





## MIXED METHODS RESEARCH IN LATIN AMERICA: INITIATIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPANSION

José Luís Guedes dos Santos<sup>1</sup>   
Elsa Lucia Escalante Barrios<sup>2</sup>   
Elizabeth G. Creamer<sup>3</sup>   
Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie<sup>4,5</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Enfermagem. Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brasil.

<sup>2</sup>Universidad del Norte, Instituto de Estudios en Educación, Departamento de Educación. Barranquilla, Colombia.

<sup>3</sup>Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, School of Education. Blacksburg, Virginia, United States.

<sup>4</sup>University of Cambridge, Faculty of Education. Cambridge, United Kingdom.

<sup>5</sup>University of Johannesburg. Johannesburg, South Africa.

Mixed methods research represents an approach in which the investigator gathers and draws inferences using some combination of quantitative and qualitative research approaches. However, it is not only the use of quantitative and qualitative components in the same study. The defining characteristic of mixed methods research is the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a research topic.<sup>1-2</sup>

Although the idea of mixing different research methods occurred in a limited manner in the 1930s, the formal use of mixed methods increased in the 1990s. Since then, mixed methods has emerged as a new paradigm in scientific research and has become a worldwide phenomenon in the education, social, behavioral and health sciences.<sup>1,3-4</sup> Therefore, the aim of this editorial is to present initiatives that have been developed for the dissemination of mixed research methods in Latin America, as well as opportunities for expansion.

Formal initiatives to promote mixed methods research in Latin American are recent. The Latin-American Association of Mixed Methods Research (ALIMM, for its acronym in Spanish *Asociación Latinoamericana de Investigación en Métodos Mixtos*) was founded in 2019 by scholars from Colombia, Chile, Paraguay and Spain with expertise in qualitative, quantitative and mixed method research. ALIMM was created with the aim of promoting the use, teaching and dissemination of mixed methods among Latin-American scholars, especially those whose first language is Spanish. Mixed methods

**HOW CITED:** Santos JLG, Escalante Barrios EL, Creamer EG, Onwuegbuzie AJ. Mixed methods research in Latin America: initiatives and opportunities for expansion. *Texto Contexto Enferm* [Internet]. 2020 [cited YEAR MONTH DAY]; 29:e20200101. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1590/1980-265X-TCE-2020-0001-0001>

have had a limited presence in the research methodology literature written in Spanish, as reflected in the lack of textbooks and academic books devoted to methodology authored by Latin-American and Spanish scholars. This situation is problematic given the likelihood that many students and researchers might not be fluent in English or might not have easy access to the academic literature published outside of their countries.

With the purpose of advancing the knowledge and practice of mixed methods research in Latin-American countries, during the last year, ALIMM has led several initiatives such as seminars and conferences that have taken place in Colombia and Chile. These initiatives have put their focus on the dissemination of best practices for designing, conducting and reporting mixed methods studies among Spanish-speaking scholars. The future of ALIMM is to build networks between leading scholars and novel researchers in the field of mixed methods research that contribute to the generation of synergies and opportunities for collaboration between Latin America and Spain.

In 2019, another successful experience was the “*International Conference on Mixed Methods Research in Health Sciences*”, which was the first specific international conference on mixed method research in health sciences in Latin America. It was held by the Graduate Nursing Program of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (Brazil) and had the objective to discuss the applications and potentials of mixed methods as a methodological approach in health sciences. It was funded by the Brazilian Government through the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), via Grant PAEP No. 07/2019.

The participants included students, professors, and professionals from the areas of Nursing, Medicine, Public Health, Dentistry, Nutrition and Physical Education. The international speakers were Dr. Ratchneewan Ross (USA), Dr. Carolyn Kleman (USA) and Dr. Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie (UK, South Africa and USA). The participation of the highly experienced international speakers in mixed methods allowed the development of discussions and clarifications regarding the methodology. It is hoped that the discussions during the Conference will contribute to the qualification of academic productions among graduate students in health sciences. The second edition of the International Conference on Mixed Methods Research in Health Sciences is expected to 2021.

During the 2019 Conference, the proposal to create a Latin American Chapter associated with the Mixed Methods International Research Association (MMIRA) was presented. The objective of this Chapter is to disseminate and promote local discussions and workshops on mixed methods research in order to engage more members. It will provide an opportunity to facilitate the dissemination and learning of mixed methods research among non-native English-speaking communities. The chapter also will provide an opportunity to communicate with international experts on mixed methods research. The MMIRA Board endorsed the Latin America Chapter in April 2020.

MMIRA was founded in 2013 to promote the development of an international and interdisciplinary mixed methods research community. Some of the benefits of being a MMIRA member are: access to professional development opportunities through monthly webinars, opportunity to enroll in the MMIRA Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) modules on core and specialized topics in mixed methods research, and a platform to develop or add to an international network of colleagues. Students are eligible for a reduced membership fee. Serving on the MMIRA Executive Committee in an elected or appointed position is an opportunity to expand professional networks and to develop leadership skills. Specifically, the “Member at Large” position is designed provide an opportunity for chapter members to have input on decisions and initiatives undertaken by the MMIRA Executive Committee.

MMIRA is also responsible for hosting global conferences. The last MMIRA global conference was in Vienna, in 2018, with participants from more than 40 countries. One of the strategies for expansion of mixed methods research in Latin America is to submit a proposal to host the MMIRA International conference in 2022. In the short term, MMIRA has hosted the first webinars on mixed

method research in Spanish and Portuguese for an international audience, as part of a Mixed Methods Webinar Series Mixed Methods from the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology (IIQM) at the University of Alberta (Canada). More details and each of the almost 50 of the archived webinars are available in the IIQM's website.

On July 22, 2020, MMIRA is hosting a *Webinar Marathon* that will four back-to-back webinar, each devoted to the initiatives of chapters. The Latin American Chapter will be leading one of the webinars. It will create the opportunity to discuss future initiatives for the chapter.

This Editorial is focused mainly on Brazilian and Colombian scholars' initiatives. However, it is believed that there are more interesting mixed methods projects being developed in Latin America. Other initiatives in Latin American countries are welcomed, encouraged and must be disclosed in order to create new opportunities for collaboration and networking. Text & Context Nursing can be a great journal option to publish manuscripts and to disseminate experiences of this nature.

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