

Spiritual care and spirituality in academic nursing training: A scoping review*

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Abstract

Objective: To map existing studies in scientific literature addressing spiritual care and spirituality in academic nursing training.

Materials and method: This is a scoping review, whose article search was conducted in July 2023 in the databases Scopus, Medline/PubMed, ScienceDirect, Google® Scholar, and through a manual search of entries in the list of references of selected papers. The following research question was formulated for this study: How are spiritual care and spirituality addressed in academic nursing training? After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the final sample consisted of 45 papers.

Results: The main findings highlight a deficit in academic training, the importance of teachers as facilitators of the teaching-learning process, the essential methodologies to address the issue of spirituality, and the specific competences required in spiritual care, such as communication, empathy, attitude towards the patient's spirituality, personal support, counseling, and the proper application of the nursing process in this type of care.

Conclusions: This review made it possible to identify how spiritual care and spirituality are addressed in the academic training of nurses, where the insertion of educational resources for spiritual care and approaches based on competences were emphasized. Despite this, spiritual-related teaching is still deficient in academic formation. Studies recommend modifying the curriculum to strengthen competencies related to spirituality and spiritual care in the nursing academy.

Descriptors: Nursing; Spirituality; Teaching; Students; Nursing (source: DeCS, BIREME).

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Cuidado espiritual y espiritualidad en la formación académica en enfermería: revisión de alcance

Resumen

Objetivo: mapear los estudios existentes en la literatura científica relacionados con el cuidado espiritual y la espiritualidad en la formación académica en enfermería.

Materiales y método: revisión de alcance cuya la búsqueda se realizó en julio de 2023 en las bases de datos Scopus, Medline/PubMed, ScienceDirect, Google® Scholar y por medio de una búsqueda manual en las listas de referencia de documentos seleccionados. Se delimitó la siguiente pregunta de investigación: ¿cómo se aborda el cuidado espiritual y la espiritualidad en la formación académica de enfermería? Tras la aplicación de los criterios de inclusión y exclusión, la muestra final estuvo conformada por 45 estudios.

Resultados: los principales resultados señalan un déficit en la formación académica, la importancia de los docentes como facilitadores del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, las metodologías esenciales para abordar el asunto de la espiritualidad y las competencias específicas en el cuidado espiritual, entre las que se cuentan la comunicación, la empatía, la actitud frente a la espiritualidad del paciente, el apoyo personal, el asesoramiento y la correcta aplicación del proceso de enfermería en este tipo de cuidado.

Conclusiones: esta revisión permitió identificar la manera en que el cuidado espiritual y la espiritualidad son abordados en la formación académica de los profesionales en enfermería, donde destaca la adopción de recursos educativos para el cuidado espiritual y el enfoque basado en competencias. No obstante, este tipo de enseñanza aún es deficiente en la formación académica en enfermería. Por ello, algunas investigaciones recomiendan modificar el plan de estudios de los programas en enfermería con el fin de fortalecer las competencias relacionadas con la espiritualidad y el cuidado espiritual.

Descriptor: Enfermería; Espiritualidad; Enseñanza; Estudiantes de Enfermería (fuente: DECS, BIREME).

Cuidado espiritual e espiritualidade na formação acadêmica de enfermagem: revisão de escopo

Resumo

Objetivo: mapear os estudos existentes na literatura científica relacionados ao cuidado espiritual e à espiritualidade na formação acadêmica de enfermagem.

Materiais e método: trata-se de uma revisão de escopo em que a busca foi realizada em julho de 2023 nas seguintes fontes de dados: Scopus, Medline/PubMed, ScienceDirect, Google® Scholar e busca manual de documentos selecionados em listas de referências. Delimitou-se a seguinte questão de pesquisa: “como o cuidado

espiritual e a espiritualidade são abordados na formação acadêmica de enfermagem?”. Após a aplicação dos critérios de inclusão e exclusão, a amostra final foi composta de 45 estudos.

Resultados: os principais resultados encontrados foram o déficit na formação acadêmica; a importância do professor como facilitador do processo ensino-aprendizagem; as metodologias essenciais para abordar o tema, bem como as competências específicas no cuidado espiritual, como a comunicação, a empatia, a atitude perante a espiritualidade do paciente, o apoio pessoal, o aconselhamento e a aplicação adequada do processo de enfermagem nesse tipo de cuidado.

Conclusões: os resultados desta revisão permitem identificar como o cuidado espiritual e a espiritualidade são abordados na formação acadêmica de enfermagem, em que se destaca a inserção de recursos educacionais para o cuidado espiritual e abordagens baseadas em competências. No entanto, esse ensino ainda é deficiente na formação acadêmica. Por isso, alguns estudos recomendam modificar o currículo acadêmico de enfermagem a fim de fortalecer competências relacionadas à espiritualidade e ao cuidado espiritual.

Descritores: Enfermagem; Espiritualidade; Ensino; Estudantes de Enfermagem (fonte: DECS, BIREME).

Introduction

Spiritual care is often conceptualized as a form of assistance aimed at addressing and satisfying the existential and spiritual demands and dilemmas associated with illness and crisis situations. Spirituality is defined as a set of beliefs and experiences of an abstract nature, based on the quest to understand the purpose of life in a context that surpasses the limitations of conventional understanding, which may or may not be associated with belief systems or religious practices (1, 2).

A study shows that the incorporation of the spiritual dimension in health care practice strengthens the deployment of an integral approach, thus upgrading the levels of humanization in health. Considering the potential impact of spirituality on improving disease conditions and a patient's quality of life, it becomes essential that nursing professionals are trained to explore this aspect within the scope of care (3).

Nurses are the closest care providers to the patient. Consequently, they are more likely to find patients with spiritual needs. It is necessary for these professionals to perform spiritual assessments, identify spiritual suffering, and provide spiritual support to patients to achieve the best nursing outcomes. However, nurses find it difficult to provide spiritual care due to the lack of nursing education and training in this dimension (4).

Being aware of the importance of a comprehensive approach to care, it is essential to understand the reasons for this dimension to be neglected. Nursing education still lacks an ongoing discussion on how students can learn to evaluate and address patients' spiritual needs. As reported by some studies, the academic population of nursing courses is characterized by an insufficient emphasis on spirituality, both in nursing education and in clinical practice. In addition, health care nurses have also reported a lack of knowledge and skills to provide spiritual support to their patients (5, 6).

The nursing classification and diagnosis system known as NANDA-International, which qualifies care and is part of the training base of the nursing academy, describes and allows the operationalization of important diagnoses related to spiritual care, such as risk for spiritual distress (00067), readiness for enhanced spiritual well-being (00068), and Spiritual distress (00066) (7). This reinforces the scientific and care relevance of teaching about spiritual care and spirituality for future nurses.

In this context, it is necessary to discuss and study the approach of spiritual care and spirituality in academic training based on research evidence and reviews that seek a better understanding not only of the concepts, but on how spiritual care can be taught, what competences are necessary for its teaching, and what studies and research on this subject are actually valid (8).

Accordingly, the objective of this research is to map out the existing studies in scientific literature in relation to spiritual care and spirituality in academic nursing training.

Materials and methods

Design

The scoping review was developed following the recommendations in the JBI Manual for Evidence Synthesis and using the criteria set out in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) checklist (9, 10). The study in question was registered on the Open Science Framework study platform and a corresponding Uniform Resource Locator sequential identifier (<https://osf.io/qc364/>) was generated (11).

This type of review enables mapping the main concepts that support research in a given area, in addition to clarifying the definitions of work and/or the conceptual limits of a given subject in the available scientific production (9, 12).

The review was guided by a research protocol and consisted of the following steps: i. Identification of research questions; ii. Identification of relevant studies by searching the literature using electronic data sources, documents that are found with a broad search based on keywords and a parallel list of references; iii. Selection of studies, with the establishment of the eligibility criteria; iv. Data analysis; and v. Data synthesis and presentation (9).

Identifying the research questions

In step i, the research question was defined based on the PCC strategy (P: Population – nursing; C: Concept – spiritual care and spirituality; C: Context – academic training). Accordingly, this part of the process had the following guiding question: How are spiritual care and spirituality addressed in academic nursing training?

Identifying relevant studies

In step ii, the search was conducted based on the strategy described in the Joanna Briggs Institute's Scoping Review Manual, divided into three parts, in order to identify published and unpublished primary studies (gray literature) and existing reviews (9).

Three databases were consulted, namely: Scopus (Elsevier), Online Medical Literature Review and Retrieval System (Medline), through the National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health (PubMed) and ScienceDirect (Elsevier), since these are databases of qualified publications in the health area. The last access date for all of them was July 30, 2023.

The descriptors indexed in each database were: 1 # (Spiritual care; Cuidado espiritual), 2 # (Spirituality; Espiritualidade), and 3 # (Student, nurses; Estudantes de enfermagem). The crossings were performed using the Boolean operator AND namely: #1 AND #3; 2# AND 3#. A standardized search was used according to the available strategies in each database.

The second part of the search took place on Google® Scholar, using the index and synonym terms (keywords) identified in the studies of the first part of the search: “Spiritual care,” “Cuidado espiritual,” “Spirituality,” “Espiritualidade,” “Student, nurses,” “Estudantes de enfermagem.”

The last access date on this data source was July 31, 2023. The search strategies defined in each data source are described in Chart 1 below. Throughout the research, quotation marks were used as a resource in order to limit studies that used the compound term.

Chart 1. Search strategies in different data source

Database	Search strategy
Scopus	Strategy 1: ALL(“Spiritual care” AND “Student, nurses”)
	Strategy 2: ALL(“Spirituality” AND “Student, nurses”)
Medline®/PubMed® (all fields)	Strategy 1: (“Spiritual care” AND “Student, nurses”)
	Strategy 2: (“Spirituality” AND “Student, nurses”)
ScienceDirect	Strategy 1: (“Spiritual care” AND “Student, nurses”)
	Strategy 2: (“Spirituality” AND “Student, nurses”)
Google® Scholar	Strategy 1: “Spiritual care” AND “Student, nurses”
	Strategy 2: “Spirituality” AND “Student, nurses”
	Strategy 3: “Cuidado espiritual” AND “Estudantes de enfermagem”
	Strategy 4: “Espiritualidade” AND “Estudantes de enfermagem”

Source: authors.

Selection of studies

Two researchers performed, independently and at the same time, the initial selection of studies based on the reading of titles and abstracts. During this process, disagreements between researchers were decided by consensus. Studies that met the eligibility criteria were read in full, and those that did not were excluded. Duplicates were counted only once.

The third part of the scoping review took place according to a reverse search through the references identified in the selected articles, thus allowing the capture of valid materials for the study, but which are not seen in the data source. The reverse search allows the final sample of this research to appreciate an even greater number of articles than just an integrative review, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how the study process takes place on a given subject (9).

In order to select the studies, the inclusion criteria were complete studies, referring to spiritual care and spirituality in academic nursing training, and available in the data source in any language. Editorials, letters to the editor and abstracts were excluded.

Data analysis

Data extraction and analysis was performed using a data extraction form addressing the study's identification, methodological aspects, main results, and themes, as well as the main limitations pointed out by the studies and conclusions essential for this scoping review.

Summarizing and reporting results

Results were presented in a descriptive manner in tables with the characterization and synthesis of the target studies.

Results

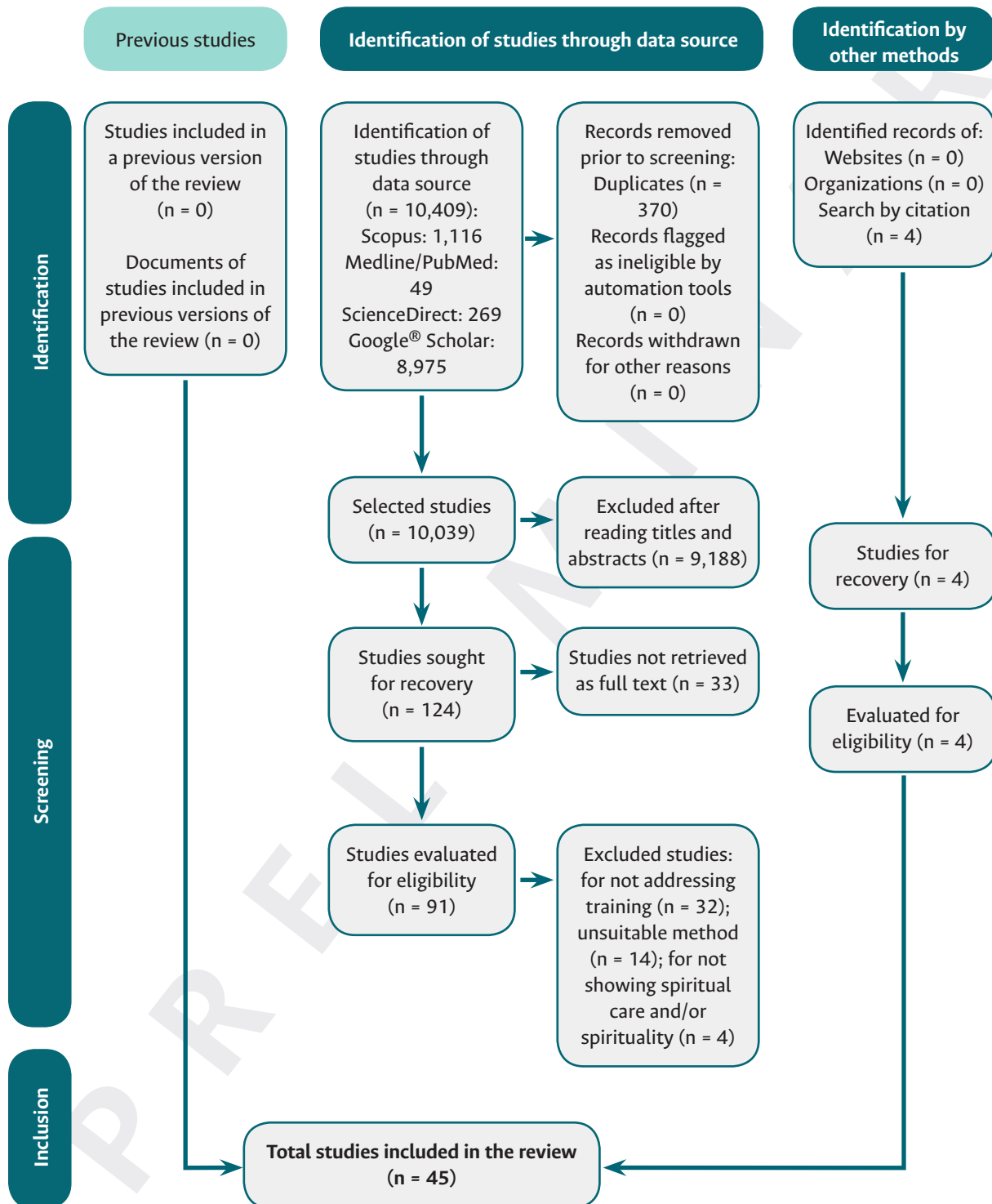
A total of 45 articles were included in the final sample. Figure 1 shows the final sample after eligibility criteria were applied.

Most of the 45 articles in the final sample were published between 2013 and 2017 (37.7%), the most frequent methodological design was the cross-sectional type (35.5%), and the most used approach was the quantitative one (64.4%). In relation to the continent of origin, Europe stood out (48.8%), and the most frequent language was English (88.8%), as exposed in Chart 2.

Chart 3 describes the mapping of studies identified in this review, according to title, authors, study population, sample, and main conclusions of the study.

The studies that refer to education in spiritual care and spirituality had the highest percentage in the sample (68.8%), followed by studies related to education/practice (15.5%), and the clinical practice itself (15.5%), whether during curricular internships or in actual nursing care.

Figure 1. Flowchart of searching the literature and selecting articles, according to the PRISMA-ScR guidelines



Source: study data.

Chart 2. Characterization of the studies analyzed in the review (n = 45)

Variables	N	%
Year of publication		
2023	04	8.8
2018-2022	16	35.5
2013-2017	17	37.7
2007-2011	06	13.3
1995-1996	02	4
Methodological design		
Cross-sectional	16	35
Review	14	31
Cohort	08	17
Clinical trial	06	13
Mixed methods study	01	2.2
Approach		
Quantitative	29	64.4
Qualitative	11	24.4
Mixed	05	11.1

Variables	N	%
Continent		
Europe	22	48.8
America	14	31.1
Asia	08	17.7
Africa	01	2.2
Language		
English	40	88.8
Portuguese	04	10
Mandarin	01	2.2

Source: study data.

Chart 3. Mapping of the studies identified in the review (n = 45)

Title	Authors	Sample/study population	Main approaches	Main conclusions of the study
Emotional intelligence as a mediator between spiritual care-giving competency and core competencies in Chinese nursing interns: A cross-sectional study	Zhang <i>et al.</i> (13)	1,811 nursing students	Emotional intelligence	The average levels of Chinese college nursing interns' core competencies and spiritual care-giving competency were at a moderate level. We suggest modifying the nurse curriculum and instruction to strengthen nursing core competencies and integrating spiritual care-giving competency and emotional intelligence management into the nursing curriculum.
The correlation of spirituality and implementation of spiritual care among nursing student in Jakarta	Gayatri <i>et al.</i> (14)	208 nursing students	Implementation of spiritual care	The study results show that nursing students have good spirituality but are still not good at implementing spiritual care. The recommendation of this research is to add material on spiritual care in the undergraduate nursing curriculum.

Title	Authors	Sample/study population	Main approaches	Main conclusions of the study
Exploring nursing students' perceptions from nursing role function (SP-NRF) during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ardabil Province: a cross sectional study from Iran	Ahmadi <i>et al.</i> (15)	320 nursing students	Insertion of holistic care	Overall, nursing students demonstrated a favorable perception of nursing role function. However, their perception of mental and spiritual care was relatively weak. These findings highlight the need to review nursing education programs and incorporate the spiritual care dimension to enhance students' understanding of and preparation for their role as nurses.
<i>Percepção dos graduandos de enfermagem acerca da dimensão espiritual no processo saúde-doença-cuidado em perspectiva fenomenológica</i>	Silva <i>et al.</i> (16)	7 scientific articles	Clarity in the conceptualization, inclusion in the curriculum and inclusion in the Systematization of Nursing Care	There are many challenges, the spiritual dimension integrates the multidimensionality of the human being, and it is hoped that this model of education can be implemented and deepened.
Student nurses' spiritual care competence and attitude: An online survey	Guo <i>et al.</i> (17)	938 nursing students	Educational resources for spiritual care	Factors such as enjoying the nursing profession, attending a spiritual assistance course, participating in classroom or specialist lecture learning, and supporting ongoing and systematic training were the strongest predictors of greater competence and attitude of spiritual care.
Spiritual care competence of nurses	Akça <i>et al.</i> (18)	201 nurses	Educational resources for spiritual care	Nurses who are trained in spiritual care scored higher on the spiritual care assessment and implementation subscale than those who were not. Nursing degree programs should address spiritual care to help nursing students develop spiritual care competency. Furthermore, health institutions must provide nurses with professional development programs that allow them to keep up to date on spiritual care.

Title	Authors	Sample/study population	Main approaches	Main conclusions of the study
The development of a consensus-based spiritual care education standard for undergraduate nursing and midwifery students: An educational mixed methods study	Van Leeuwen <i>et al.</i> (19)	58 nursing students	Spiritual Care Education Standard	The process resulted in a Spiritual Care Education Standard composed of the following three spiritual care competencies: Interpersonal spirituality; Spiritual care: assessment and planning; Spiritual care: intervention and assessment. This process guides education for spiritual care, assessment, and research. It can be the starting point for discussing spiritual care competencies in other health professions.
Perceived professional competence in spiritual care and predictive role of spiritual intelligence in Iranian nursing students	Ahmadi <i>et al.</i> (20)	510 nursing students	Spiritual intelligence	Spiritual intelligence can affect the competence of nursing students in providing spiritual care to patients. Therefore, to promote students' spiritual intelligence, suitable plans are recommended with the aim of promoting the level of critical thinking and spiritual self-awareness.
Effectiveness of an educational intervention to teach spiritual care to Spanish nursing students	Fernández-Pascual <i>et al.</i> (21)	369 nursing students	Educational resources for spiritual care	A teaching activity on spiritual care in nursing practice was designed and implemented (focus groups, open discussion, discussion groups, and clinical case studies). Post-intervention results indicated that the program was effective in improving knowledge, skills and attitudes related to spiritual care.
An exploratory study of spirituality and spiritual care among Malaysian nurses	Atarhim <i>et al.</i> (22)	208 nurses	Educational resources for spiritual care	Most participants reported having received insufficient spiritual education and training to be competent in providing spiritual care.
A view of spirituality and spiritual care in a sample of Spanish nurses	Reig-Ferrer <i>et al.</i> (23)	25 nurses	Clinical approach	Nurses are sensitive to spirituality issues and acknowledge their importance in practice. Despite this, they view spirituality in a rather mechanistic way without changing their attitudes, competences, and perspectives on healthcare.
Developing a spiritual care competency framework for pre-registration nurses and midwives	Attard <i>et al.</i> (24)	63 scientific articles	Competence-based approach	A competence-based approach addresses the educational mission of integrating the concepts of spirituality/spiritual care into education and practice.

Title	Authors	Sample/study population	Main approaches	Main conclusions of the study
Influence of palliative care training on last-year nursing department students' perception on regarding spirituality and spiritual care: A single-group pretest-posttest intervention study	Özveren <i>et al.</i> (25)	70 nursing students	Techniques for awareness of spiritual perception	It is reported that education begins with an understanding of spirituality. Along with techniques for awareness of spiritual perception, students should be given adequate knowledge and skills (communication, trusting relationship, hope, and support).
Is spirituality an important variable as the predictor of emotional labour for nursing students?	Baksi <i>et al.</i> (26)	167 nursing students	Quiet educational and clinical environment	It was found that the more peaceful the work environment, the more students will be able to express their own spirituality. This shows the primary role of nursing teachers and preceptors in transmitting the teachings about spiritual care.
Talking about spiritual matters: First year nursing students' experiences of an assignment on spiritual conversations	Kuven <i>et al.</i> (27)	385 nursing students	Assignment on spiritual conversations	It was found that, by providing students with a task to explore and practice conversations about spiritual care in real-life situations, they were given an opportunity to develop confidence when talking to patients about spiritual issues.
Psychometric evaluation of the Turkish form of the spiritual care competence scale	Daghan <i>et al.</i> (28)	292 nursing students	Competence-based approach	It was found that for nurses to obtain competences in spiritual care, their perceptions of spirituality and their own spirituality are necessary, and this can and should be offered in the academic environment.
The effect of group reflection on nursing students' spiritual well-being and attitude toward spiritual care: A randomized controlled trial	Momenasab (29)	63 nursing students	Group reflection	It was found that the spiritual well-being of students is relatively high. And this index can be used to improve students' spiritual care skills.
"Enablement" - Spirituality engagement in pre-registration nurse education and practice: a grounded theory investigation	Lewinson <i>et al.</i> (30)	13 nursing students	Behavioral strategy	Spirituality and spiritual care in education need to be clearly represented throughout the theoretical and practical classes in curricular components of nursing education.

Title	Authors	Sample/study population	Main approaches	Main conclusions of the study
Influence of nursing students' purpose in life on quality of life: Focused on the mediating effects of consciousness of calling and satisfaction with life	Park <i>et al.</i> (31)	171 nursing students	Education programs to increase life purpose	It was felt that the life purpose of nursing students had significant influences on the quality of life of nursing students, together with awareness and satisfaction with life.
Nursing and midwifery students' perceptions of spirituality, spiritual care, and spiritual care competency: A prospective, longitudinal, correlational European study	Ross <i>et al.</i> (32)	2,193 nursing students	Competence-based approach	They diagnosed the first international evidence that perceived competence in spiritual care is developed in undergraduate nursing students and that students' perceptions of spirituality and personal spirituality contribute to this development.
Spirituality in nursing: An overview of research methods	Martins <i>et al.</i> (33)	231 scientific articles	Competence-based approach	The conclusions of this review address the gap in longitudinal studies on spirituality and related phenomena and their essential role in establishing a solid foundation for knowledge and for improving effective and appropriate spiritual care interventions.
Carrying hope; pre-registration nursing students' understanding and awareness of their spiritual needs from their experiences in practice: A grounded theory study	Wigley (34)	7 nursing students	Pastoral care model	It was felt that pastoral care could promote recognition of the link between "hope" and "awareness of spiritual need," not only for the students, but also for those responsible for their education.
Attention to spiritual needs in clinical nursing practice	Nascimient <i>et al.</i> (35)	17 nurses	Competence-based approach	They reported that the lack of knowledge and the organization of the work process are difficulties for not performing spiritual care and prioritizing physical care.
An investigation of the perceptions and practices of nursing students regarding spirituality and spiritual care	Kalkim <i>et al.</i> (36)	400 nursing students	Approach based on listening and psychological support	They reported that the spiritual care they provided most often was listening, empathy and psychological support.

Title	Authors	Sample/study population	Main approaches	Main conclusions of the study
Factors contributing to student nurses'/ midwives' perceived competency in spiritual care	Ross <i>et al.</i> (37)	618 nursing students	Competence-based approach	They report that it is necessary to improve competence in spiritual care for non-religious students to broaden their perspective and include the full range of spiritual concerns that patients may need.
Spiritual care as perceived by Lithuanian student nurses and nurse educators: A national survey	Riklikiene <i>et al.</i> (38)	316 nursing students; 92 nurses	Techniques for awareness of spiritual perception	Academics and nurse educators recognized the importance of spiritual care for patients, as well as caregivers – nurses.
Spirituality in the undergraduate curricula of nursing schools in Portugal and São Paulo-Brazil	Caldeira <i>et al.</i> (39)	129 nurses	Spirituality skills	The learning results are consistent with the improvement of the comprehensive education of nursing students, developing clinical reasoning in relation to spirituality and improving the patient's evaluation throughout life. Even though, it seems that spirituality is rarely addressed in clinical practice.
Utilization of spirituality and spiritual care in nursing practice in public hospitals in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa	Chandramohan <i>et al.</i> (40)	385 nurses	Workshops/ courses/seminars on spiritual care	Although most participants had received some information on spiritual care during their training, most nurses felt that such training was insufficient.
Undergraduate nurse students' perspectives of spiritual care education in an Australian context	Cooper <i>et al.</i> (41)	6 nursing students	Discipline of spiritual care	Spiritual care had a positive impact on the perceptions of undergraduate nursing students. In particular, students considered themselves more prepared to provide holistic care, which included spiritual care, after the subject of spiritual care.
Spiritual care education of health care professionals	Baldacchino (42)	223 scientific articles	Educational resources for spiritual care	Experiential learning, visits to the community, reflective exercises and reflective writing, reports, use of the arts to express complex concepts of spiritual care, discussions on the provision of holistic care, participation in research, tutorials and role modeling were identified as beneficial learning resources.
Spirituality in pre-registration nurse education and practice: A review of the literature	Lewinson <i>et al.</i> (43)	187 scientific articles	Spiritual awareness and competency approaches	The education of nurses has a vital part to play in spiritual awareness and in facilitating competence and confidence in this domain.

Title	Authors	Sample/study population	Main approaches	Main conclusions of the study
Nursing students' spiritual well-being, spirituality and spiritual care.	Abbasi <i>et al.</i> (2014) (44)	283 nursing students	Discipline of spiritual care	The inclusion of spiritual care in the syllabus of nursing courses will enhance their understanding and provision of spiritual care.
<i>Diálogos entre espiritualidade e enfermagem: uma revisão integrativa de literatura</i>	Espírito Santo <i>et al.</i> (45)	229 scientific articles	Spiritual practices	Spiritual practices, including religious ones, serve as a form of support and coping with the family member's illness.
Student nurses' perceptions of spirituality and competence in delivering spiritual care: A European pilot study.	Ross <i>et al.</i> (46)	618 nursing students	Spiritual awareness and competency approaches	Students had a broad view of spirituality/spiritual care and considered themselves marginally more competent than those who do not study about spiritual care.
Student nurses' perspectives of spirituality and spiritual care	Tiew <i>et al.</i> (47)	129 nursing students	Spiritual awareness	Students affirmed the importance of spiritual awareness to meet the patients' spiritual needs.
The impact of spiritual care education upon preparing undergraduate nursing students to provide spiritual care	Cooper <i>et al.</i> (48)	79 scientific articles	Educational resources for spiritual care	Teachings about spiritual care were associated with positive perceptions by students toward providing patient care.
Teaching nursing students about spiritual care – A review of the literature	Timmins <i>et al.</i> (49)	69 scientific articles	Spirituality teaching programmes	Spiritual education is also necessary. Definitions and understandings of spirituality, assessment, and how best to teach spiritual care are issues of concern to educators.
Spirituality-based nursing practice by nursing students: An exploratory study	Nardi <i>et al.</i> (50)	86 nursing students	Awareness and application of spirituality	Discovery of 5 competences of spiritual care: valuing and supporting others, teaching based on spirituality in the nursing process, use of the metaphysical self, individual actions based on spirituality, and outcomes based on spirituality
Spirituality within popular education in health	Vasconcelos (51)	698 scientific articles	Educational resources for spiritual care	It was felt that placing emphasis on the concept of spirituality, instead of religiosity, could unblock resistance, since it refers to practices not necessarily linked to religions.
<i>Religião e espiritualidade no ensino e assistência de enfermagem</i>	Gussi <i>et al.</i> (52)	74 scientific articles	Religious practices	It was found that there is, in fact, a Brazilian religious root, and this has profound ramifications in the shaping of Brazilian nursing.

Title	Authors	Sample/study population	Main approaches	Main conclusions of the study
Teaching on the spiritual dimension in care to undergraduate nursing students: The content and teaching methods	Baldacchino (53)	65 nursing students	Educational resources for spiritual care	The teaching and learning process centered on the student and using different teaching methods, such as lessons, case studies and self-reflection, provide a better understanding of spiritual care.
The ethical basis of teaching spirituality and spiritual care: A survey of student nurses' perceptions	McSherry et al. (54)	176 nursing students	Perception-based approach	Nursing students consider it relevant to receive instruction on issues associated with spirituality.
<i>O enfermeiro e a abordagem das questões religiosas</i>	Salgado et al. (55)	10 nurses	Religious practices	The difficulties faced result from the lack of space in academic training and in the professional environment to discuss critically and openly about spiritual care and spirituality.
Teaching spiritual care to nurses	Ross (56)	19 nurses	Educational resources for spiritual care	There is a need for more education on spiritual care to help students to provide this care.
The spiritual dimension: Its importance to patients' health, well-being and quality of life and its implications for nursing practice	Ross (57)	13 scientific articles	Spiritual practices	It was found that there is an agreed definition of what is meant by "spiritual," "spiritual need," and "spiritual care," and that there are few guidelines for nursing practice.

Source: study data.

Discussion

After analyzing the studies identified in the scoping review, it is observed that the main approaches deal with educational resources for spiritual care and on competencies. Still, results such as the deficit in academic training; the importance of the teacher as a facilitator of the teaching-learning process; the essential methodologies to address the theme, as well as specific skills in spiritual care such as communication, empathy, attitude towards the patient's spirituality, personal support, counseling, and the proper application of the nursing process in this care were found in the studies.

The scientific productions published in the last years stand out, which shows the contemporaneity of the subject. This is due to the position adopted by the care references that have reported on the importance of the requirement of nurturing spiritual care and recommendations regarding a greater consideration of the spiritual dimensions of care at a national and international level such as the European Commission, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the International Council of Nurses (ICN). However, it is also worth noting the studies found during the period from 1995 to 2004, which makes visible the view that there were already scientific inquiries regarding spiritual care in recent decades (21).

Although the WHO considers spirituality as one of the intrinsic components of good health care practices, few public policies are specific to spiritual care. Corroborating the findings of our study, research highlights the need to raise awareness among doctors and health professionals about the benefits of providing spiritual care, especially with regard to academic training (58).

In Europe, where most of the studies in this scoping review were published, spiritual care has been used since academic training to try to reduce the academic teaching deficit on the subject, which is unanimous in the research found. From this perspective, it is possible to think of novel approaches for clinical and care practice (32). Studies indicate that this becomes necessary and paramount because the spiritual needs of patients are not effectively met (59).

In Brazil, researchers have already shown interest in addressing spirituality in teaching and nursing care. They list the following barriers at the national level: lack of time for care; lack of academic training, which is also explained in the absence of teaching guidelines that address spirituality and spiritual care; lack of professional training (39). Research confirms the results of our study by recognizing the importance of teachers as facilitators in the learning process, so that spiritual care can be transferred from scientific evidence to nursing care practice (60).

The best teaching methodologies to be addressed during academic training are the discussion of the concept of spiritual care and holistic care, the use of the arts to express complex concepts about spiritual care, participation in research groups involving the student in the dynamic contact with patients, visits to the community, learning based on experiences, reflection exercises and reflective writing. These conclusions show that it is possible for any educational institution to address spiritual care and spirituality during the academic cycle (53).

Researchers describe that the competences found in spiritual care are developed in undergraduate nursing students and that the students' perceptions and biographical experiences about personal spirituality contribute to their development. A valid instrument for these perceptions to be captured is called the Spiritual Care Competency Scale (SCCS), developed with the purpose of analyzing the spiritual dimensions and understanding of individuals about spirituality (17, 18, 32).

Academic spiritual education is guided by the understanding of what spirituality is and continues with the learning of techniques for raising awareness of spiritual perception, appropriate knowledge, and skills. This understanding is important so that specific competences for spiritual care can be formed, such as communication, the attitude towards a patient's spirituality, personal support and counseling, evaluation and implementation of spiritual care and evaluation of the same (25, 61).

Other authors have already added three more unique characteristics of the competences necessary for spiritual care: self-knowledge of oneself, legal ethical issues in spiritual care and information technology in spiritual care. Nevertheless, that same study shows the need for more rigorous research so that the necessary competences for spiritual care can be improved (19, 24).

One of the findings of this review that draws attention and raises questions, as it permeates all the studies identified, is the fear of approaching spirituality and religiosity in academic teaching and in nursing care. Accordingly, it is necessary to emphasize the concept of spirituality, instead of religiosity, since this can help to unblock resistance due to the spiritual care presenting its own references that are not necessarily linked to religion (21, 39). Confirming the findings of this review, a study recommends further research on the clinical efficacy of spiritual care interventions, with a view to promoting results that can sensitize health professionals (58).

In one of the articles, the fact that the formation of Brazilian nursing has a religious root with profound ramifications in the very history of the profession in the country was addressed. This can be a factor that promotes a more integrative view of the human being in the national setting. However, as mentioned above, it can also entail a difficulty in the academic environment, due to the fact that in a conformation of scientific studies there is still confusion in relation to concepts of spirituality and religiosity (52, 62).

An academic training that addresses the spiritual care of patients and allows for continuous reflection under the vision of spirituality can generate students with their own positive spiritual well-being and develop professionals who are aware and sensitive to the full range of needs their patients may present during nursing care (46, 63).

Moreover, during clinical practice, a spiritual care framework can promote a true culture, instilling commitment, and guidance to improve standards of spiritual care, not only for patients, but allowing nursing students to learn and adopt a multidisciplinary team spirit and continuous professional and personal development (32, 64).

The results of this study expose a deficit in relation to spirituality in academic nursing education. Therefore, since nursing is the professional team that is more directly and more frequently involved in providing care, it is necessary to improve the training in spiritual care and spirituality. In this way, it is possible that the competences evidenced become a practical dimension of care.

The practical implication of strongly recommending educational institutions to include the theme of spirituality and spiritual care in the curriculum of nursing courses is highlighted, as well as in the training of other health professionals. As verified in this research, the proper implementation of this aspect in the training of professionals enables comprehensive and holistic health care.

This study has limitations that may be related to the data sources selected for the identification of related studies on the subject, which could have favored that other relevant research on the topic addressed were not considered. Furthermore, the level of evidence of the selected studies was not classified, therefore, practical implications cannot be classified.

Conclusions

Spiritual care and spirituality should be linked to the academic training of nursing so that, during their internships, when students are faced with the spiritual needs of their patients, they know how to provide holistic and comprehensive nursing care. It is the role of educational institutions, as well as the teachers responsible for this training, to adopt an approach that goes beyond the walls of the fundamentalist theory of this profession.

Our findings made it possible to identify how spiritual care and spirituality are addressed in the academic training of nurses, where the insertion of educational resources for spiritual care and approaches based on competences were highlighted. However, this teaching is still deficient in academic formation. Studies recommend modifying the curriculum to strengthen competencies related to spirituality and spiritual care in the nursing academy.

Most studies are cross-sectional studies and non-systematic reviews. In this sense, it is suggested that new research be conducted with studies with methodologies with a prominent level of evidence, such as systematic reviews and experimental studies for a better scientific basis.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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