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**Review Paper**

## **ALTRUISM IN NURSING**

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**Abstract.** *Altruistic behavior in nursing is necessary and can be encouraged by eliciting empathy. The aim of this work was to map the trends of the scientific literature on the question of altruism in nursing. A bibliometric analysis was used to determine the set goal. The Dimensions database was chosen for literature analysis. After many attempts to search for different combinations of words, the final search strategy according to the Boolean algorithm included the following: "altruism" AND "nursing". Raw data was extracted from the Dimensions database in csv format. The CSV file was processed in the Vos Viewer program. The unit of analysis consisted of 7 publications, and the results are tabulated. The research included all citation databases, and from the types of publications, only scientific original articles. The results showed that this topic in science has experienced an exponential decline in the last two years. Also, the most productive authors, journals and countries were identified. According to the number of citations, the most relevant journal is Psychology and Nurse Education in Practice. A review of studies was used to map the published literature, and the results were synthesized and gaps were identified. The basic task of altruism is to help others without reward, but through isolated studies, a decline in willingness to sacrifice, a high burnout rate and compassion fatigue have been identified, which is worrying. Knowing the main lines of research generated in this field allows researchers to follow the trends themselves. Altruism encourages nurses to sacrifice their time and perform challenging tasks, all for the benefit of patients. Researchers can use this analysis in order to identify and design an adequate methodology regarding the representation of altruism in nursing, which is insufficiently researched.*

**Key words:** *Altruism, nursing, nurses, empathy*

## **Introduction**

Altruism is a behavior based on empathy with another person. It allows us to know what others experience and feel, and if empathy occurs, then we too begin to experience and feel the same or similar. Altruistic behavior would be behavior that we undertake for the pleasure of giving pleasure to others. The most significant "reward" for such behavior is satisfaction (1, 2, 3).

The essence of altruism in nursing is a specific emotional experience, and it is in accordance with certain moral norms. When defining altruistic behavior, empathy plays an important role in nursing, which means experiencing the emotional state of another (4). One of the goals in nursing practice is the precise observation of the needs and concerns of patients seen from their point of view, which enables the individualized provision of nursing care. By expressing empathic understanding, patients feel valued and acknowledged, which facilitates the establishment of a relationship of trust (5, 6). Altruistic behavior in nursing is necessary and can be encouraged by eliciting empathy. It is necessary to observe altruism and empathy separately, because altruism is not the same as empathy, and vice versa (7, 8, 9). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are no studies that investigated altruism in the nursing profession. The aim of this work was to map the trends of the scientific literature on the question of altruism in nursing.

## **Material and methods**

This paper dealt with the bibliometric analysis of scientific publications on the topic of altruism in nursing. The Dimensions database was chosen as the data source. The data were analyzed in the VosViewer program, which is intended for bibliometric and visual data analysis. Bibliometric and visual analysis was used to map the scientific literature in the researched area. The Dimensions database was used for the search. The advantage of this methodology is a comprehensive evaluation of scientific literature (10). In order to reduce researcher bias, a protocol for the analysis procedure was established (11). After many attempts to search for different combinations of words, the final search strategy according to the Boolean algorithm included the following: "altruism" AND "nursing". Raw data was extracted from the Dimensions database in csv format. The CSV file was processed in the Vos Viewer program. The search was conducted at the beginning of 2025 and a total of 7 scientific publications were found. Scientific publications with keywords in the title or abstract in all research categories are included. The results are presented in tabular form, and the research includes all citation databases, and from the types of publications, only scientific original articles.

## **Results**

Table 1 shows the evolution of scientific production on this topic. This evolution had three clearly defined periods, the first from 2011 to 2016 when the number of publications was very low, and the second from 2016 to 2021 when scientific production grew slightly. Then, an exponential decline from 2021 to 2023 is evident, as the number of studies was again lower than in the previous period. After that,

scientific production reached an evident exponential decline as after 2023 not a single paper was found.

Table 1. Evolution of scientific production on the topic of altruism in nursing

<b>Year of publication</b>	<b>Total number of publications</b>
2011.	1
2016.	2
2018.	2
2021.	1
2023.	1

In Table 2, we see research categories that have 1 published article each in this area. As is evident, the analyzed articles are mainly from the field of biomedical and clinical sciences, psychological science, health science, as well as the field of economics.

Table 2. Representation of research categories

<b>Research categories</b>	<b>Number</b>
Biomedical and Clinical Sciences (32)	1
Economics (38)	1
Health Sciences (42)	1
Human Society (44)	1
Psychology (52)	1

The most relevant journals in this field are shown in Table 3. The journal with the largest number of documents (n=1) and the largest number of citations (n=14) was the journal Psychology. After that, the most relevant journals according to the number of citations were: Nurse Education in Practice and Acta Facultatis Medicae Naissensis.

Table 3. The most relevant journals in this field

<b>Journals</b>	<b>Number documents</b>	<b>Number citate</b>
Acta Facultatis Medicae Naissensis	1	3
Psihologijske teme	1	1
Sociologija	1	0
Metodički obzori	1	0
Vojnosanitetski pregled	1	0
Psihologia	1	14
Nurse Education in Practice	1	5

Table 4 shows the bibliographic connection map of the countries. The most prominent cluster of countries is Serbia, followed by Turkey, Croatia and Iran.

Table 4. Map of bibliographic connections of countries

Author/s	Institutions	Country
Aleksandar Đurović	Clinic for physical medicine and rehabilitation of the Academy of Medical Sciences, Faculty of Medicine	Belgrade, Serbia
Srbislava Pavlov, Zagorka Markov	College of Teachers in Kikinda	Kikinda, Serbia
Aleksandar Dimitrijevic, Natasa Hanak, Sonja Milojevic	Department of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, 2 Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation, University of Belgrade	Serbia
Nayereh Baghcheghi, Hamid Reza Koohestani	Department of Nursing - Center for Social Determinants of Health Research; Center for Research on Social Determinants of Health Saveh Medical University	Iran
Lucija Bijelić, Ivana Macuka	Special hospital for psychiatry and palliative care Sveti Rafael Strmac, University of Zadar, Department of Psychology	Croatia
Milana Ljubicic	University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy	Serbia
Gülden Basit, Serpil Su, Emine Geçkil, Osman Basit, Kübra Nur Köse Alabay	Necmettin Erbakan University, Faculty of Nursing, Fundamentals of Nursing Department, Konya; Necmettin Erbakan University, Faculty of Nursing, Department of Child Health and Diseases Nursing, Konya; Necmettin Erbakan University, Eregli Faculty of Education, Department of Pre-school Education, Konya	Turkey

### Discussion

Examining the representation of studies on altruism in nursing, included productivity, trends, leading research organizations, journals, and authors. Knowing the main lines of research generated in this field allows researchers to follow the trends themselves. In the health sciences, numerous issues that are often caused by complex phenomena impose the need for more and more frequent application of altruism in nursing, especially since it is a very sensitive profession, although a decline in their use is visible in the last year, which coincides with the dynamics of research in this area, as evidenced by our analysis (8).

Namely, it was determined that research with the concept of altruism in nursing had an exponential decline since 2019. From 2011 to today, a total of 7 studies were found that examined the representation and assessment of altruism in nursing. The country with the most published publications on this topic is Serbia. Serbia is also in the center of the bibliographic map of the connection, but with the closest ties to Turkey, Iran and Croatia.

Without empathy it is impossible to help others, but with too much openness to the emotional aspects of empathy or without sufficiently focused mentalization, especially nurses working in a clinical environment, may be at risk of professional burnout, and patients may have more harm than good (12).

In their study, the authors found out that emotional exhaustion particularly affects secondary education staff - nurses and carers. The majority of employees have energy, enthusiasm and motivation to perform their work in the best possible way, but to a greater extent they lack motivation, elan and energy for work, as well as the meaning of the work they perform - they are professionally powerless to change anything, and the work effort they undertake does not produce the expected results, which can affect the presence of altruism of employees in the long term (13).

Also, in this field of work, it is very important to examine whether there is a connection between the dimensions of altruism and the choice of a future occupation. The findings of the study show that there is a significant statistical difference related to the dimension of altruism in favor of respondents who chose the profession of nursing (14).

In altruism, an individual helps others constructively without expecting a reward. Empathy is an important motivation for altruism. It starts and further develops socio-emotional relationships between people and thus encourages their positive personal growth. Nurses are the best carriers of health care (15). Empathy is one of the most important skills in the nursing profession. Being empathetic, which is recognized as the most basic motivation for altruistic behavior, requires recognizing emotional states and understanding the needs of other persons, especially hospitalized patients (16). Although we are making rapid progress from the aspect of technology in medical and health sciences, the results indicate that it is necessary to introduce the humanities in rehabilitation medicine precisely because of the positioning of altruism, religiosity among employees due to the ultimate positive outcomes in this field of work as well (17).

Knowing the main lines of research generated in this field allows researchers to follow the trends themselves. Researchers can use this analysis in order to identify the design of an adequate methodology regarding the representation of altruism in nursing, which is insufficiently researched. There are major global problems that lead to the disintegration of personality in the modern era (identity crisis, damaged value system, humanism on trial, endangered satisfaction of personal, social and biological motives). We believe that this research, despite its limitations, raises important practical questions.

## **Conclusion**

Altruism encourages nurses to sacrifice their time and perform challenging tasks, all for the benefit of patients. Our analysis has numerous implications related to the fact that our results will be useful to future researchers in collecting adequate and interesting topics from this field of research, so that numerous scientific subjects of research can be identified. Limitations of our study relate to the limitation of

searching a single database, Dimensions. A recommendation for further research could be to extend the analysis to other databases such as Wos, Scopus and Pubmed.

## Literature

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## ALTRUIZAM U SESTRINSTVU

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**Sažetak.** *Altruističko ponašanje u sestrinstvu je neophodno i može se potaknuti izazivanjem empatije. Cilj ovog rada bio je mapirati trendove naučne literature po pitanju ispitivanja altruizma u sestrinstvu. Korišćena je bibliometrijska analiza kako bi se utvrdio postavljeni cilj. Za analizu literature izabrana je baza podataka Dimensions. Nakon mnogo pokušaja traženja različitih kombinacija riječi konačna strategija pretrage je prema Boolean-ovom algoritmu uključivala sljedeće: "altruism" AND „nursing“. Sirovi podaci su ekstrahovani iz Dimensions baze u csv formatu. CSV fajl je obrađen u Vos Viewer programu. Jedinica analize se sastojala od 7 publikacija, a rezultati su prikazani tabelarno. Istraživanjem su obuhvaćene sve citatne baze, a od vrsta publikacija samo naučni originalni članci. Rezultati su pokazali da je ova tema u nauci imala eksponencijalni pad posljednje dvije godine. Identifikovani su najproduktivniji autori, časopisi i zemlje. Prema broju citata najrelevantniji časopis je Psihologija i Nurse Education in Practice. Pregled studija se koristio za mapiranje objavljenih literature, a rezultati su se sintetizovali i identifikovale praznine. Osnovni zadatak altruizma je pomoć drugima bez nagrade, ali kroz izdvojene studije je identifikovan pad volje za požrtvovanost, visoka stopa sagorijevanja i umor od saosjećanja, što je zabrinjavajuće. Poznavanje glavnih pravaca istraživanja generisanih u ovoj oblasti omogućava istraživačima da sami prate trendove. Altruizam podstiče medicinske sestre da žrtvuju svoje vrijeme i obavljaju izazovne zadatke, a sve u korist pacijenata. Istraživači mogu koristiti ovu analizu u cilju identifikacije koncipiranja adekvatne metodologije po pitanju zastupljenosti altruizma u sestrinstvu što je nedovoljno istraženo.*

**Ključne riječi:** *Altruizam, sestrinstvo, medicinske sestre, empatija*

