimental study design (RCT, CT) was used in only two included studies. We included 3 meta-analyses and 36 systematic reviews using qualitative data synthesis. Most of the literature has focused on nursing and patient outcomes. Using a comprehensive matrix, our systematic scoping review identified 35 influencing factors that significantly impact the work environment, team performance, nursing outcomes, and patient outcomes. These factors were categorized into nine overarching domains: workload, leadership, team composition, stress and demands, professional relationships, safety, logistics and ergonomics, autonomy and responsibility, and transparency and task clearness.

Discussion:

The identified factors from our scoping review offer valuable insights for policymakers, decision-makers, and nursing leaders in their efforts to improve the healthcare system. Policymakers and decision-makers should prioritize modifications to these factors to attract and retain nurses, while nursing leaders can utilize them to create well-balanced care teams that align with the demands of the healthcare setting and consider contextual factors. Addressing these factors can have significant positive impacts on patient outcomes and enhance job satisfaction among nurses. By optimizing workload, implementing effective leadership practices, carefully considering team composition, and addressing other identified domains, decision-makers and nursing leaders can contribute to a resilient workforce, ensure high-quality care, and enhance patient safety. To further advance the understanding and implementation of balanced care teams, it is recommended that future research delves deeper into this concept. Investigating the potential benefits and limitations of balanced care teams will provide valuable insights for decision-makers and nursing leaders. Additionally, integrating this research into decision support systems can aid in the achievement of balanced care teams by optimizing a team's capacity to meet specific demands while taking contextual factors into account. This will ultimately contribute to the improvement of healthcare delivery and patient outcomes.

Implications:

The findings of our scoping review have important implications for practice and research. Practically, decision-makers and nursing leaders can utilize the identified factors as a guide to improve the work environment and team dynamics. They can make strategic changes to workload distribution, leadership practices, team composition, and other domains to foster a well-balanced care team.

For research, our scoping review highlights gaps in the current body of knowledge, indicating areas where further research is needed. Researchers can focus on exploring these gaps to deepen the understanding of how these factors interact and influence care team dynamics, job satisfaction, and patient outcomes. This will contribute to evidence-based practices and support the ongoing development of effective strategies for building and maintaining well-balanced care teams.