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GROUNDING THEORY IN THESES AND DISSERTATIONS OF BRAZILIAN NURSING¹

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to identifying how the researchers used the method of Grounded Theory in theses and dissertations of the Brazilian nursing.

Method: this is a documentary study with a quantitative approach. As a source of data collection, the reports deposited in the Catalog of Theses and Dissertations of the Center for Nursing Studies and Research of the Brazilian Nursing Association between 2001 and 2015 were used, with subsequent redemption of the full version in the repository of the higher education institution of theses and dissertations. The data collection was carried out from data extraction in spreadsheets that were submitted to the descriptive analysis.

Results: 70 theses and dissertations (0.95%) were selected from the total of 7,369 studies. The majority (70%) described how the sample groups were constructed. Only 4.3% did not report having collected and analyzed the data concomitantly. From the studies that described all the steps, 34.3% did not present the validation process of the theoretical model. The diagrams and memos were used, respectively, in 74.3% and 65.7% of the theses and dissertations analyzed. The most frequent theoretical reference was Symbolic Interactionism and the methodological perspective was the Straussian. It was evidenced that for the researchers, the interview was the main collection technique used in isolation and combined with other approaches.

Conclusion: the diversity in the presentation and description of the method and results of the studies reveals that there is still need for improvement regarding the use of the method, considering the different aspects of the Grounded Theory.

DESCRIPTORS: Nursing research. Nursing methodology research. Qualitative research. Grounded Theory. Education, nursing, graduate.

TEORIA FUNDAMENTADA NOS DADOS EM TESES E DISSERTAÇÕES DA ENFERMAGEM BRASILEIRA

RESUMO

Objetivo: identificar como os pesquisadores utilizaram o método da Teoria Fundamentada nos Dados nas teses e dissertações da enfermagem brasileira.

Método: trata-se de estudo documental com abordagem quantitativa. Como fonte de coleta de dados, foram utilizados os relatórios depositados no Catálogo de Teses e Dissertações do Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas em Enfermagem da Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem, entre 2001 e 2015, com posterior resgate da versão completa no repositório da instituição de ensino superior de origem das teses e dissertações. A coleta ocorreu a partir de extração dos dados em planilhas que foram submetidos à análise descritiva.

Resultados: elegeram-se 70 teses e dissertações (0,95%) do total de 7.369 estudos. A maioria (70%) descreveu como foram construídos os grupos amostrais. Somente 4,3% não registrou ter realizado a coleta e análise dos dados de forma concomitante. Dos estudos que descreveram todas as etapas, 34,3% não apresentaram o processo de validação do modelo teórico. Os diagramas e os memorandos foram utilizados, respectivamente, em 74,3% e 65,7% das teses e dissertações analisadas. O referencial teórico mais frequente foi o Interacionismo Simbólico e a perspectiva metodológica foi a Straussiana. Evidenciou-se que para os pesquisadores, a entrevista foi a principal técnica de coleta utiliza de forma isolada e combinada com outras abordagens.

Conclusão: a diversidade na apresentação e na descrição do método e resultados dos estudos revela que ainda há necessidades de aprimoramento quanto ao uso do método, considerando as diferentes vertentes da Teoria Fundamentada nos Dados.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Pesquisa em enfermagem. Pesquisa metodológica em enfermagem. Pesquisa qualitativa. Teoria fundamentada. Educação de pós-graduação em enfermagem.

TEORÍA FUNDAMENTADA EN LOS DATOS EN TESIS Y DISERTACIONES DE LA ENFERMERÍA BRASILEÑA

RESUMEN

Objetivo: identificar cómo los investigadores utilizaron el método de la Teoría Fundamentada en los Datos en las tesis y disertaciones de la enfermería brasileña.

Método: se trata de un estudio documental con enfoque cuantitativo. Como fuente de recolección de datos, se utilizaron los informes depositados en el Catálogo de Tesis y Disertaciones del Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones en Enfermería de la Asociación Brasileña de Enfermería, entre 2001 y 2015, con posterior rescate de la versión completa en el repositorio de la institución de enseñanza superior de origen de las tesis y disertaciones. La recolección ocurrió a partir de extracción de los datos en hojas que fueron sometidos al análisis descriptivo.

Resultados: se eligieron 70 tesis y disertaciones (0,95%) del total de 7.369 estudios. La mayoría (70%) describió cómo se construyeron los grupos de muestra. Sólo el 4,3% no registró haber realizado la recolección y análisis de los datos de forma concomitante. De los estudios que describieron todas las etapas, el 34,3% no presentó el proceso de validación del modelo teórico. Los diagramas y los memorandos se utilizaron respectivamente en el 74,3% y el 65,7% de las tesis y disertaciones analizadas. El referencial teórico más frecuente fue el Interaccionismo Simbólico y la perspectiva metodológica fue la Straussiana. Se evidenció que para los investigadores, la entrevista fue la principal técnica de recolección utiliza de forma aislada y combinada con otros enfoques.

Conclusión: la diversidad en la presentación y en la descripción del método y resultados de los estudios revela que todavía hay necesidades de perfeccionamiento en cuanto al uso del método, considerando las diferentes vertientes de la teoría Fundamentada en los Datos.

DESCRIPTORES: Investigación en enfermería. Investigación metodológica en enfermería. Investigación cualitativa. Teoría fundamentada. Educación de postgrado en enfermería.

INTRODUCTION

Brazilian nursing has been combining different domains and methodological references in order to guarantee scientific rigor in its production, making it possible to elucidate the object investigated from the best theoretical-philosophical framework to apprehend the roots of the problems studied.¹ Therefore, evidence from Nursing Postgraduate Programs (PGP) are an important scenario of scientific and technological knowledge results in studies that directly contribute to the quality of care and professional credibility.²

In this context, in the last decades, there has been a considerable increase in research with a qualitative approach, mainly in the scientific community of health sciences, empowering knowledge from the field of social sciences, addressing aspects of the social and complex world.³ In Brazil, nursing as an academic discipline of the health sciences pioneered the incorporation of interactionist and phenomenological methods, which became, over the years, important methodological tools to build the knowledge *corpus* of the profession.⁴

In the qualitative research, there is a deepening regarding entities and processes of the cultural and social context and their meanings, which evidently, cannot be quantified. It is an intimate relationship between researcher and object, which highlights and approximates experience and social relations, engaging in a naturalistic, interpretive, creative and flexible nature the verification of complex phenomena, always aiming to describe or understand them.⁵

In due course, the *Grounded Theory*, among other qualitative methodological approaches, appears

as an emerging methodology in nursing research. It is an inductive and deductive method of comparative analysis based on a set of procedures that generate, from the deepening, a theory based on data.⁶ Thus, the main objective of the Grounded Theory is to understand the experiences of the empirical world and the interactions between the subjects that compose it in a given social context, evidencing a particular social or psychosocial process, obtaining, for this, a theory that presents strategies developed before experienced situations.⁶⁻⁷

In the Grounded Theory, therefore, the interaction and introspection of the human behavior is incorporated, since it prioritizes a subjective dimension capable of guiding the actions of the nursing care, good health practices and implementing multifocal and complex processes.⁸ Nevertheless, it requires, for its development, versatility and rigor in the presentation of the analyzed facts, obeying carefully the methodological steps proposed by the authors.

However, the challenge of using rigor to create a theory based on data, especially in positivist academic environments, is presented as a challenge. Therefore, this documentary study justifies the heterogeneity with which the Grounded Theory research reports have been presented in Brazilian productions, mainly regarding the different analytical resources used by the authors due to the different positions of the academic publications, for example: data collection resources, coding and validation steps.⁷⁻⁸

Based on the above, the present study chose the following guiding questions: how was the

Grounded Theory method operationalized in the dissertations and theses available in the Brazilian Nursing Association's Thesis and Dissertation Catalog? What analytical resources have been used in the scientific studies of nursing with the Grounded Theory?

In this sense, in order to contribute to the elucidation of the issues related to the development of studies using the Grounded Theory, the objective of this study was to identify how the researchers used the method of Grounded Theory in theses and dissertations of the Brazilian nursing.

METHOD

This is a quantitative, documentary, descriptive and comparative study based on the mapping of the productions in the *stricto sensu* courses of Postgraduate Programs in Nursing in Brazil that used the Grounded Theory method. The documentary study consists of the analysis of the material that has not received scientific treatment, such as the reports, aiming to extract information for technical analysis.⁹

Thus, the Thesis and Dissertation Catalog of the Nursing Studies and Research Center of the Brazilian Nursing Association (CEPEn/ABEn) was used as a source for data collection, which documents titles and summaries of the production in the Postgraduate Programs in Nursing in Brazil. The choice for such material was the most consistent among the nursing production in scientific research, being this modality of work characterized by the thematic variance, creativity, rigor and logicity, relevant and essential elements for the methodological development of a research using the Grounded Theory. In addition, it was decided to carry out the research using theses and dissertations, considering that in this type of research report the methodological description is more complete than the one found in published articles.

The data collection took place between June and July 2016, conducted by three master's and a doctorate students. To facilitate the organization and registration of the data by the researchers, the Documentary Research Protocol was elaborated, composed of the following items: subject, study objective, guiding question and search strategies regarding the database, selection criteria of the studies and collection and synthesis of the data.

The volumes from XIX to XXXIII of the CEPEn/ABEn were used as data collection source, comprising the publications of the temporal cut between the years 2001 to 2015, obeying the following

inclusion criteria: (1) to be dissertations or theses; (2) to be linked to the Nursing Postgraduate Programs in Brazil; and, (3) to have the Grounded Theory as a methodological resource.

In the first phase of the study, to identify the dissertations and theses that used the Grounded Theory, the production was selected by means of reading the titles and abstracts contained in the CEPEn/ABEn and, in the second phase, by reading the research reports in full. By identifying, from the titles and abstracts, the production of dissertations and theses of nursing using the Grounded Theory, the reports were searched in the institutional repositories where they were defended. Thus, theses and dissertations that were not available electronically in full in the databases and repositories of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of origin were excluded.

The data collected and organized in a *Microsoft Office Excel*[®] spreadsheet were submitted to the analysis of the absolute and relative frequencies, according to the following variables: Formation of the author (academic training at the undergraduate level of the author, consulted via Platform *Lattes*); Academic level (Ph.D. master's degree and professional master's degree); Institution of education (HEI to which the research is linked); Year of defense of the thesis or dissertation; Place of study development (federative unit where the data collection of the research was carried out); Methodological perspective of the Grounded Theory (classification of the works in the three main methodological aspects that emerged along the evolutionary course of the method - Classical, Straussian and Constructivist);⁸ Theoretical reference (analysis of the theoretical reference that allows to identify the autonomy of the produced knowledge and the relation with other disciplines of scientific knowledge);¹ Nursing knowledge area (grouping of studies in the nursing work process categories - care, teaching, research and management); and, analytical resources (according to the conceptual, structural and operational aspects of the Grounded Theory.⁸ Then, there was the grouping of the results into the following categories - description of the construction of the sample groups, simultaneity of data collection and analysis, data coding process, use of diagrams, use of memoranda and presentation of the theory: theoretical model/theoretical matrix/substantive theory).

In order to favor the analysis, the data of the theses and dissertations will be presented together. It should be highlighted that, since this documenta-

ry study is based on public data, the approval of the Ethics and Research Committee was not necessary.

RESULTS

In the CEPEn/ABEn Thesis and Dissertations Catalog, 7,369 abstracts were found, considering the

volumes XIX to XXXIII. Of these, 70 studies that used the Grounded Theory were retrieved from the HEI repositories and selected to integrate the final documentary research sample, which corresponds to 0.95% of the nursing researches produced between 2001 and 2015. Table 1 presents the quantitative data regarding the study search stages.

Table 1 - Total of studies in the Catalogs of Research and Nursing Researchers of CEPEn, using the Grounded Theory, pre-selected and selected. Natal, RN, Brazil, 2016. (n=70)

Volumes	Total studies*		Pre-selected studies †		Selected studies ‡		Final sample	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
XIX	469	6.36	5	4.55	2	2.30	2	2.86
XX	280	3.80	4	3.64	3	3.45	3	4.29
XXI	285	3.87	2	1.82	-	-	-	-
XXII	318	4.32	7	6.36	1	1.15	1	1.43
XXIII	383	5.20	5	4.55	1	1.15	1	1.43
XXIV	554	7.52	9	8.18	8	9.20	8	11.43
XXV	518	7.03	6	5.45	5	5.75	4	5.71
XXVI	445	6.04	5	4.55	5	5.75	5	7.14
XXVII	482	6.54	8	7.27	5	5.75	4	5.71
XXVIII	368	4.99	7	6.36	4	4.60	4	5.71
XXIX	547	7.42	10	9.09	9	10.34	7	10.00
XXX	900	12.21	18	16.36	17	19.54	14	20.00
XXXI	806	10.94	8	7.27	11	12.64	6	8.57
XXXII	565	7.67	4	3.64	6	6.90	4	5.71
XXXIII	449	6.09	12	10.91	10	11.49	7	10.00
Total	7369	100	110	100	87	100	70	100

* Number of summaries of volume components; †According to inclusion criteria; ‡According to inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Expressively, the last five years of publications (2010-2014) accounted for 54.3% (n=38) of all the production analyzed, to the detriment of the first nine years (2001-2009), which despite concentrating approximate value (32; 45.7%), is the product of a greater temporal cut.

There was a predominance of doctoral studies (36, 51.4%), followed by academic master's dissertations (33, 47.1%) and reduced number of professional master's degrees (1.4%).

Figure 1 shows the HEI where the research was developed. Only twelve institutions carried out studies using the Grounded Theory in the period evaluated and in the sample size, with emphasis on the Federal University of Santa Catarina (22, 31.4%), the University of São Paulo (22, 31.4%), the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (8, 11.4%) and the Federal University of Paraná (7; 10%). When grouped by federative regions, the HEIs of the Southern axis (30; 42.9%) and Southeast (36; 51.4%), followed by the Northeast (4; 5.7%) predominated. No production was found in HEIs of the North and Central-West regions.

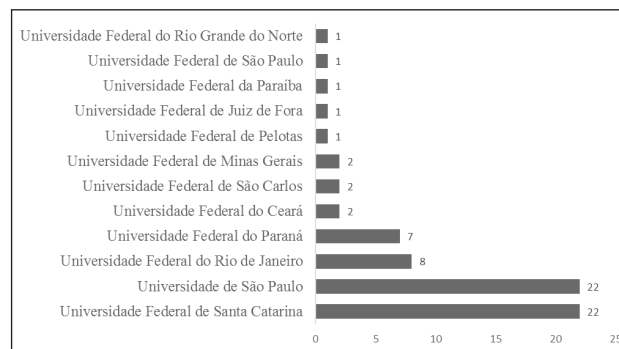


Figure 1 - Institutions of Higher Education according to the number of theses and dissertations in the Nursing area, which used the Grounded Theory. Natal, RN, Brazil, 2016. (n=70)

Most of the research was developed, that is, it had as a *locus* of data collection, the States of São Paulo (21; 30%), Santa Catarina (18; 25.7%), Paraná (9; 12.9%); and Rio de Janeiro (8; 11.4%), concentrating on the HEIs of the South and Southeast axis.

Regarding the undergraduate education of the authors of the analyzed studies, these are exclusive-

ly nurses (70, 100%), although some HEIs assume an interdisciplinary character in their Postgraduate Programs in Nursing.

Table 2 presents the areas of knowledge, theoretical reference and methodological perspectives adopted from the analyzed studies.

Table 2 - Nursing knowledge area, theoretical reference and methodological perspective in theses and dissertations using the Grounded Theory. Natal, RN, Brazil, 2016. (n=70)

Nursing Knowledge Area			Referential theoretical			Methodological perspective		
	n	%		n	%		n	%
Care	50	71.43	Symbolic interactionism	48	68.57	Straussian	54	77.14
Research	8	11.43	Paradigm of complexity	16	22.86			
Management	8	11.43	Did not specify	6	8.57	Classic	16	22.86
Teaching	4	5.71						
Total	70	100	Total	70	100	Total	70	100

Regarding the nursing knowledge areas, the research on the care practice predominated (71.4%). The dissertations and theses that addressed the research and management had eight studies each (11.4% for both). Those of education represented 5.7% of the sample (n=4).

By analyzing them together, the theoretical reference and the methodological perspective that supported the discussion and the development of the research, respectively, the Symbolic Interactionism (48; 68.6%) and the Straussian slope (54; 77.1%) stood out, and this preference may be related to the origin of the Grounded Theory method. At the same time, the Complexity Paradigm (16; 22.8%) and the classical one (16; 22.9%) appear next, as theoretical and methodological support, respectively.

Regarding data collection techniques, 42 surveys (58.3%) used more than one resource, according to table 3. There was a predominance in the use of interviews (100%), the semi-structure type being the most employed (91.4%). The observation resource (88.1%) was the most used in combination with the interview, predominating the non-participant observation (52.4%).

Regarding the conceptual, structural and operational aspects of the analytical resources described in the theses and dissertations, according to table 4, 70% presented how the sample groups were constructed, an important strategy to meet the principle of the theoretical sampling. Not to describe this step, what happened in 30% of the analyzed reports, can limit the understanding about the process and methodological decisions adopted by the research.

Table 3 - Characterization of the resources used for data collection in the theses and dissertations supported by the Grounded Theory. Natal, RN, Brazil, 2016. (n=70)

Resource	Type	n	%
It used only one resource (n=28; 40%)			
Interview	Semi-structured	25	89.3
	Unstructured	3	10.7
	Structured	0	0
Total		28	100
It used more than one resource (n=42; 58.33%)			
Interview	Semi-structured	39	92.9
	Unstructured	2	4.8
	Structured	1	2.3
Total		42	58.33
Note	Non-participant	22	52.4
	Participant	15	35.7
Total		37	88.1
Documentary		9	21.43
Focus Group		1	2.4

Failure to comply with the recommendation for simultaneous data collection and analysis (4.3%) compromises the development of concepts based on their dimensions and properties, that is, categories that are poorly conceptually developed, although 91.4% of the researchers described all the steps of the coding process. However, 8.6% omitted one of these steps, related to the axial analysis, that is, the consolidation of categories and the development of the paradigmatic model.

Table 4 - Characterization of the theses and dissertations regarding the fulfillment of the analytical processes of the Grounded Theory. Natal, RN, Brazil, 2016. (n=70)

Analytical processes	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Described the process of building sample groups	49	70	21	30
Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously	67	95.7	3	4.3
Used all the steps of the coding process	64	91.4	6	8.6
Used diagrams	52	74.3	18	25.7
Used memos	46	65.7	24	34.3
Described the theory validation process	46	65.7	24	34.3

Of those who described all the stages (91.4%), expressively, 24 studies (34.3%) of the sample did not validate the theoretical construct. Diagrams and memos were used (74.3% and 65.7%, respectively) in the theses and dissertations analyzed.

DISCUSSION

Even in the face of advances in the dissemination of information and method at the national level, its use had little expressiveness, corroborating with the findings of a review on the theme.¹⁰ Such reality may have to do with the progressive expansion of method use in the national territory and little domain of some researchers for their implementation in the different methodological aspects.⁸

It is also important to highlight that the Grounded Theory is disclosed in academic corridors as a difficult method of operationalization. On this aspect, it is necessary to demystify, since the method presents methodological structure that guides the researcher through all the steps, from the process of collection to the analysis. However, the researcher who chooses the Grounded Theory will handle a large volume of data and the need to use induction, deduction, sensitivity and creativity concomitantly in a dynamic and systematic way. Perhaps, the exposed aspect is what most implies in difficulties with the method.

Through the results of the search, it was clarified that, more than half of the investigations that used the Grounded Theory as a research method are concentrated from the year 2010. Such evidence may be associated with its greater visibility at the national level as of 2008, since the main works^{6-7,11} that describe its use were published in the Portuguese language, facilitating the appropriation of the method.

This may also be associated with the globalized advancement of the global computer network in recent years, which has made it easier to access

information, including in other languages. This reality enabled the dissemination of knowledge and its expansion through the rapid and practical access of the Internet.¹² It is believed that this advance contributed to the greater number of publications using the Grounded Theory method, as well as the accessibility of the knowledge of the method by the Brazilian researchers.

Brazilian nursing has sought to consolidate the Postgraduate Program through research, scientific production of significant importance and recruitment of masters and, mainly, qualified PhDs to compose the body of knowledge of this scientific discipline. In this context, the result of this documentary study is inserted, whose research concentrates in the doctoral courses and academic masters. This advance contributed to the notoriety and academic quality of the profession on a national and international level, highlighted by the excellence in the training of PhDs capable of being researchers and scientists.¹³

In addition to the skills described above, the construction of the Grounded Theory requires from the researcher a dense theoretical knowledge of the elements that compose it, as well as the disposition and time to reach it, which may explain the predominance of research at the doctoral level, considering that the formation of the PhD offers theoretical and philosophical load for the development of critical and analytical thinking, plus longer time for its completion at the expense of the master's course.

The results showed that the use of the Grounded Theory, although more frequent in theses, is increasing in master's studies, since the number between theses and dissertations was directly proportional to each other. Such reality may be related to the dissemination of the method and to the increase of the number of master's degrees in the Brazilian territory. However, it is worth mentioning that there is no restriction on the use of the method in the master's courses, however, such choice will

require the researcher greater commitment to be able to execute it, since the course time is shorter to reach all the stages that are required.

The predominance of the method in the South and Southeast regions, both in relation to HEI and at the *locus* of the study, can be justified by the higher concentration of Postgraduate Programs in Nursing, as well as being the oldest and best evaluation of the *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de pessoal de Nível Superior* (CAPES). In addition, it corroborates other studies,¹⁴⁻¹⁶ in which these programs are presented as substantially stable when compared to others located in different regions of the country.

From the reports of theses and dissertations analyzed in this research, 100% were developed by nurses. On the one hand, such evidence may be related to the inclusion criteria proposed by this study, in which only theses and dissertations of nursing programs were included. On the other hand, the growing interest of nurses for the Grounded Theory method to contribute to care practice seems to be associated, since the training of masters and PhDs in these programs has followed an interdisciplinary perspective, allowing the entry of non-nurses professionals.

Regarding to the care procedural activity, it presented imminent prominence for investigations using the Grounded Theory as a method. This fact can be understood considering the care centered on the human person, the essence of nursing, who is offered care, the being that cares, their interrelationships and the management of care.¹⁷ From this perspective, the importance of studies is raised, which bring evidence to research, management and teaching as research objects using the Grounded Theory method for nursing.

Still in relation to the emphasis on productions linked to the care component, this can be justified considering nursing care the essence of the profession. Additionally, it is possible to correlate its prominence with the choice of the Straussian methodological reference, present in most of the studies, being strongly related to the researcher's experience in relation to the studied phenomenon.^{6,8}

In the theoretical approach to the objects studied, Symbolic Interactionism was the referential adopted by most theses and dissertations and its choice may be linked to the historical aspect of elaboration of the method, since Anselm Strauss, one of its idealizers, sought to understand phenomena qualitatively in the light of Symbolic Interactionism.⁷

The referential in question aims to understand the reactions of the human being to the meaning of

everything that is presented to him, the meaning that objects begin to develop in relation to their relationship with other human beings, and, finally, the modifications of meaning suffer through interpretations made by the person in face of the experience of some situations.¹⁸

Another theoretical reference adopted that deserves attention is the Complexity Theory. It is believed that the use of this reference in the Grounded Theory due to the search for connections and interrelations between the conflicts that permeate a phenomenon to be studied. In this context, Edgar Morin, the main thinker of complexity, refers in his theory to man as a multifaceted, non-fragmented and non-simplified being, which results from a thought that interrelates events in the search for explanations for them.¹⁹

Regarding the methodological reference adopted, in the present study, it was observed that there was no consensus in its choice. This finding agrees with the Brazilian national research reports in which it points out disagreements in the analytical processes, as well as in its formal structure. Such a condition can be justified by methodological oppositions among the idealizers of the method.⁷⁻⁸

The Straussian method was the most used approach in the theses and dissertations of the sample, with the post-positivist paradigm as guiding their theoretical construction. The question of research on its optics must emerge in the face of the researcher's experience and an in-depth reading of the subject. Analysis of the data takes place in three steps coding and validation of the theoretical model, which gives greater scientific rigor,^{6,8} to present additional step of reflection on the data, coordinating the participation of assessors with expertise in the subject and/or the method.

The classical methodology was also described as a methodological reference of choice for Grounded Theory in the investigations of the present article. The method is anchored in the positivist paradigm, proposed by Glaser,¹¹ who proposed to study phenomena of the individual using exact, quantitative methods, where the questions of research arise through emerging data without deepening the literature on the subject. In this method, data analysis also occurs through coding and in the theoretical validation stage the possibility of modifying a theory is defended as new data arise.^{8,11}

As for the analytical resources, the data collection had the use of the interview as a collection mechanism. This reality confirms the fact that the interview is the predominant resource used

in the Grounded Theory.⁸ The substantial preference for the interview method, especially of the semi-structured type, in the data collection of the Grounded Theory is also due to the possibility of the researcher modifying the course of the collection, deepening the understanding with questions about the phenomenon in question according to the requirement of the data. Thus, this method allows the researcher to cross different paths during the collection.²⁰ Thus, it is through the interview that the reliability of what is said is reached, because it is possible to perceive the behavior of the participant during the data collection.¹⁰

In addition, it is emphasized that there was a tendency for studies to adopt more than one resource for data collection. It is believed that this fact occurs because it allows a greater safety in the quality of the findings in investigations that use different collection techniques. This would be different ways of obtaining information about the same phenomenon, which would guarantee greater support for the study.

In addition, it should be highlighted that all the methodological resources adopted for combined data collection were linked to the Straussian perspective, with no study with a constructivist approach, although it also encouraged the use of multiple sources of data collection.⁸ However, the CEPEn database depends on the Postgraduate Programs to send the theses and dissertations to compose their volumes.

Other techniques of data collection such as observation, focus groups, document analysis, group interviewing are also highlighted. It is emphasized that the use of these resources is understood as a possibility and not as an inflexible and rigid mechanism to collect data. Thus, the investigator should have the appropriate knowledge about the method and the slope that will be used to avoid possible misunderstandings in the results of the study.²¹

The expressive number of studies that used observation as a data collection strategy can be clarified by this method to allow the understanding of what is not said, either because there is no vocabulary or due to the participant's inability to verbally express the desired.¹⁰

It was identified in the findings of the theses and dissertations in question that, among the types of existing observations, the non-participant was the choice of many of the authors. The option for this collection technique may be related to the fact that the researcher is present in the context of the object under study, but to have only the visual role, thus

observing the individuals of the research without collaborating with the information. However, it is emphasized that regardless the type of observation adopted, the researcher must record them methodically.⁸

It is important to consider that the choices of the techniques for data collection were consistent with the recommendations and specificities of the methodological perspectives, since resources such as interviews, observations, document analysis and focus group were used.

It is necessary to emphasize that the main purpose of the Grounded Theory is to search for the meanings of social relations, interactions and associations that are signaled from the meanings attributed by the subjects who experience them, and who can explain their movements, not just existential meanings for the person being, to their living and related to the image that the person designs or represents for themselves. Thus, it differs from a phenomenological study or from social representations, or from others that also seek the understanding of the essence of the phenomenon or condition.⁸

In this sense, the documentary research pointed, for the most part, the adequate use of the analytical resources of the Grounded Theory, to the detriment of the few that were not performed effectively. Regarding the description of the construction of the sample groups, most of the surveys successfully described the selection of subjects to compose the sample, which was detailed in the methodology of each research. Only a small portion of the studies did not emphasize the description of the sample group, an essential field in the research methodology, and an emphasis on the selection of those subjects who are experiencing the social situation being studied, that is, those who have information or knowledge about the study in question. Considering that the sample groups are constructed from the hypotheses developed by the inductive process from the analysis of the data and it is configured as an important strategy for the development of broad concepts and based on the data. The inadequate operationalization could compromise the elements of the theory.²¹

Regarding the development of these resources, it is also important to highlight the effective compliance with the steps of the method in which the data collection and analysis were performed, simultaneously, for data elucidation and verification, since the researchers need to appropriate the process of inductive and deductive reasoning to establish the concepts through skills, which involve sensitivity

and creativity, aiming at a complex and detailed understanding of the object addressed.^{11,22}

The theoretical codification, by establishing new connections and transforming them into relevant ideas, determines the original character of the theory. The researcher's effort at this analytical stage is to delimit the attributes, which are termed by Strauss and Corbin as properties, for detailing the content of the categories. That is, concepts advance and consolidate in terms of properties and dimensions.⁸

When analyzing the coding steps, it should be highlighted that most of the researches described in detail the steps as defined in the method. However, a small portion left gaps in the description of the coding steps or did not describe in their method according to the adopted methodological perspective.

Strauss and Corbin present a structured and systematic approach for data analysis in three steps. The open coding as the first step of the analysis process. The second step is the axial coding that aims to systematically develop categories and relate them. The last step is the selective coding, whose objective is to integrate and refine categories into an analytical model.⁶ Glaser argues for the performance of the theoretical coding and discards the need for the axial coding, as it reconnects the fragmented elements.¹¹ Thus, in the analysis processes, the theoretical coding differs from the substantive with respect to the level and type of abstraction. Charmaz recommends that the coding process for data analysis should be performed in at least two steps: initial coding and focused coding.^{7,23}

According to the differences between the coding steps of each methodological perspective of the Grounded Theory, it is important to register with specificity the way in which the method was used according to the theoretical-philosophical reference that guided the research, since the isolated use of the steps of the Grounded Theory coding to analyze the data collected does not characterize the method as a technique or method of analysis.

The methodological perspectives of the Grounded Theory also suggest the use of diagrams and memoranda as a strategy to guide the researcher throughout the research. Both the diagram, which contributes to visually presenting the categories and their connections throughout the research process, and the memo, records containing analysis products and aimed at developing concepts,⁷⁻⁸ were well explored in the research.

Although the authors of the Grounded Theory method do not express the obligatory use of these

resources, their use is extremely important to determine the relationships between the concepts and to collaborate in the construction of the research hypotheses. It should be highlighted the use of these tools to assist in the analysis and construction of hypotheses and concepts, since analytical strategies are important, considered records of the analysis, which can be done manually or through softwares for analysis of the qualitative data.⁶

Regarding the stage of presentation of the theory, there was an expressive number of works that carried out this stage, which aims to demonstrate that the theoretical model is representative in relation to the reality investigated; however, a small number of works did not present, in particular, the results as substantive theory, implying in reading and applicability, to other contexts of time and space, not allowing modifications and incorporations of new elements that aim at the improvement of the knowledge related to the phenomenon that was investigated.⁸ Finally, all the stages of construction of the Grounded Theory anchored in the appropriate analytical resources, leading to the validation and presentation of the constructed theory, with the categories and their relations until reaching the phenomenon or central category, by experts in the method or subject under study and/or the group or part of the group of participants of the study.

Still, it is pointed out that, although it was a small number of dissertations and theses not located in full-text format, this represented a methodological limitation. This limitation can be related to the option to search only in CEPEn/ABEn and in the repositories of HEIs.

CONCLUSION

The study sought to contribute to the identification of the analytical resources of the Grounded Theory in theses and dissertation linked to the Post-graduate Nursing programs in Brazil and to show how this method has been used by the researchers, with the intention of subsidizing the construction of the knowledge of this method in a reliable and faithful way to its steps.

The research to the documents sought to verify mainly the consistency to the method adopted in the selected studies, stimulating the reflection on the importance of quality productions, as well as to add rigor to the development of knowledge to the Nursing discipline, in order to contribute to the continuity of its improvement. Therefore, in the nursing production identified in this study, there

were few dissertations and theses that showed a lack of detailed description regarding the application of the Grounded Theory, revealing that there are still weaknesses or need for improvement regarding the management of the method.

The points of difficulty in selecting the research sample are highlighted, such as: the scarcity of important information in the abstracts; theses and dissertations not available in full in institutional repositories, which were generally older productions; and the limited number of papers that discuss their methodological limitations regarding the use of the Grounded Theory.

For all these aspects mentioned, the research allowed to detect that for the construction of the Grounded Theory, it is necessary to know the main elements of this method, as well as dedication and time for the researcher to fulfill all the processes aiming at reaching the theory.

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