

# ANALYSIS OF REFERENCES OF THE BRAZILIAN NURSING DOCTORAL THESIS:

# BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY ANÁLISE DAS REFERÊNCIAS DE TESES DE DOUTORADO DA ENFERMAGEM BRASILEIRA:

ESTUDO BIBLIOMÉTRICO ANÁLISIS DE LAS REFERENCIAS DE TESIS DE DOCTORADO DE ENFERMERÍA BRASILEÑA: ESTUDIO BIBLIOMÉTRICO

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#### **ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** to analyze thesis references of doctoral dissertations of graduate programs in Brazilian nursing published from 2010 to 2012. **Method:** bibliometric study of 50 thesis, with 6,587 references analyzed, descriptively, as the category, the type, temporality, language and geographic origin. **Results:** the data showed that there was a predominance of references of journal articles and books and book chapters; temporality ranged from three to ten years; Portuguese and English languages; and as to the geographical origin, Brazilian and North American. **Conclusion:** the findings of this study show the need for other bibliometric studies for future comparisons and appreciation of the scientific production of Brazilian nursing, besides of getting results about the bibliometric profile of nursing publications. **Descriptors:** Bibliometrics; Nursing Research; Knowledge.

#### **RESUMO**

Objetivo: analisar as referências de teses de doutorado dos programas de pós-graduação em enfermagem brasileira, publicadas no período de 2010 a 2012. *Método*: estudo bibliométrico realizado com 50 teses, das quais foram analisadas 6.587 referências, descritivamente, quanto à categoria, ao tipo, à temporalidade, ao idioma e à procedência geográfica. *Resultados*: os dados mostraram que houve o predomínio de referências do tipo artigos de periódicos e livros e capítulos de livros; a temporalidade variou de três a dez anos; os idiomas português e inglês; e quanto à procedência geográfica, brasileira e norte-americana. *Conclusão*: os achados desta pesquisa apontam para a necessidade de outros estudos bibliométricos para futuras comparações e valorização da produção científica da enfermagem brasileira, além de obter resultados acerca do perfil bibliométrico das publicações de enfermagem. *Descritores*: Bibliometria; Pesquisa em Enfermagem; Conhecimento.

#### **RESUMEN**

Objetivo: analizar las referencias de tesis de doctorado de los programas de post-graduación en enfermería brasileña, publicadas en el período de 2010 a 2012. Método: estudio bibliométrico realizado con 50 tesis, en las cuales fueron analizadas 6.587 referencias, descriptivamente, sobre la categoría, al tipo, a la temporalidad, al idioma y a la procedencia geográfica. Resultados: los datos mostraron que hubo predominio de referencias del tipo artículos de periódicos y libros y capítulos de libros; la temporalidad varió de tres a diez años; los idiomas portugués e inglés; y la procedencia geográfica, brasileña y norte-americana. Conclusión: los hallados de esta investigación apuntan para la necesidad de otros estudios bibliométricos para futuras comparaciones y valorización de la producción científica de la enfermería brasileña, además de obtener resultados acerca del perfil bibliométrico de las publicaciones de enfermería. Descriptores: Bibliometría; Investigación en Enfermería; Conocimiento.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Bibliometric methods are important tools to analyze the scientific production and to quantify the evolution of knowledge produced by men. Applying a high level of methodological rigor, there is authority and credibility to the facts cited in the text.<sup>1</sup>

application of bibliometrics methodological theoretical alternative to map scientific research and generate different indicators of treatment and management of information, knowledge and productivity necessary for the planning, evaluation and management of science and technology of a particular scientific community or country. In addition, it minimizes the subjectivity inherent to the indexing and recuperation of information and produces knowledge in a particular area of a subject.2

In Nursing, as in any other science, the research must generate impacts and changes that improve care. For this to happen it is essential to publish the results of the studies.<sup>3</sup> In addition, it is necessary that nurses have easy access to knowledge produced, reducing the distance between knowledge from the research and the healthcare professional practice.

Among the components of a research there are the references that constitute the elements of a written work, such as title, author, publisher, place and year of publication, volume and number, allowing them to be identified. They are subsidies for argumentation and elaboration of the research problem construction of the study as a whole, since they meet the essential and necessary information to be described and exposed in the research. Failures in the references, as the absence of important elements that prevent access to that source or not quoting an indispensable reference for particular subject will compromise the quality of the arguments of justification. The relevance and the discussion are issues to be identified in order to prevent a research submitting its references of incomplete and/or improperly.

Despite the importance of the references, there is a gap in the studies about nursing research references revealing the pattern of research and trend identification. To assess the quality and the credibility of the research, it is important to analyze the references used, that is why the need of methodologies supporting the achievement of evaluation indicators of scientific production, as bibliometrics. Thus, it is worth analyzing the references of nursing research in order to identify the quality, credibility and capability of academic production.

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Like other areas, it is important to highlight that nursing does not use the benefits of bibliometric studies. The analysis of references, such as science-metric technique has been applied progressively in the evaluation of research in the different areas of knowledge and it is described in several ways in the literature.<sup>4,5</sup>

The data obtained from the analysis of references, through bibliometrics, provide important information for indicators of scientific production, highlighting the institutional aspect and even the countries where they generate scientific information that will support and parameters to detect the development of related areas.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, when analyzing the references of a research, it is contributed to the evaluation of data collected by the type of literature used, and the reader is directed to other sources of data on the subject of interest.<sup>7</sup>

It is expected to contribute to the awakening of the need to evaluate the quality and credibility of references, emphasizing the importance of using methodologies such as bibliometrics, obtaining quality indicators of the research elements. It is the first attempt that enables to improve what is being used as references in nursing research.

In this context, the study aimed to analyze the references of the doctoral thesis of graduate programs in Brazilian nursing.

#### **METHOD**

A bibliometric study that analyzed the references used in the doctoral thesis of graduate programs in Brazilian nursing was conducted. The following inclusion criteria were established: doctoral thesis in graduate nursing programs evaluated by the Higher Education Personnel Training Coordination (CAPES) score of 6, advocated in the past three years, including 2010 to 2012, and available in full on the websites of these programs.

Therefore, 50 thesis of four graduate nursing programs scored 6 were included: Nursing in Adult Health from the University of São Paulo; Public Health Nursing and Primary Nursing from the University of São Paulo/Ribeirão Preto, and Nursing at the University of Santa Catarina.

Data collection occurred during May and June 2012, through consultation to the websites of programs for identification and selection of thesis. After this selection, data were collected through an elaborated instrument with the following aspects: type, temporality, language and geographic origin of the cited documents.

Regarding the type, the documents were classified in books and book chapters, journal articles, monographs, dissertations and thesis,

annals abstracts in congress, legislation and others. Regarding temporality, the measure was based on the date of presentation and grouped into categories: up to two years, from three to five years, from six to ten years, from 11 to 20 years, more than 20 years and without date when it was not found in the reference. Concerning the language, the quotations were categorized using the language of publication. Finally, in the geographical origin, the country of publication was considered.

Data were tabulated and gathered in a spreadsheet Excel 2010. Tables were used to present the data and descriptive statistics for analysis.

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It is noteworthy that it was not necessary to submit this study to the Research Ethics Committee, as the data collected is in the public domain.

#### **RESULTS**

In order to meet the objective proposed by this study, the analysis of the references of the thesis by type list of the documents were shown, the temporality of the documents, language and geographic origin of the journals.

There were 6,587 references analyzed of 50 thesis of graduate programs scored 6 by CAPES. Table 1 shows the type of reference used.

**Table 1.** Distribution of the thesis according to the type of reference user Fortaleza-CE, 2012.

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Type of Reference	Total	%
Articles of journals 3.489		53,0
Books and books chapters 1847		28,0
Legislation	305	4,6
Dissertations	196	3,0
Thesis	178	2,7
Websites	145	2,3
Annals abstracts	49	0,7
Monographs	17	0,3
Others	361	5,4
Total	6.587	100

Regarding the type of reference used in the thesis, there was greater emphasis on journal articles, with 53% of the total of the references, followed by books and book chapters,

representing 28%. Legislation, dissertations, thesis, websites, annals abstracts, monographs and other were 19% of the cited references.

Table 2. Distribution of the thesis according to temporality of the references used. Fortaleza-CE, 2012.

Temporality	Total	%
< 2 years	800	12,0
3 to 5 years	1.670	25,0
6 to 10 years	2.078	31,5
11 to 20 years	1.211	18,4
> 20 years	759	11,5
Not informed	69	1,0
Total	6.587	100

The trajectory of the citations had an increasing in the temporality from three to five years and six to ten years, representing 57.5% of the thesis. It was also noted variations from year

to year with peaks of publication in the first five years, from 2002 to 2006, and the in the second five years from 2007 to 2009.

Table 3. Distribution of the thesis according to the language of the references used. Fortaleza-CE, 2012.

Language	Total	%
Portuguese	3668	55,7
English	2821	42,8
Spanish	75	1,1
Others	23	0,4
Total	6587	100

It was notices that the references in Portuguese were the most used in the thesis, with 55.7%, followed by 42.8% in English, and

Spanish 1.1%. The references classified as others were coming from Italian and French languages.

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Table 4. Distributions of the thesis according to geographical origin of the references used. Fortaleza-CE, 2012.

Place	Total	%
Brazil	3665	55,6
United States of America	2278	34,6
England	256	3,9
Canada	49	0,7
Spain	49	0,7
Others	260	4,0
Not found	30	0,5
Total	6587	100

From the analyzed references, 55.6% were written in Portuguese and in Brazil, and 38.2% were written in English, with 34.6% of North American origin. In geographical distribution, other countries had 4.7% of the citations.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The results from the analysis of the types of documents cited in the thesis, compared to others in investigations by authors from different areas of knowledge, involve some exposed following considerations: 53% with reference to citations from journal articles, there is an approximation of this result to other studies<sup>8,9</sup>, finding respectively 62% and 60.1% of articles cited in public health thesis and dissertations.

Other studies have also found a predominance of article citations, 48% in dissertations in the field of information science<sup>10</sup> and 43% in doctorates in the field of engineering.<sup>11</sup>

It is noteworthy that the scientific articles are considered the most used type of document in the communication of scientific research. This is due to the ease of access to the full text of scientific articles and to the fact that magazines are evaluated periodically by the quality of their publications by the impact factor.<sup>12</sup>

Another factor to be considered to justify the increased use of scientific articles graduate work is due to the assessment conducted by CAPES, which officially adopts the impact factor of the journals for the evaluation of teachers, courses and registered institutions offering graduate courses. It is noteworthy the incentive the production and the service journals.

There are also the articles originated from thesis and dissertations, since the publication in the form of scientific articles undergoes rigorous judgement by expertise. After critical evaluation, the text is recommended for publicizing and the content is published with extensive reduction, which is more suitable to be read by people.<sup>13</sup>

As previously mentioned, this study showed a low percentage of use of dissertations, thesis, monographs, legislation, websites and other publications cited in the evaluated documents. These types of documents are the list of the so-called gray literature, which presents identification and difficult access by the lack of

specific sources of disclosure and the lack of knowledge of its existence by researchers. Thus, it is important to consider the small amount produced of this literature, particularly thesis and dissertations, whose offer is lower when compared to other types of documents.<sup>9</sup>

When citing the websites, it is necessary to take the due care, since not all web pages can be considered reliable. It is not always possible to find information about the author or even the title of this type of reference. Communication identification at conferences is another reference type that needs special care because it requires a lot of information, and many references published in this type of documents are incomplete.<sup>13</sup>

Citation of non-indexed document in scientific literature and difficult to access should be avoided. Generally, this type of disclosure document are limited to an institution or an event. In the same way, they should not be part of the list of information references cited in the extracted text of electronic documents that are not kept permanently on websites.<sup>14</sup>

It is noteworthy that the use of dissertations and thesis in the preparation of thesis is not marked, corroborating data from another study<sup>15</sup> about analysis of biological sciences thesis references, with 1.75% of references the use of dissertations and thesis; masters in information sciences 81.6% of references were dissertations and thesis; in the field of public health 102% references of thesis and dissertations in the analyzed masters and doctorates used this type of reference.

The relevance of what is not published, as thesis and dissertations, as references, is supported on the premise that a thesis or dissertation must also have first-hand material. The only thing that is must not deny is ignoring original authors, which are useful to support the work, because without preliminary critical literature, text may appear garbled, and without its knowledge, the critical literature cannot be assessed.<sup>14</sup>

The little use of thesis and dissertations can be masked, since this type of information could have been cited in another format, such as journal articles and conference information. 9

Regarding the temporality, the data are consistent with the study's findings that<sup>(8)</sup> found that about 50% of the references in masters and doctoral degrees in public health are from the ten most recent years.<sup>9</sup> Another study also showed that publications of ten years cover 60.2% of the references of masters and 58.8% of the references of doctoral in public health from 1990 to 1994.

A study<sup>16</sup> showed in the temporality of documents that the majority (80%) was on publications from the past five years as the academic papers require current literature and wide disclosure.

These findings reflect greater experience of the students of the Brazilian nursing graduate to identify the different sources of consultation documents of interest and the existing means of selection and updated information published more recently, while considering the importance of the classics, for the development of the studies.

Referencing other research in the construction of any study is an important characteristic in the academic literature as it shows the author's field in the studied subject and the recognition of many authors who previously addressed the issue.<sup>17</sup>

The function of the service is to give "authority and credibility to the facts cited in the text, and allows the area of researchers the opportunity to meet work dealing with the same subject of interest"<sup>9:66</sup> Therefore, scientific knowledge must never be built in isolation and immediately. On the other hand, it must be generated and shared continuously, through the collective contribution of the various research already disclosed in the area and in compliance with the various periods of publication.

It was observed that 1% of the references did not have date, detected mainly on the other reference types used in the thesis. The reason can be linked to the wide variety of sources included in this group of citations.

It is necessary that the authors are aware of the correct normalization of publications, to avoid that the references are presented as incomplete and/or inadequate texts, with a deficiency of information and absence of essential elements to identify the document, making difficult the qualification and the analysis of this type of document. The citations of well organized references provide, when necessary, effective proof of the information contained in the text of the study.

The language can be related to the topics of the published studies and to the places where these topics are most studied. There is a greater amount of research in the original language, with the predominance of the native language in the Analysis of references of the brazilian nursing...

citations. In this way, the study<sup>18</sup> confirms this finding by demonstrating that literature found in the database Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE) is formed in the literature from countries in North America, with English speaking countries, where there is more concentration of references in that language. In the case of Latin American Literature in Health Sciences (LILACS) database, the predominant languages are Portuguese and Spanish, since it is a scientific production database produced in Latin America and the Caribbean.

It should be noted that the fact that the English language is in second place is due to the hegemony of that language, since countries that do not have that language as an official language also produce in English language to further promoting the availability of journals internationally. 19

The findings of this study are similar to data from studies<sup>9,10,19</sup> that found that Portuguese and English are the most used in the references, and the study<sup>19</sup> analyzed the articles. However, the results of these research differ in this study, because the English language is more than Portuguese.

Bibliometric studies<sup>9;10;15;19</sup> that have been developed over the time found that Brazil and the United States are the countries responsible for most of the scientific literature used in the studies, corroborating the findings of this study. This fact is because the country of origin of these works is Brazil and the large amount of national activities with international literature dependency, because only the Brazilian research are not sufficient to cover the demand for necessary information to conduct scientific research, mainly Ph.D. thesis that need further clarification on the subject.9

As explained in this study results, the predominant languages in the references were Portuguese, followed by English. Thus, in the geographical origin aspect, the data confirmed the previous finding, with Brazil being the predominant place of origin of the citations with 55.6%, followed by the countries whose official language is English, as the United States, England and Canada with 39.2%.

The countries categorized as others included: Australia, Japan, Chile, Colombia, New Zealand, Argentina, Cuba, Switzerland, Sweden, Holland, Mexico, Portugal, Ireland, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Finland, Scotland, Lithuania, Turkey, Venezuela, Norway, Poland, Malaysia, Belgium, Scandinavia, Austria and Indonesia.

The predominance of citations of Brazil about American citations is something important because it is natural that the work referenced in the thesis has a great expressiveness citation in

English. The large investment in research, characteristic of nations with predominance of this language, there are more incentives for the use of research citations of these countries in nursing thesis in Brazil. This predominance of Brazilian references shows that after investments of recent years, the Brazilian in various areas have shown research improvement in the quality and credibility.<sup>20</sup>

It is worth noting that when developing a thesis or dissertation, an ethical commitment is assumed, individually and/or as part of a system that invests public funds in promoting research. Therefore, it cannot deprive people of access to new knowledge produced, which enables discuss, densify and develop, with the wealth coming from diversity of what was produced, and had enabled their use by people interested in the newly produced knowledge.<sup>14</sup>

A thesis must have a final quality literature. Book chapters and books are used in thesis and dissertations, distinguishing and individualizing primary and secondary sources. The thesis, as a document that reports research, has the hallmark to produce new knowledge and to record effectively consulted works. It is important to remember that the credibility of a bibliography is given by its title, and not only by the format in which it is published.<sup>14</sup>

# CONCLUSION

This study allowed us to analyze the arguments presented in the period 2010-2012, to the graduate programs in nursing scored 6 (CAPES) in relation to references used. It was sought to identify the document type, temporality, language and geographic origin of the references used.

There was a predominance of references of journal articles and books and book chapters; temporality ranged from 3 to 5 years and 6 to 10 years; Portuguese and English languages; and the geographical origin, they were Brazilian and North American.

Being a bibliometric research that analyzed predetermined aspects of references, it did not include a discussion of the accuracy of the information contained in the references. Thus, as limitation of the study, there is the possibility that some references are incorrect and/or incomplete. Although it is known that the references from a search must pass the scrutiny of a librarian, the researcher must aim to revise the typing and the presence of all its elements. It is important to note that the data presented here correspond to the references described by the authors in their thesis, and the veracity data of their responsibility.

The bibliometric analysis are important methodological resource for nursing, for

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revealing search patterns and identify trends. Thus, it is recommended that other bibliometric studies are conducted in graduate programs for future comparisons and appreciation of the scientific production of Brazilian nursing, and getting results about the bibliometric profile of nursing publications.

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