

The image of nursing in the media: A scoping review

Hildegart González PhD, BSc, Professor^{1,2,3}  | Begoña Errasti-Ibarrondo PhD, MSc, RN, Associate Professor^{1,2,4}  | Andrea Iraizoz-Iraizoz RN⁵ | Ana Choperena PhD, MSc, RN, Associate Professor^{1,2,6} 

¹Facultad de Enfermería, Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona, Spain

²IdiSNA Navarra Institute for Health Research, Pamplona, Spain

³Center for Health Policy and Media Engagement, George Washington University School of Nursing, Washington, USA

⁴John Dossetor Health Ethics Centre, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada

⁵Clinica Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona, Spain

⁶The Marjory Gordon Program for Clinical Reasoning and Knowledge Development, William F. Connell School of Nursing, Boston College, Boston, USA

Correspondence

Begoña Errasti-Ibarrondo, Facultad de Enfermería, Universidad de Navarra, Irunlarrea, 1, Postal code: 31008, Pamplona, Navarra, Spain.
Email: meibarrondo@unav.es

Abstract

Aim: To systematically review the available evidence from research exploring the image of nurses in the media.

Background: Nurses have historically faced many challenges and have received media attention for such efforts. However, the image of nursing traditionally conveyed by media has failed to represent the real character and a positive image of the nursing profession.

Review methods: For this scoping literature review, a search was conducted in PubMed, CINAHL, Scopus, PsycINFO, Web of Science and Dialnet to identify studies written in English, Spanish or Portuguese from the earliest date in the databases until February 2022. Four authors were involved in a two-stage screening process. Data were subjected to quantitative content analysis. A decade-by-decade analysis was performed to track the evolution of the research.

Results: Sixty studies were included. The analysis shows (1) an increasing interest in analysing the portrayal of nurses and nursing in media over time, especially from 2000 onwards; (2) a prevailing trend of focusing on one form of media when analysing the portrayal of nurses; (3) qualitative designs as the most frequent method for exploring the image of nursing; and (4) a predominantly negative image conveyed by media.

Conclusions: There is a notable body of scientific evidence about the image of nurses and nursing portrayed in media. The interest in analysing media depictions of nursing has a long history. The included studies' samples showed heterogeneity, as they were obtained from different media, periods and countries.

Implications for nursing: This scoping review is the first systematic review to provide a comprehensive map of what has been studied thus far regarding media depictions of nursing. It confirms the imperative need for nurses in different settings (academic, assistance or management fields) to maintain a proactive attitude towards addressing images of nursing and ensuring accurate representations.

KEYWORDS

Image of nursing, media, nursing, public image, scoping review, social media

INTRODUCTION

The portrayal of nursing in media has long been of concern to nurses. Media portrayals of nurses influence the public's perception of their roles, the recruitment of nurses (Cleary et al., 2018; Errasti-Ibarrondo et al., 2012) and nurses' professional identity (ten Hoeve et al., 2014). Nurses have historically faced many challenges for which they have received media

attention, as shown by the contributions of nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, the image of nursing traditionally depicted by media has failed to represent the real character and image of the nursing profession that emerged as a scientific discipline in the last half of the 20th century; thus, traditional stereotypes persist (ten Hoeve et al., 2014; Teresa-Morales et al., 2022). We need to convey more realistic representations of nursing (Price et al., 2013) and

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reposition the public understanding of nurses' achievements in clinical, academic and leadership roles (Bennett et al., 2020; Dhandapani & Gopichandran, 2019; Santillán-García, 2020).

Nursing encompasses a set of rules, roles, beliefs, practices and relationships that shape nurses' actions and their social image (Joseph & Edmonson, 2020; Siles-González, 2011). Society should not build an idea of nursing that is detached from its evolution and current reality. We examine how the profession has been publicly depicted through common means of mass and social media. We report on a five-stage scoping review that aims to systematically review the available evidence on the image of nurses in the media from the literature in three languages.

BACKGROUND

Images are not isolated structures but compositions perceived and decoded within a context by the public in a more or less conscious way (Heierle Valero, 2009). They do not strictly depend on or reflect the reality that is being evaluated so much as they depend on society's beliefs (Pawłowski et al., 2019). Mass media has an enormous impact on the formation of images to the extent that it has a decisive effect on people's conceptions of the world (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1986). This effect is not an old-fashioned or irrelevant issue; rather, media portrayals impact the perceptions even of contemporary media-aware audiences (Gill & Baker, 2019). Recognizing the significance of media in influencing the perception of nursing as a social good or public evil (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1983) is essential to achieving an accurate image of nursing.

As pointed out by ten Hoeve et al. (2014), previous studies 'have shown that nurses are not given due recognition for the skills they have by the majority of the public' (p. 2); rather, stereotypic thinking about nursing promoted by mass media persists (Gill & Baker, 2019). The act of stereotyping involves the use of images to make judgements about people, places or events (Auker, 2004). In light of this definition, many authors have studied nursing clichés disseminated by mass media: the doctor's handmaiden, ministering angel, 'battleaxe' and naughty nurse (Ferns & Chojnacka, 2005; Kalisch & Kalisch, 1982; Mohammed et al., 2021). Some studies have found that as a result of the distorted images and negative portrayals of nurses, issues with 'staff recruitment and nursing shortage, resource allocation, interdisciplinary relationships, nurses' job performance, violence against nurses, public trust, low pay and workload, burnout, and job dissatisfaction' are among the harmful consequences for the profession (Rezaei-Adaryani et al., 2012, p. 84). Those considering nursing as a career may be dangerously conditioned by the misrepresentation of nursing (Price et al., 2013), and nurses' self-concept and professional identity may be affected (Godsey et al., 2020; ten Hoeve et al., 2014).

Although many efforts have been made over the years to rectify this situation and the profession has undergone significant and continual evolution in the minds of the public,

these stereotypes continue to be perpetuated by the media (Perna et al., 2019). In this respect, the analysis of nursing-related images has a long history, but no research has yet formed a comprehensive picture of nursing from the perspective of the mass media around the globe involved in creating this image of nursing throughout the years. Some studies have partially analysed some portrayals from the perspective of specific media (Baldrich-Rodríguez et al., 2016; Gill & Baker, 2019; Girvin et al., 2016; Martín González et al., 2018; Sánchez-Gras, 2017; Stanley, 2008), but there has been no systematic approach developed to examine the complexities of the social representation of nursing conveyed by all media across time and space. In a challenging and never-ending struggle between what nurses are, what they are not and what images have been used to depict them, a systematic global review of the research available on the image of nursing disseminated by media throughout time was conducted and is described here.

The review

The aim of this scoping review was to systematically examine the available evidence from research on the image of nurses in the media. More precisely, this methodology was implemented with the following objectives: (1) conduct a systematic search for studies exploring and analysing the image of nurses in the media; (2) map the characteristics, range of data sources and methodologies used to explore and analyse the image of nurses in the media; and (3) track the progress of such research to explore and analyse the image of nurses in the media across time.

Design

This scoping review was based on Arksey and O'Malley's framework (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005) and the recommendations of Levac et al. (2010). Scoping reviews are 'a valuable form of evidence synthesis ... [that are] increasingly being adopted by nurses and midwives who are seeking to map evidence and describe relevant literature' (Pollock et al., 2021, p. 2111). They are useful for mapping research activity in terms of its volume, features and nature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005) and are frequently used when the body of literature exhibits a large, complex or heterogeneous nature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Peters et al., 2015). Such reviews may be carried out to determine the range of research on a given topic and the way the studies have been conducted (Peters et al., 2015).

Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework consists of five stages: (1) identifying the research question; (2) identifying relevant studies; (3) selecting studies; (4) charting the data; and (5) collating, summarizing and reporting the results. Given the aim of this scoping review, a quality assessment of the studies was not deemed necessary (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Pham et al., 2014) and hence was not performed.

Research question

The research question of this review was: What are the characteristics, methodologies and samples used in studies exploring and analysing the image of nurses or nursing in mass media and on social media over time? What are the dominant themes in the focus of the identified studies over time?

Identifying relevant studies

A comprehensive literature search was conducted in PubMed, CINAHL, Scopus, PsycINFO, Web of Science and Dialnet for items published from the inception of the databases until June 2020. The searches were conducted in July 2019 and refreshed in June 2020 and February 2022. The searches in PubMed, CINAHL, PsycINFO and Web of Science used the combination of MeSH terms and the keywords 'Nurs*', 'image', 'communications media', 'mass media', 'periodicals as topic', 'press coverage', 'newspaper article', 'radio', 'tv', 'television', 'motion pictures', 'soap opera', 'social media', 'advertising as topic' and 'advert*'); these terms and keywords were then modified to fit the parameters of Scopus and Dialnet (see the [Supplementary Material](#) for the full electronic search strategy). For each database search strategy, a research librarian was consulted. To find additional relevant studies, the reference lists for the selected studies were searched. Finally, the literature search was manually completed by searching and reviewing the works published by the authors of the selected studies.

Study selection

To be included in the review, studies had to focus on analysing the image of nurses or nursing in data sources such as the press, radio, TV, journals, magazines or social media for informative, recreational or advertising purposes. Exclusion criteria included studies on the image of nurses on webpages, blogs, recruitment campaigns, information leaflets and Google images. Empirical studies were excluded if they focused on the public perception of nursing or nurses; did not describe their research methods; were published in sources other than academic journals, dissertations, books or reports; or were published in languages other than English, Spanish or Portuguese. Editorials, comments and essays were also excluded. One identified study did not specify the research design or the methods used to analyse data, but was included because the researchers identified it as an investigation, and the sample and sampling in the research were described in depth (Johnson, 2012). Some of the identified studies' samples combined media that met our inclusion criteria with media that fell outside them. These studies were included in the review, but only data meeting our inclusion criteria were considered for analysis (Auker, 2004; Dahlborg-Lyckhage & Pilhammar-Anderson, 2009; Girvin et al., 2016; Heierle Valero, 2011; Kalisch & Kalisch, 1983, 1986, 1987; McGillis Hall & Kashin, 2016; Perna et al., 2019).

The study selection process led to the exclusion of literature that was related to the topic of this scoping review but that did not explore nurses' image in media *per se*. For example, this was the case for (a) studies focused on analysing adverse events occurring in nursing practice (Fontana et al., 2015; Forte et al., 2019; Novatzki Forte et al., 2016); (b) studies aimed at analysing nurses' presence in the media, such as the Woodhull Study (Sigma Theta Tau International, 1997), the Woodhull Study Revisited (Mason et al., 2018), and the study of Norwood (2001); and (c) studies centred on the role of the communication departments of nurses' associations disseminating nurses' images, such as the study carried out by Cardoso et al. (2014).

A two-stage screening process (Pham et al., 2014) was followed to determine if the identified studies were relevant for the scoping review: (1) the title and abstract were screened for relevance, and duplicates were deleted; and (2) the full texts were screened for relevance. Figure 1 shows the PRISMA flow diagram of the search strategies and the number of papers excluded at each phase. All the studies were independently screened by two of the researchers. When the reviewers disagreed on whether a study should be included, they discussed the study's suitability with the third and fourth authors (Levac et al., 2010).

Charting, collating and summarizing the data

A data charting form was developed to guide the standard and systematic extraction of specific information for each study. A refined version of the chart form is shown in Table 1. To guarantee the consistency of the data extraction process, four studies were independently charted by HG and AC, and another four were charted by HG and BE (Levac et al., 2010). Two of the researchers independently verified all the extracted information with the original articles (BE and AI).

The charting form data were subjected to quantitative content analysis (Bardin, 2002). An ad hoc code of analysis was developed to objectively assess the characteristics of the studies using seven variables: (1) sample country, (2) the dates of the samples that were analysed in the studies included in the review, (3) the media included in the sample, (4) the study methodology, (5) the means for disseminating the study's results, (6) the study's publication date, and (7) the original study authors' assessment of the image of nursing/nurses. Furthermore, a decade-by-decade analysis was performed to track the evolution of the research conducted to explore the image of nurses portrayed in the media.

RESULTS

The final number of studies included in the review was 60, of which 95% were published in professional journals. The results derived from the quantitative content analysis on the first six variables are presented in the [Supplementary Material](#). In summary, most of the studies focused on analysing media in one country, with studies in the United States

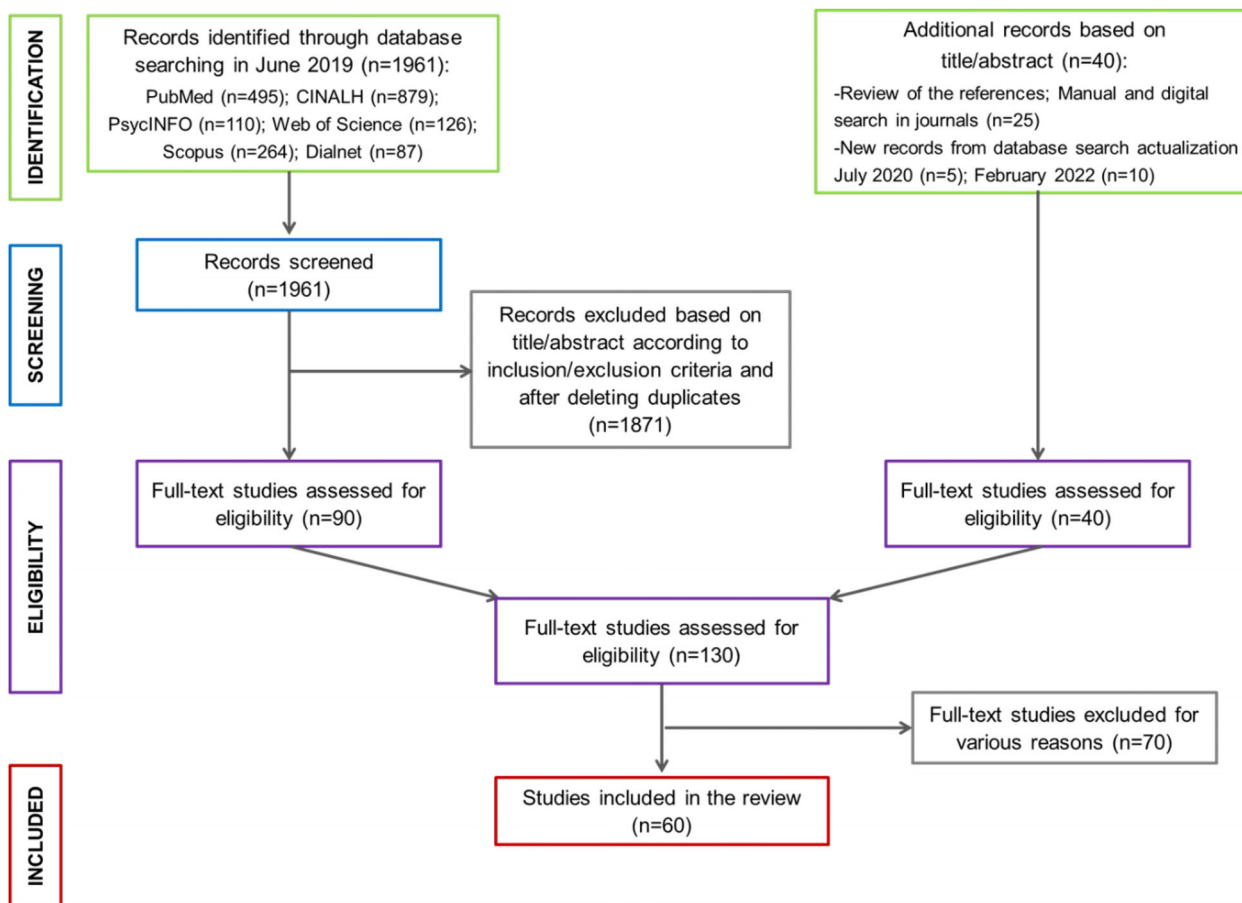


FIGURE 1 Flowchart diagram.

predominating. The studies analysed media from each decade since the 1920s except the 1960s. A majority of the studies analysed print media or films and used qualitative and mixed-methods designs. They were published in the last decade.

Original study authors' assessment of the image of nursing/nurses

Twenty-four studies (40%) concluded that the nursing image disseminated by media was negative; 12 studies (20%) found the image to be more negative than positive; 11 studies (18.33%) found the overall image to be positive; and 3 (5%) found the image to be more positive than negative. Five studies (8.33%) found the image to be balanced, and five studies (8.33%) did not conclude whether the portrayal of nurses was positive or negative. See Table 1 for an overview of each study's results.

Studies' decade-by-decade highlights

The 1980s

In the 1980s, 14 studies in the United States were identified. Kalisch and Kalisch authored all 14 of these studies. Most cov-

ered a broad period of time, with the exception of three studies that analysed a period of only one year: one study examined the treatment of clinical nursing news (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1984a), and two studies analysed the coverage of nurses' strikes in 1980 (Kalisch et al., 1983; Kalisch & Kalisch, 1985). Three studies focused on analysing films in the 1930–1979/80 period (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1981b; Kalisch & Kalisch, 1982; Kalisch et al., 1982b); three analysed newspaper articles in the 1978–81 period focusing on specific nursing specialties – psychiatric nursing (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1984a), community health nursing (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1984c) and perioperative nursing (Kalisch et al., 1985); and four covered the period from 1950 to the 1980s and examined the public image of nurses in a variety of media (Kalisch et al., 1982a; Kalisch & Kalisch, 1983; Kalisch & Kalisch, 1984b; Kalisch & Kalisch, 1987). It was during the 1980s when the first study focused on analysing the differences in the portrayal of physicians and nurses was conducted (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1986).

The 1990s

In the 1990s, only four articles were relevant for our review: two Spanish (González-Oya & Alonso-Pérez, 1990; Siles-González et al., 1998) and two US studies (Aber & Hawkins,

TABLE 1 Summary of included studies (chronologically ordered).

Study Country	Aim Methods	Analysed media and period	Main Findings
Kalisch and Kalisch (1981a) USA	To examine the treatment of clinical nursing news. <i>Quantitative content analysis</i>	Newspapers 1978	The quality of news about clinical nursing varied by specialty, with maternity nursing and paediatric nursing news being more progressive and community health nursing and medical-surgical nursing being quite traditional. Psychiatric nursing received an inordinately low amount of news coverage.
Kalisch and Kalisch (1981b) USA	To investigate the depiction of psychiatric nurses. <i>Quantitative and qualitative content analysis</i>	Films 1930–1980	The psychiatric nurses were (1) demographically no different from other nurses portrayed in the sample; (2) significantly more likely to hold an administrative position; (3) depicted as less attractive and have less sex appeal than other nurses; (4) more likely to have power and had significantly more influence over the physicians with whom they work than non-psychiatric nurses; (5) depicted as deficient in sympathy, altruism, kindness, permissiveness, warmth; and (6) depicted as indifferent to patients and revealed to be mentally ill themselves (a special form of the pathological personality (sadism) was especially prevalent). Motion pictures portraying psychiatric nurses portrayed a significantly more negative image of nursing than the other films pertaining to nursing.
Kalisch and Kalisch (1982) USA	To document the image of nurses in films. <i>Qualitative and quantitative content analysis</i>	Films 1930–1979	The image of the nursing profession in motion pictures reached its most positive expression during the 1940s, actually peaking at the height of the Second World War. Since then, a steady erosion of the strong and positive image of the nursing profession has occurred. A particularly dramatic decline began in the 1960s and intensified throughout the 1970s, as the nursing profession was demigrated and satirized in many important and influential films.
Kalisch et al. (1982a) USA	To explore the practice of nursing as portrayed on prime-time television over the past 30 years. <i>Quantitative content analysis</i>	Television series 1950–1980	Nurses were depicted as working in acute care settings, entering nursing for altruistic reasons, predominantly serving as resources for other health professionals, not using problem-solving and evaluation skills, deficient in administrative abilities, and remiss in providing physical comfort, and engaging in activities beyond their assigned role, including patient education and scholarly endeavours. Since the 1960s, the accuracy of the portrayal of nurses has decreased.
Kalisch et al. (1982b) USA	To determine the nature and extent of the motion picture industry's depiction of the nurse as a sex object and to identify changes in that portrayal from 1930 to 1980. <i>Quantitative content analysis</i>	Films 1930–1979	Seventy-three percent of the nurse roles characterized nurses as sex objects. The stereotype of nurses as sex objects became significantly more frequent and intense during the 1960s and 1970s. The exploitation of the nurse as a sex object was more common in the larger roles for nurses. However, in films with a strong emphasis on professional nursing either in the story or through character development, sexual stereotyping of nurses was uncommon.
Kalisch and Kalisch (1983)* USA	To study the image of the nurse in mass media in search of the evolving social perception of the nurse and the accompanying symbolic system that expresses the implicit concepts of what nursing means. <i>Qualitative and quantitative content analysis</i>	Novels, magazine short stories, poems, articles, newspapers, films, radio programmes, television episodes. 1850–present	Five dominant image types were identified: (1) the angel of mercy (1854–1919), (2) the girl Friday (1920–1929), (3) the heroine (1930–1945), (4) the mother (1946–1965), and (5) the sex object (1966–1982). These images epitomize the modes of thinking and feeling about nurses that were inherent in mass media entertainment and common messages of the day; as such, these depictions constitute the stereotypes of nurses fundamentally characteristic of their particular periods.
Kalisch et al. (1983) USA	To explore the coverage of local events by New York news stations during 1980, including what image newscasts presented of striking nurses. <i>Quantitative content analysis and a qualitative review of the broadcasts.</i>	Television news 1980	The quality of television news coverage of nurses' strikes and other labour activities plays a crucial role in expanding such conflicts to the public with either pro-labour or pro-management colourations. Access to each medium was influenced by the magnitude of the disruption. Nurses' unions benefit from more positive television news coverage when they (1) project an image of solidarity, (2) maintain unity over time, and (3) receive the support of other types of healthcare workers. Hospital administrators made more negative televised comments about the striking nurses than other interviewees.

(Continues)



TABLE 1 (Continued)

Study Country	Aim Methods	Analysed media and period	Main Findings
Kalisch and Kalisch (1984a) USA	To analyse the newspaper articles pertaining to psychiatric nursing published between 1978 and 1981. <i>Quantitative content analysis</i>	Newspapers January 1978–December 1981	When psychiatric nursing articles are published in newspapers, they are more visible than articles on the other clinical specialties. These articles appear in newspapers with wider circulation and greater publication frequency, are bigger in size, and have larger headlines. Unfortunately, these positive features are entirely cancelled out by the markedly deficient output of newspaper articles about psychiatric nursing.
Kalisch and Kalisch (1984b) USA	To determine the nature and extent of the differences in prime-time television portrayals of nurses and physicians over the past three decades and to illuminate the major variables implicit in the interface between the sexual and occupational stereotyping of the two largest groups of health care professionals. <i>Quantitative content analysis</i>	TV series 1950–1980	There are extreme levels of both sexual and occupational stereotyping. Ninety-nine percent of television nurses are female. An image of the female professional nurse as totally dependent on and subservient to male physicians is painted. The development of the dichotomous sex and occupational role imagery has resulted in male physician characters who not only have outstanding medical competencies but also embody all the attractive competencies of professional nurses. Television nurses largely serve as window dressing on sets and have little opportunity to contribute to patient welfare.
Kalisch and Kalisch (1984c) USA	To investigate the quality of press information about community health nurses and their services. <i>Quantitative content analysis</i>	Newspapers 1978–1981	The community health nursing articles have unfavourable visibility in newspapers. The media image of the community health nurse is moving away from the progressive, innovative, powerful and prevention-oriented character it historically held.
Kalisch and Kalisch (1985) USA	To examine the geographical distribution of newspaper articles about nurse strikes as well as the level of exposure, setting and specific strike issues covered in strike stories and to measure the quality of the image of nurses in such stories. <i>Quantitative content analysis</i>	Newspapers 1 January 1980–31 December 1980	The 893 articles on nurses' strikes presented a more negative image of nurses than newspaper articles on other nursing subjects. There were more negative headlines, criticism of nurses and negative relationships. The desire for higher salaries was the major strike issue covered by newspapers, which suggested to readers that nurses are interested in personal economic gain more than quality patient care. Such articles were more likely to appear in newspapers with wide circulation and to be about strikes in hospitals rather than other healthcare settings. The most extensive and favourable press coverage occurred in states where organized labour is concentrated.
Kalisch et al. (1985) USA	To analyse the quality and amount of information on the perioperative nursing specialty in newspapers. <i>Quantitative content analysis</i>	Newspapers 1978–1981	The news media during this time projected a relatively positive image of perioperative nursing. Perioperative nurses were depicted in indirect and vital care-giving roles, little confusion existed about their role, and they were praised by patients for their contributions to health care. However, there were too few articles on this subject, and the dissemination of those articles that did exist was quite limited.
Kalisch and Kalisch (1986)* USA	To analyse differences in the portrayal of nurses and physicians in three major forms of entertainment media: novels, films and prime-time television; to illuminate changes in the portrayal of nurse and physician characters from 1920 to the present. <i>Quantitative content analysis</i>	Novels, films and TV prime-time television series 1920–1980	Compared with physician characters, nurse characters were consistently found to be less central to the plot and less intelligent, rational and individualistic as well as less likely to value scholarship and achievement or to exercise clinical judgement. In TV series, nurse characters were depicted as placing less value on service to others, being less helpful to patients, being less nurturing and have less empathy than physician characters.
Kalisch and Kalisch (1987)* USA	To promote a fuller understanding of the powerful relationship between media portrayals of nurses and the public image of nursing. <i>Quantitative content analysis</i>	Novels, films and TV series 1850–1987	Five image types that are characteristic of five successive periods of time were identified: (1) the angel of mercy (1854–1919), (2) the girl Friday (1920–1929), (3) the heroine (1930–1945), (4) the sex object (1966–1982) and (5) the careerist (1980).
González-Oya and Alonso-Pérez (1990) Spain	To analyse news mentioning nurses in Galician newspapers in recent years. <i>Quantitative content analysis</i>	Newspapers 4 years	There are few reports on nurses, who are considered to be part of a conflictive labour sector. Nurses appear in a secondary position as handmaidens to physicians and lacking responsibilities. However, the image of nurses is upgraded in regard to their education and scientific activities. Only 6% of the news centred on negligence and complaints. The adjectives most often used to refer to nurses were 'pretty' and 'astute'.

(Continues)



TABLE 1 (Continued)

Study Country	Aim Methods	Analysed media and period	Main Findings
Stevens (1990) USA	To examine the images of nursing projected in Movietone news (newsreels) during the Second World War and to identify strategies that may be effective today for improving the image of nursing. <i>Descriptive historical study. Content analysis and internal and external criticism</i>	Newsreels 1942–1944	Depictions of nursing focused only on the positive aspects of the profession. Segments were orchestrated to promote an image of nurses as competent, attractive, intelligent, courageous and patriotic. They were consistently depicted through pictures and words as having a vital role; showing unflinching devotion; being true comrades, gallant, heroic and needed; guarding the nation's health; and easing pain and suffering. Movietone news documented changes in the image, practice and education involved in nursing. The newsreels provided advertisements, promoted nursing as a valued profession, documented nurses' roles in the world and allowed for cooperation with nursing and government organizations. The essential nature of nursing care was depicted, and it was shown to be a science-based profession.
Aber and Hawkins (1992) USA	To determine if the images of nurses reflect the roles nurses actually play in health care. <i>Quantitative content analysis</i>	Medical and nursing journals 1990	Nurses are predominantly portrayed as young women, sex objects, ornaments and physicians' handmaidens. The portrayal of nurses' uniforms and scrub colours continues to perpetuate stereotypes.
Siles González et al. (1998) Spain	To determine the influence of the cinema on the public's image of nursing during the Spanish Civil War. <i>Filmic analysis and thematic analysis based on predefined categories</i>	Spanish films 1936–1939	Both sides of the Spanish Civil War (Nationalists and Republicans) used and conceptualized an image of nurses as a symbol of the self-denial and dedication of women. On the Nationalist side, this image was linked to the religious and domestic sphere, and on the Republican side, it was linked to the selfless character of nurses.
Lusk (2000) USA	To assess how nurses are portrayed in advertisements from journals read by their employers and other hospital personnel. <i>Quantitative content analysis</i>	Hospital administration journals 1930, 1940, 1950	Nurses were predominantly portrayed as female, young, eager to please, and lacking wisdom. In group scenes, nurses were placed as subordinate to physicians and hospital administrators, revealing nursing's heritage as a woman's profession. Nurses in 1940 performed more complex, autonomous activities than those in 1930 and 1950.
Clarke and O'Neill (2001) Ireland	To explore the images of nursing in the Republic of Ireland as presented by <i>The Irish Times</i> during the industrial action taken by Irish nurses and midwives in 1999. <i>Feminist approach to a qualitative study</i>	Newspapers 4 October–4 November 1999	The image of nurses as care providers was consistently referred to. When care itself was debated, emphasis on the provision of medication and treatment (in the absence of significant reference to the provision of care for comfort or dependency needs) suggested an understanding of nursing as technical carers.
McGillis Hall et al. (2003) Canada	To describe nursing work–life issues as portrayed in the media during the SARS crisis in Toronto. <i>Qualitative description and qualitative content analysis</i>	Newspapers, radio and television 26 March–12 May 2003	Six themes were identified: (a) changing schemas of nursing practice: the new normal; (b) barriers to relational nursing work affected by necessary infection control; (c) work–life concerns: retention and recruitment; (d) the virtue of nurses: nurses as heroes and professionals; (e) paradoxical responses to nurses from the community; and (f) leadership in nursing during the SARS crisis.
Auker (2004)* USA	To examine the image of nurses and the profession of nursing in print media and the related implications for nursing retention and recruitment and, in turn, nursing shortages. <i>Discourse analysis</i>	Newspapers (2001–2004) Recruitment advertisements	The analysis current newspaper articles demonstrated that while nurses are portrayed as skilled and essential, their actual practices are misunderstood and that the language used to describe the conditions under which nurses work creates a decidedly distasteful image of the profession.
Andina Díaz and Bonet Manso (2004) Spain	To analyse the role of nursing and the life–health situations. <i>Hermeneutic film analysis using the guidelines proposed by prominent scholars in the field.</i>	Film 2001	The 'talk to her' film shows a nursing professional that provides autonomous and humanized care.
Farrow and O'Brien (2005) New Zealand	To analyse the print media representations of mental health service users and nurses involved in the 2001/2002 Canterbury mental health nurses' strike. <i>Discourse analysis</i>	Newspapers 1 January–May 2002	Nurses were depicted as avaricious and lazy, being interested solely in pay raises. They were represented as being work-shy and inflexible. They were described as 'staffing empty wards' and applying 'rigid' overtime bans. The responsibility for any 'incidents' was implicitly linked to staff who were on strike.

(Continues)



TABLE 1 (Continued)

Study Country	Aim Methods	Analysed media and period	Main Findings
Ferns and Chojnacka (2005) UK	To examine the presentation of sexual stereotypes of nurses in newspapers and the sex/pornography industry. <i>Matrix-based analysis</i>	Newspapers 2000–2005	Both national and local newspapers in the UK frequently use derogatory terminology to depict the sexual stereotyping of nurses. Imagery of nurses is also highly visible across a wide range of pornographic and sex industry material.
Rambor and Kruse (2007) Brazil	To study how Hollywood films have depicted nurses and how meaning is built by the stories that are told. <i>Discourse analysis</i>	Films 1998–2004	The following categories were identified: the nurse as the hospital normalizer; the nurse as a subordinate and low-ranking professional; the nurse as villain or hero; and nursing as a feminine profession.
Stanley (2008) Australia	To examine influences on the portrayal of nursing and nurses in feature films made between 1900 and 2007 whose main or a principal character was a nurse and whose storyline related specifically to nursing. <i>Mixed methodological approach (quantitative and qualitative analysis)</i>	Films 1900–2007	For the period from 1900 to 2007, 280 relevant feature films were identified. Most films were made in the USA or UK, although in recent years, films have been increasingly produced in other countries. Early films portrayed nurses as self-sacrificial heroines, sex objects and objects of romantic attention. More recent films increasingly have portrayed them as strong and self-confident professionals.
Dahlborg-Lyckhage and Pilhammar-Anderson (2009)* Sweden	To elucidate the predominant discourse regarding nursing around the year 2000. <i>Analysis of discourse. Content analysis and deconstructive discourse analysis.</i>	Recruitment campaigns and soap operas shown in television 1999–2003	Nurses were portrayed as possessing independent professional competence. They were shown as playing secondary or supporting roles to physicians and as occupying a subordinate position in decision-making/leadership. However, nurses are accustomed to discussing care with physicians and tend to defend and protect them by acting as intermediaries in difficult situations. Nursing was depicted as a female profession (sexuality was expressed through their femininity and was connected to their behaviour). Information on the education of nurses was largely absent.
Heierle Valero (2009) Spain	To explore and understand the images of nurses transmitted by newspapers. <i>Qualitative descriptive analysis. Iconologic applied analysis.</i>	Newspapers July 2004–July 2006	Nurses are not identified as individuals but are perceived only as one group within a work team. This media image of the social collective paints an undesirable image of every nurse, and the media do not provide images that help the public understand the abilities nurses have or the work they do.
Ertem et al. (2010) Turkey	To analyse news items about nursing published in the media and to investigate how nursing is portrayed in publications in Turkey. <i>Quantitative content analysis</i>	Newspapers 1 January–31 December 2006	News regarding nursing was poorly covered in terms of both quantity and quality. Published articles gave a negative impression of nursing and failed to reflect the scientific side of nursing.
Porto and Santos (2010) Brazil	To describe the medication advertisements featured in Fon-Fon Magazine; to analyse the objectifying representations of nurses in these advertisements and to discuss the symbolic effect of these representations on the consumption of medication in Brazilian society. <i>Historical study and matrix-based qualitative analysis of images and text</i>	Magazines 1920–1925	The analysed advertisements featuring objects used nurses to increase the reliable image of the medication being sold. The analysis revealed that the symbolic effect of the advertisements, in addition to conveying the authority of nurses, presented the nurse as an ally in fighting disease.
Heierle Valero (2011)* Spain	To identify the values of professionalism, gender, prestige, social consideration and power that are transmitted in newspaper stories and films about the nursing profession. <i>Quantitative and qualitative analysis</i>	Newspapers (July 2006–July 2008) and films (from the 1950s to 2008) <i>Other sources aimed at identifying how people perceive nurses</i>	Nurses' images reflect neither the realities of the nursing profession nor the different roles nurses play. Globally, nurses are portrayed in films as women without criteria that complete technical tasks as ordered by physicians and as lacking the culture, prestige, social impact and power of physicians. Nurses mainly appear as simple and superficial characters who fall in love.
Babini (2012) UK	To explore the melodramatic portrayals of nurses with a specific focus on 1950s cinema, concentrating on two representative case studies; to examine whether different historical and cultural origins have exerted an influence on the eventual portrayal of the nurse character. <i>Historical analysis</i>	Films 1950s	In Anna, the protagonist's dual vocations, being both religious and professional, was the only acceptable solution to her melodramatic struggle. In contrast, Sister Luke opts for only one of the two vocations: nursing. As a highly valuable profession, nursing is the only possible answer. In a sense, the same ambivalence underlying the consideration of the nursing profession in the two societies is also reflected in their respective approaches to the Catholic religion.

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Study Country	Aim Methods	Analysed media and period	Main Findings
Johnson (2012) USA	To posit post-war advertising as a forum that emphasized nurses' professionalism, as well as formed complex expectations surrounding women's professional and domestic roles. -	Magazines 1945–1950 (5 years)	Advertisers sometimes treated nursing as a symbol or analogue of women's domestic duties, but they also consistently portrayed nurses as skilled professionals and trusted experts. Nurses appeared in advertising whose target audiences varied in terms of gender, race, class and age, with only minor differences in how they were portrayed. Nurses were typically portrayed in post-war advertising as young white women in hospital settings, but black nurses appeared in the advertising pages of <i>Ebony</i> , and middle-aged nurses were occasionally portrayed in advertising in <i>Ladies' Home Journal</i> , <i>Ebony</i> , and <i>the Saturday Evening Post</i> .
Kelly et al. (2012) UK	To describe nurses' identity as construed in YouTube videos. <i>Critical discourse analysis</i>	Online video-sharing platform 2005–2010	Three distinct nursing identities were found: the nurse as 'a skilled knower and doer', the nurse as 'a sexual plaything' and the nurse as 'a witless, incompetent' individual.
Oosthuizen (2012) South Africa	To determine how South African newspapers report on issues related to nurses and nursing. <i>Qualitative inductive content analysis</i>	Newspapers 1 January 2005–31 December 2009	Images of nurses as caring, compassionate and knowledgeable professionals were present but were overshadowed by negative reports. Articles that portrayed nurses as overworked, uncaring, lazy, ruthless, incompetent and suffering from burnout appeared regularly during this period.
Porto and Veraldo (2012) Brazil	To describe the images of nurses, or images inspired by them, based on a matrix analysis and the chronology of iconography; to classify these images according to themes. <i>Historical-exploratory in nature and a matrix-based analysis allowing thematic classification</i>	Magazines 1916–1931	Images were described according to their themes: the First World War; the Spanish flu pandemic, institutional rites, propaganda, health institution propaganda, health reform promotion and miscellaneous. The historical context played a fundamental role in the quantity of images containing nurses. Nurses were generally portrayed clothed in light-coloured clothing with a veil and a cross on the top of their head and sometimes across their chest.
Stanley (2012) Australia	To study how male nurses are portrayed in feature films. <i>Interpretive qualitative methodology guided by insights into hegemonic masculinity (in-depth critical analysis)</i>	Films 1900–2007	A total of 13 relevant cases (feature films) were identified, 12 of which were made in the United States. Most films portrayed male nurses negatively and in ways opposed to hegemonic masculinity: effeminate, homosexual, homicidal, corrupt or incompetent. Few images of male nurses showed them in traditional masculine roles or as clinically competent or self-confident professionals.
Deslandes et al. (2013) Brazil	To analyse the images of Public Health Nurses in public care delivery disseminated by the <i>Revista da Semana</i> , in 1929. <i>Historical semiotic study. Data interpretation in the light of Pierre Bourdieu's notions of object representations and body hexis</i>	Professional journals 1929	The use of distinctive uniforms by public health nurses was a non-verbal communication strategy to gain visibility and credibility during home visits. Public health nurses are responsible for offering care to the sick and guiding them in efforts to prevent illnesses, which would help improve the quality of public health services.
Calvo-Calvo (2014) Spain	To identify the sexist stereotypes and biases that are projected onto female nurses in advertising campaigns; to identify the characteristics of female nurses depicted in advertising. <i>Qualitative content analysis</i>	Advertisements -	Female nurses appearing in advertising transmit both sexist stereotypes and sexist biases. Advertising propagates the image of the seductive nurse, depicted as a young, attractive, sensual and defiant woman who is used merely for her decorative presence.
Porto and Neto (2014) Brazil	To analyse the most common imagery of aspiring and professional nurses and of nursing schools and courses in printed illustrations to understand how the image of Brazilian nurses in Rio de Janeiro is constructed. <i>A historical semiotic study.</i>	Magazines 1890–1925	The transition from the nurse's veil to a cap with a cross and the subsequent emergence of the scrub cap all strengthened the signature visual elements of the imagery of nurses in the period 1890–1925.
Van Zyl and Christofides (2014) South Africa	To determine the influence of International Nurses' Day on press coverage about nursing by examining whether there was a difference in the proportion of South African press articles on nursing; to explore the associations between the importance, key issues and approaches of the articles. <i>Qualitative content analysis</i>	Newspapers January–June 2010	From 95 publications, 242 articles were identified. The month of May had almost double the press coverage of nursing-related events that January had. International Nurses' Day articles were mainly positive and appeared in weekly community publications in May and June rather than in daily national and regional newspapers. When they were excluded, most articles portrayed nursing negatively.

(Continues)



TABLE 1 (Continued)

Study Country	Aim Methods	Analysed media and period	Main Findings
Weaver et al. (2014) Australia	To establish if male nurses on TV are also subject to the same stereotypes identified in previous research; to determine if such characters conform to conventional stereotypes of masculinity; to explore the status and role of male nurses. <i>Qualitative study</i>	TV series 2007–2010	Male nurses on television were portrayed in ways that engaged with explicit and implicit stereotypes. The men were often subjected to questions about their choice of career as well as their masculinity and sexuality; their role was usually reduced to that of prop, minority spokesperson or source of comedy. Thus, rather contradictorily, although the programmes often sought to dismantle common stereotypes about men in nursing, they nonetheless often implicitly reinforced those stereotypes.
McGillis Hall and Kashin (2016)* Canada	To examine media portrayals of nurses and their roles during the 2014–2015 Ebola epidemic in western Africa. <i>Document analysis and in-depth content analysis</i>	Audio and video works, blogs, podcasts and websites, conference papers and proceedings, dissertations and theses, government and official publications, magazines, newspapers and reports 1 January 2014—31 December 2014	There is a gap in system preparedness for global health events and a lack of public awareness of the critical role of nurses. Little attention was given to nurses and their knowledge and expertise as they worked through the Ebola epidemic. The perception of nurses evolved from positive to negative over the course of the epidemic.
Blomberg and Stier (2016) Sweden	To examine how nurses as a profession and their working conditions are dramatized and portrayed in Swedish media narratives about the nursing shortage. <i>Qualitative discursive study</i>	Newspapers 2009–2014	Nurses are portrayed as being good, concerned about and critical of healthcare managers and politicians for not taking action. The accused actors justify their actions by partially accepting or deflecting responsibility. The shortage of nurses is framed as a social problem—a threat to patients' safety. Seven different types of metaphorical expressions were used to frame the problem as inevitable, out of control, abstract and both an individual and collective issue, and nurses were framed as replaceable. In addition, the articles argued that nurses and patients were being dehumanized and no one was being held responsible.
Girvin et al. (2016)* UK	To explore the current public understanding and/or perception of nursing. <i>A systematic review and narrative synthesis</i>	Peer-reviewed papers 2000–2015	Six studies addressing the representation of nursing in newsprint, social media and films were identified. Overall, four main themes were identified: (1) the media portrayal of nursing as a troubled profession; (2) the entertainment value of demeaning nursing; (3) role incongruity—nurses are trusted but not respected; and (4) the poor understanding of nursing roles.
Sánchez-Gras (2017) Spain	To critically analyse the treatment received by the nursing profession and nurses in the daily press. <i>Qualitative content analysis</i>	Newspapers 2000–2015	Eight categories were identified: employment-related issues; other health care professionals' mistrust of nurses; unqualified practitioners; roles, activities and achievements; incorrect naming of nurses; offences and negligence; erotic-sexual presence; and incidents. Nurses were portrayed in secondary roles, associated with other professions and as lacking responsibility, autonomy and decision-making abilities.
Almudéver Campo and Camaño Puig (2018) Spain	To examine the events of the influenza epidemic of 1918 in relation to nursing professionals from a journalistic perspective. <i>Journalistic analysis and quantitative analysis</i>	Newspapers 1 January 1918–31 December 1920	In total, 555 units of analysis were obtained; these addressed aspects of the recognition of nurses, the creation of professional profiles of nurses and early academic courses in nursing as well as nurses' wage demands, strikes and care offered.

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Study Country	Aim Methods	Analysed media and period	Main Findings
Martin González et al. (2018) Spain	To show the influence of the media and cinema on the representations of nursing that are transmitted to society. <i>Qualitative analysis of the stereotypes and roles of nurses from a genre perspective</i>	Newspapers and academic articles (2011–2016) Films and TV series (20th and 21st centuries)	The media offer a sexist and very reductionist image of nursing, depicting it as a female profession that is focused on care and is subordinate to other health areas, such as medicine.
Urban (2018) Canada	To elucidate how nurses are positioned in Canadian news stories about the salaries of nurses. <i>Discourse analysis</i>	Daily newspapers 2007–2017	Nurses' wages constitute a substantial portion of hospital costs, making them a convenient scapegoat for hospitals' financial issues. Nurses are depicted in three ways: as expensive, opportunistic and expendable. Nurses are situated as responsible for, contributing to, or blamed for the financial issues of hospitals in several stories.
Yague Renau and Almudéver Campo (2018) Spain	To analyse how feature films portray the nursing profession by examining various models and stereotypes. <i>Film analysis and hermeneutic analysis</i>	Films 1932–2007	Three stereotypes of nurses were identified: the angelic nurse, the evil nurse and the nurse as an object of desire. Some of the examined movies did not fit in any of these categories, and their portrayals of nurses move away from these stereotypes. Male nurses as a sub-collective are especially underrepresented in feature films.
Escobar and Heilemann (2019) USA	To analyse the midwife characters portrayed in the BBC's <i>Call the Midwife</i> and in Claire Temple in the <i>Marvel cinematic universe</i> (Netflix). <i>A close reading in the tradition of literary analysis drawn from themes related to female nurse depictions identified as problematic by Kathleen McHugh (2012)</i>	TV series – 2010–2014	The nurse and midwives in these series are not saviours, handmaidens, angels, battle axes, sexpots or asexual prudes. They are complex, interesting human beings whom we want to watch, root for and follow. These shows avoid each of the three challenging issues McHugh (2012) identifies as problems for scriptwriters, directors and producers.
Gill and Baker (2019) UK	To explore whether the discourse regarding known media stereotypes of nursing and the profession's female-dominated status affect contemporary media representation. <i>Critical realist review</i>	Advertisements 2010–2014	The media stereotypes of nurses with hints of sexist, outdated images continue to exist. The consequence of nursing, a female-dominated profession, being represented by a male-dominated media industry is that changing the image of nursing to align with reality is a historically slow process.
Guo et al. (2019) USA	To examine perceptions of nursing on Twitter by analysing tweets related to the arrest of a high-profile nurse. <i>Text analysis techniques, latent Dirichlet allocation models and sentiment analysis</i>	Social media (Twitter) 31 August–10 September 2017 (10 days)	Twelve topics were identified, four of which related to nursing: nurses as protectors, protecting the protector, nurses as innocent victims and nurses as important team members. 'Trust' (44.3%) was mentioned in the majority of tweets.
Pawłowski et al. (2019) Poland	To analyse social media's possible influence on the image of nurses on the internet. <i>Comparative method (analysis criteria: subject matter, published content purpose, attractiveness and visual coherence, published content language, website activity, creation of a long-term community of recipients and promoted professional image)</i>	Social media (Facebook) January 2019 in two-day intervals	Differences in the strategies for running the analysed websites were identified, depending mainly on the subject matter and purpose of published content. Topicality, visual attractiveness and cohesion were highly important. The posts appearing on individual websites were written in the language of the recipients with varying frequency. The websites gathered a long-term audience and tried to influence the image of nursing in Poland in a positive way.
Perna et al. (2019) Italy	To define the portrait of nurses and how it changes with different means of communication and is thus transmitted to the public in different ways. <i>Text analysis (quantitative and qualitative)</i>	Websites (web pages, blogs, social media, specialized sites that collect information and considerations about nurses) 2008–2016	There are still ambiguities, prejudices, stereotypes and a lack of knowledge about nurses. The stereotypical image of nurses minimizes the knowledge and skills that nurses bring to the healthcare and welfare system.

(Continues)



TABLE 1 (Continued)

Study Country	Aim Methods	Analysed media and period	Main Findings
Stanley et al. (2019) Australia	To explore how nurses who are the principal character of zombie-themed feature films are portrayed. <i>Mixed methods; quantitatively examine the zombie-themed films (genre, country, year of production and plot lines); qualitative thematic analysis for insights into the key attributes of nurses and how they are portrayed</i>	Films produced and released between 1900 and May 2018	Only 115 zombie-themed feature films with health professionals were identified; of these, 27 films featured nurses and 10 had nurses in the main role. Nurses were portrayed as romantic, sexualized, caring, self-sacrificial, strong and evil; however, the over-arching representation of nurses in zombie films was tied to the depravity with which zombie sub-culture is associated.
Brandão et al. (2021) Brazil	To present an overview of nurses' social image published in the news of Brazilian Printed Media from 1970 to 1999. <i>Exploratory, documentary research, with a quantitative approach.</i>	Newspaper 1970–1999	News contributed little to the construction of nurses' image as health professionals in Brazilian society because most of the news only mentioned nurses in the text or used the term to characterize an object or situation. 2,528 news were analysed over 30 years. The average of news published in the analysed period (360 months) was 7 news/ month, with emphasis on the years 1979 and 1975, which presented, respectively, the largest (127 total and 10.58/month) and the smallest (52 total and 4.33/month) number of news published about it. In 2,276 news stories, nurses were only mentioned; they appeared as a central figure in 188 news, and in 64 nurses was a secondary figure.
Mohammed et al. (2021)* Canada	To critically examine the effects of the hero discourse on nurses who are contending with the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and to consider the political, social, cultural and professional impact of this discourse on nursing work. <i>Post-structural discourse analysis.</i>	Newspaper and magazine articles, corporate advertisements, videos, social media postings and institutional/corporate websites 1 March–1 August 2020	Three main elements of the hero discourse were identified: (1) <i>Nurses as a 'necessary sacrifice'</i> , portraying nurses as selfless, sacrificing and outstanding moral subjects for practising on the front-line without adequate protective gear and other clinical resources; (2) <i>Nurses as 'model citizens'</i> , positioning nurses as compliant, hardworking and obedient subjects in contrast to harmful individuals and groups that ignore or resist COVID-19 public health measures; (3) <i>Heroism itself as the reward for nurses</i> , characterizing hero worship as a fitting reward for nurses who were unappreciated pre-pandemic, as opposed to supporting long-term policy change, and highlighting how heroism reconfigures nursing work from the mundane and ordinary to the exciting and impactful.
Şahan et al. (2021) Turkey	To identify the image of nursing in social media before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey, and to review public perceptions about nurses' communication on Twitter in Turkey. <i>Content analysis (codes were created, including expressions of respect, anxiety, violence, gratefulness, anger, positivity and negativity); sentiment analysis.</i>	Tweets about the nurse posted on Twitter before (December 2019) and during (11 March–11 April 2020) the COVID-19 pandemic	35.65% of the 373 tweets posted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic were positive and 64.35% were negative. During the pandemic, 91.94% of the 1006 tweets were positive and 8.06% were negative. The tweets posted before COVID-19 showed that 19.8% of the tweets included respect, 20.9% included gratefulness, 20.1% included anxiety, 4.8% included violence, and 42.6% included anger. The result of the sentiment analysis performed for the tweets posted during COVID-19 demonstrated that 24% of the tweets included respect, 69.3% included gratefulness, 38.2% included anxiety, 3.37% included violence and 10.7% included anger. The image of the nursing profession has been transformed in a positive direction in social media during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Studies combining samples that meet our inclusion criteria with samples that fell outside them.

1992; Stevens, 1990). It is remarkable that the only two studies focusing on wartime – during the Spanish Civil War (Siles-González, et al., 1998) and the Second World War (Stevens, 1990) – were done in the 1990s.

The 2000s

Of the 60 studies included in this review, 11 pertained to the first decade of the 21st century. In this period, we found the emergence of international interest in the topic, as the studies published in this decade pertained to nine different countries: the United States (Auker, 2004; Lusk, 2000), Canada (McGillis Hall et al., 2003), Brazil (Rambor & Kruse, 2007), Spain (Andina Díaz & Bonet Manso, 2004; Heierle Valero, 2009), Ireland (Clarke & O'Neill, 2011), the UK (Ferns & Chojnacka, 2005), Sweden (Dahlborg-Lyckhage & Pilhammar-Anderson, 2009), New Zealand (Farrow & O'Brien, 2005) and Australia (Stanley, 2008). It is noteworthy that in this period, we found, for the first time, an interest in the depiction of nurses in the media during a health crisis, in this case, during the SARS epidemic (McGillis Hall et al., 2003). Looking at the analysed media, newspapers and films attracted the interest of most researchers (Table 1). Finally, except one study that analysed the years 1930, 1940 and 1950 (Lusk, 2000), all other studies focused on analysing media from the 1990s. Hence, the studies conducted in this decade did not analyse particularly old media samples.

The 2010s

In the 2010s, research on the image of nurses or their portrayal in media increased notably, as among the 60 identified studies, 28 were published in the 2010s. Spain had the highest number of publications ($n = 6$), followed by Brazil ($n = 4$), the UK ($n = 4$), the United States ($n = 3$), Australia ($n = 3$), Canada ($n = 2$), South Africa ($n = 2$), Sweden ($n = 1$), Poland ($n = 1$), Italy ($n = 1$) and Turkey ($n = 1$). The years with the highest number of studies published were 2012 and 2019, with 6 studies published in each year (see Table 1). Notably, the studies analysing the oldest samples were published in the 2010s. Four Brazilian studies led by F. R. Porto stand out for their sample's sources (magazines) and data: Porto and Neto (2014) focused on analysing printed images of nurses from 1890 to 1925; Porto and Veraldo (2012) analysed pictures of nurses from 1916 to 1931; Deslandes et al. (2013) focused on magazine photos in 1929; and Porto and Santos (2010) studied medication advertisements from 1920 to 1925.

The most commonly analysed media in the studies during the 2010s were newspapers, followed by films, magazines and TV series. In addition, three studies from this decade looked at the depiction of nurses in the media in relation to health crises: Two examined the influenza epidemic (Almudéver Campo & Camaño Puig, 2018; Porto & Veraldo, 2012) and another investigated the Ebola epidemic (McGillis Hall & Kashin, 2016). Remarkably, this was the decade in which researchers started

to look into the internet and its influence on the portrayal of nurses. As such, one study centred on YouTube (Kelly et al., 2012), one on Twitter (Guo et al., 2019), one on Facebook (Pawłowski et al., 2019) and another on different kinds of websites, including social media platforms (Perna et al., 2019). Likewise, in this decade, one literature review of 21 studies 'aimed to explore [the prevailing] public understanding and/or perception of nursing' (Girvin et al., 2016, p. 995).

From January 2020 to February 2022

In the early 2020s, three articles were identified: one Canadian (Mohammed et al., 2021), one Turkish (Şahan et al., 2021) and one Brazilian (Brandão et al., 2021). The study led by Brandão et al. (2021) focused on the social image of nurses published in Brazilian printed news media from 1970 to 1999. Notably, the remaining two studies focused on the depiction of nurses during the COVID-19 crisis: one studied the image of nursing in social media (Twitter) before and during the COVID-19 pandemic (Şahan et al., 2021), and the other focused on the effects of the hero discourse on nurses contending with the ongoing COVID-19 crisis in a variety of sources (Table 1) (Mohammed et al., 2021).

DISCUSSION

The aim of this scoping review was to systematically map the available evidence on studies exploring the image of nurses in media. Using Arksey and O'Malley's framework (2005) and following a standardized coding process, the researchers explored the main characteristics of the included studies. These features include, among other things, (1) a growing interest in analysing the portrayal of nurses and nursing disseminated by media over time, especially from 2000 onwards; (2) the variety of media addressed by researchers to explore the image of nursing; (3) the use of qualitative designs as the most frequent method for exploring the image of nursing; and (4) the predominantly negative image conveyed by media.

This is the first systematic review to provide a comprehensive picture of the studies conducted to explore the image of nursing disseminated by media over time. Although a similar review was found (Girvin et al., 2016), it did not provide a global map of research on the image of nurses. In contrast, the search conducted in this study was expanded from health science databases to social science databases to identify work in disciplines other than nursing, such as communication and sociology. Furthermore, as no temporal limit was established and the study languages included English, Spanish and Portuguese, the sample was significantly broader than that of the other review (60 studies versus 21). As for the methods of analysis, our scoping review used quantitative analysis, including an exhaustive coding process, to objectively determine the main characteristics of the studies included in the sample. Furthermore, a decade-by-decade qualitative picture of research across the globe is provided.



The dominant themes of this review are as follows. First, media portrayals of nurses have aroused greater interest among researchers in recent years than previously. Although images of nurses in media have been studied for more than three centuries (Porto & Neto, 2014), the growth of studies per se increased substantially ($n = 39/60$) in the 2000s and 2010s. Notably, the number of studies might continue to grow in the 2020s because of nurses' key role during the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, two of the three studies identified at the beginning of the 2020s addressed the image of nurses in this global health crisis. On the other hand, persistent crises around the world, such as the recent Ukrainian war, might lead researchers to explore the role and image of nurses in such conflicts. Although the image of nursing has been carefully considered throughout the years, especially in recent periods, this has not yet played out in an accurate public image (ten Hoeve et al., 2014). Indeed, as the discipline of nursing has gradually developed, scholars have become more conscious of the potential impact of real, undistorted representations of what nurses do and what their real role is. This is one of the reasons the image of nursing conveyed by media has captured the interest of scholars more frequently in countries with common law systems. The predominance of North American and British studies in this scoping review bears witness to this. Additionally, as nurses have progressively achieved more prominent positions in social and academic domains, their voices have become louder. The emergence of international interest in the topic in the 2000s and 2010s must be considered in light of this, as the number of studies has increased and the topic has been of interest in a larger number of countries.

Second, with regard to the forms of media examined in past studies, a prevailing trend has been to analyse a variety of media. In effect, the richness provided by addressing content from different forms of media has prompted researchers to include a variety of sources. Nevertheless, print media was the most frequently analysed media form when only form was examined in a study. As printed media was traditionally considered the public's primary source of information on nursing (Nawková et al., 2012) before the arrival of social media, its impact on nursing has been quite decisive since media depictions of nurses determine society's perception of the profession (Voznesenskyy et al., 2015). This dominance may be surprising if we consider traditional access challenges resulting from the previous lack of databases or printed media records. Ultimately, the increasing interest in analysing social media in the 2010s must be highlighted in a context in which the representation of nurses on social media has become a widespread phenomenon. This contemporary change in communication has led to a pervasive culture of creating and sharing images of nursing (Fraser et al., 2015; O'Connor et al., 2018). Fortunately, today, nurses can represent themselves without being filtered or mediated by journalists.

Third, this review found the use of qualitative designs to be the most common way to address and analyse images of nursing disseminated in media. Considering that the most fundamental assumption underlying qualitative research is that reality is socially constructed on an individual basis

(Creswell, 1994; Miller, 2010), this method is the most suitable to determine what information has been disseminated about nursing within society. It is worth mentioning the work of Kalisch and Kalisch (1983, 1986, 1987), who specifically concentrated on the historical changes in media representations of nurses and the implications these images had for the nursing profession (Holloway, 1992). On the other hand, designing, creating and validating tools could help to analyse, measure and track changes in the image of nurses in media.

Finally, although this study has identified that society's image of nursing as portrayed through media has been mainly negative and inaccurate and that negative stereotypes of nursing persist (Bacon et al., 2000; Jessup, 2001; Morris-Thompson et al., 2011; Salem, 2019), it also found a positive and hopeful trend regarding the connection between the image of nursing conveyed by media and the real essence of the profession. In this regard, the profession of nursing has historically faced difficulties that challenge the professional efforts and performance of nurses (Salvage & Stilwell, 2018), and consequently, the public image of nursing has remained inaccurate (Salem, 2019). In 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2016) indicated that the negative portrayal of the professional and personal efforts of nurses led to reduced enrolment in nursing schools in many parts of the globe. However, many initiatives, such as editorials praising nurses (Salvage & Stilwell, 2018), advocacy from international agencies, the *Nursing Now* and *Nursing Now Challenge* campaigns (Holloway et al., 2021; Nursing Now, n.d.a), the declaration of the *International Year of the Nurse* (2020/2021), and media coverage of nursing during the COVID-19 crisis (Gagnon & Perron, 2020; Mohammed et al., 2021; Rebolledo et al., 2021), aimed to reinforce the well-deserved and praiseworthy position of nursing. In fact, the *Nursing Now* and *Nursing Now Challenge* campaigns have been successful in generating the first global social movement in nursing that has led to building a more effective narrative that is disseminated in the media and heard and appreciated in political decision-making processes (Stilwell, 2020a, 2020b, 2021). This context is ideal not only for supporting nurses and addressing the handicaps and challenges they have faced for centuries (Bayliss-Pratt et al., 2020) but also for developing their potential to become a cornerstone in achieving sustainable development goals (Rosa et al., 2021). The achievements of these campaigns will indeed be historic in creating leadership development opportunities for nurses all over the world, enabling them to provide innovative and cost-effective answers to ongoing global health challenges (Stilwell, 2020a) and to develop initiatives and activities that raise the profile and status of nurses (Nursing Now Challenge, n.d.b; Sikorová, 2019), hence reinforcing their public image. In this regard, we can expect studies to show the impact of the *Nursing Now* and *Nursing Now Challenge* campaigns on updating nurses' social image, upgrading their value, profile and status worldwide (Crisp & Iro, 2018). Such progress will continue in the near future, adding evidence to the 101 papers published from 1 January 2018 to 2020 that were identified in a scoping review conducted by a team from the University of Edinburgh and Stirling (Holloway et al., 2021; Thompson

et al., 2021). This is a good indicator of the visibility and impact of the *Nursing Now* campaign (Holloway et al., 2021). One of the latest examples is a recent study by Santos et al. (2021), in which the authors reported the actions implemented by a group of teachers, students and nurses in the *Nursing Now* campaign and the resulting positive impact on nursing education and nurses' social visibility. Another example is a project that, using the Nursing Now Nightingale Challenge framework, implemented a 'high-quality continuous professional development education for midwives working in isolation in a deprived suburb in Uganda' (Nayika et al., 2022, p. 24).

Finally, the work accomplished by Summers and Summers (2015) to publicly update an observatory (<https://www.truthaboutnursing.org>) with the aim of preserving society's image of nursing and hence nurses' value should also be highlighted.

Limitations

One limitation of this scoping review is that studies published in other languages than English Spanish and Portuguese were excluded; hence, studies of potential interest to this scoping review might have been missed. Another limitation is that no quality appraisal of the included studies was conducted; however, this is a widely accepted practice for scoping reviews (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Furthermore, given the heterogeneous nature of the studies' samples and methods, although a qualitative global and decade-by-decade picture was provided, it was not possible to conduct a rigorous qualitative analysis of the conclusions reached by the 60 studies regarding the media image of nursing. However, it should be noted that that was not the aim of this scoping review.

Implications for nursing and health policy

Regardless of what has been disseminated by traditional media or on social media, nurses can represent themselves both as a group and as individuals. Nurses in their different settings (academic, assistance or management fields) should maintain a proactive attitude towards addressing images of nursing and ensuring accurate representations. Consequently, it is important to adequately train nursing students not only to be competent at their jobs but also to adequately and publicly demonstrate these competencies and convey their professionalism and specific contributions to the health system to others (Buresh & Gordon, 2006; Kazis & Schwendimann, 2009; Myers et al., 2022; ten Hoeve et al., 2014).

Given the increasing focus on this subject, future studies should pay more attention to the images of individual nurses as conveyed through social media. The research gaps identified in this review may not only lead to new research projects that delve into specific aspects of media influence on nurses' image but also encourage the initiation of studies that go a step further by focusing on issues such as nurses' presence in the media as information sources, nurses' leadership and nurses' political competence and engagement (Cipriano,

2022; McDonald, 2022). In this regard, the need for more leadership by nurses in creating their own narrative—especially in social media—is essential to explain what they are, what they do and what they can offer to the society and health-care system of the 21st century. Furthermore, this review is the first step towards advancing proposals and strategies for nurses and nurses' associations to disseminate and broadcast nurses' professional identity.

CONCLUSION

The results obtained in this scoping review confirm that interest in analysing the media's depiction of nursing has a long history. In fact, the first studies date back to 1980, with a notable increase in the last two decades. The included studies' samples showed heterogeneity. The samples were obtained from different media, historical moments, geographical areas and countries. The methodologies in the studies were also diverse. For all these reasons, it can be stated that there is a notable body of scientific evidence about the image of nursing portrayed in media. However, the multiplicity of the samples and methodologies prevents a comparison between the results obtained by different studies to confirm whether there has been an evolution and whether this accurately reflects the changes that the profession has undergone.

This scoping review provides a complete map of what areas of this field of study have been researched thus far and how. It is a useful resource for researchers who want to increase their knowledge in this field. Knowing what has been researched facilitates the design of additional studies to fill in the knowledge gaps left by previous articles. Academic literature may wish to reference some of the results obtained here or the bibliography cited in this review. Finally, it is hoped that when nurses see this overview of how they have been represented, they will feel a sense of responsibility to proactively seek change. The most effective path for doing so requires proactive nurses committed to giving accurate explanations of their professional identity through an engaging narrative that shows what contributions they are making to improve global health in the 21st century.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Study design: HG; BEI; AII; AC. Data collection: HG; BEI; AC. Data analysis: HG; BEI; AII; AC. Manuscript writing: HG; BEI; AII; AC. Critical revisions for important intellectual content: HG; BEI; AC.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to Diana Masson for her critical review.

FUNDING STATEMENT

Facultad de Enfermería, Universidad de Navarra.

ORCID

Hildegart González PhD, BSc  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7328-2051>



Begoña Errasti-Ibarrondo PhD, MSc, RN <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1359-3330>
 Ana Choperena PhD, MSc, RN <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2359-6674>

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How to cite this article: González, H., Errasti-Ibarrondo, B., Iraizoz-Iraizoz, A. & Choperena, A. (2023) The image of nursing in the media: A scoping review. *International Nursing Review*, 70, 425–443. <https://doi.org/10.1111/inr.12833>

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.