# Social Support for Doctoral Nursing Students: A Scoping Review

**Josephine Francis Xavier[1], Abrar AlAmrani[1], An Nguyen[1], Michelle Hwang[2]**

1. Ph.D. Candidate, York University
2. Librarian, Trillium Health Partners

**Background and Aim:** Doctoral nursing students face numerous challenges during their journey. These challenges can negatively impact their academic performance and well-being. The literature reports 22-50% dropout rates from doctoral studies in nursing (Fang & Zhan, 2021). Social support has been recognized as a factor in promoting student success and well-being. Despite its importance, social support for doctoral nursing students remains an understudied area. This scoping review aims to explore and synthesize the existing evidence on social support for doctoral nursing students.

**Method:** This review is guided by the JBI methodology for a scoping review. A search strategy was developed with the assistance of a librarian. With no date limit, published peer-reviewed studies were identified through electronic databases (CINAHL, Medline, Embase, Psych INFO, Cochrane, Web of Science) and Google Scholar. Studies focusing on doctoral nursing students and social support were considered for inclusion. Data were extracted using the JBI SUMARI extraction tool and analyzed using a descriptive narrative approach.

**Results:** 1789 potentially relevant papers were identified, from which 35 papers were selected. The findings present the types of support from formal and informal supports and attributes of social support across structures and systems around doctoral students' progress.

**Implications:** This review suggests that it is essential for doctoral nursing programs to prioritize social support. Initiatives such as training faculty mentors, peer support and networking that promote social support will promote the well-being and success of doctoral students. Future priorities for research include using standardized tools to measure social support and to create a social support model for doctoral nursing programs.

**Reference:**
Fang, D., & Zhan, L. (2021). Completion and attrition of nursing PhD students of the 2001 to 2010 matriculating cohorts. *Nursing Outlook*, *69*(3), 340-349.

**Word count:** 257 words