THEORY OF THE RESPONSE TO THE ITEM IN RESEARCH IN PUBLIC HEALTH

TEORIA DA RESPOSTA AO ITEM NAS PESQUISAS EM SAÚDE PÚBLICA

TEORÍA DE LA RESPUESTA AL ITEM EN LAS INVESTIGACIONES EN SALUD PÚBLICA

Diego Eller Gomes¹, José Luís Guedes dos Santos², José Wicto Pereira Borges³, Murilo Pedroso Alves⁴, Dalton Francisco de Andrade⁵, Alacoque Lorenzini Erdmann⁶

ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the use of Item Response Theory (IRT) in public health research. **Method:** integrative review, without temporal delimitation, in the databases LILACS, SCOPUS, MEDLINE / PUBMED and in the SCIELO virtual library. We adopted the steps of reading, counting of occurrence of characteristics of the publications and organization in thematic categories in the process of analysis. Results: 56 studies met the inclusion criteria that sought to evaluate the validity and reliability of measurement instruments and to make psychometric adjustments. The quality of life, the health of the elderly and the health literacy were highlighted as more evaluated latent traits. Conclusion: the possibilities of using IRT for the evaluation of a diversity of traits previously related to public health are evidenced by allowing the transformation of subjective results into probabilities. The development of new instruments may consider the evaluation of latent traits relevant to public health, such as the integrality of care in basic care, the user's link to health services and perspectives on vulnerabilities, contributing to the advancement of scientific knowledge. **Descriptors:** Statistical Methods and Procedures; Surveys and Questionnaires; Quantitative Analysis; Public Health; Nursing; Nursing Assessment.

RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar a utilização da Teoria da Resposta ao Item (TRI) nas pesquisas em saúde pública. **Método:** revisão integrativa, sem delimitação temporal, nas bases de dados LILACS, SCOPUS, MEDLINE/PUBMED e na biblioteca virtual SCIELO. Adotaram-se as etapas de leitura, contagem de ocorrência de características das publicações e organização em categorias temáticas no processo de análise. **Resultados:** 56 estudos atenderam aos critérios de inclusão que buscaram avaliar a validade e a confiabilidade de instrumentos de mensuração e realizar ajustes psicométricos. Destacaram-se, como traços latentes mais avaliados, a qualidade de vida, a saúde de idosos e o letramento em saúde. **Conclusão:** evidenciam-se as possibilidades de utilização da TRI para a avaliação de uma diversidade de traços antes relacionados à saúde pública ao permitir a transformação de resultados subjetivos em probabilidades. O desenvolvimento de novos instrumentos pode considerar a avaliação de traços latentes relevantes para a saúde pública, como a integralidade da assistência na atenção básica, o vínculo do usuário aos serviços de saúde e perspectivas sobre vulnerabilidades, contribuindo para o avanço do conhecimento científico. **Descritores:** Métodos e Procedimentos Estatísticos; Inquéritos e Questionários; Análise Quantitativa; Saúde Pública; Enfermagem; Avaliação em Enfermagem.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar la utilización de la Teoría de la Respuesta al Ítem (TRI) en las investigaciones en salud pública. **Método:** revisión integrativa, sin delimitación temporal, en las bases de datos LILACS, SCOPUS, MEDLINE / PUBMED y en la biblioteca virtual SCIELO. Se adoptaron las etapas de lectura, conteo de ocurrencia de características de las publicaciones y organización en categorías temáticas en el proceso de análisis. **Resultados:** 56 estudios atendieron a los criterios de inclusión, que buscaron evaluar la validez y la confiabilidad de instrumentos de medición y realizar ajustes psicométricos. Se destacaron como rasgos latentes más evaluados, la calidad de vida, la salud de ancianos y el letramiento en salud. **Conclusión:** se evidencian las posibilidades de utilización de la TRI para la evaluación de una diversidad de rasgos latentes relacionados a la salud pública, al permitir la transformación de resultados subjetivos en probabilidades. El desarrollo de nuevos instrumentos puede considerar la evaluación de rasgos latentes relevantes para la salud pública, como la integralidad de la asistencia en la atención básica, el vínculo del usuario a los servicios de salud y perspectivas sobre vulnerabilidades, contribuyendo al avance del conocimiento científico. **Descriptores:** Métodos y Procedimientos Estadísticos; Encuestas y Questionarios; Análisis Cuantitativo; Salud Pública; Enfermería; Evaluación en Enfermería.

¹PhD in Production Engineering, Postgraduate Program in Production Engineering, Federal University of Santa Catarina / UFSC, Florianópolis (SC), Brazil. E-mail: diego.eller@ufsc.br ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4434-5492>; ²PhD, PostGraduate Program in Nursing, Federal University of Santa Catarina / UFSC, Florianópolis (SC), Brazil. E-mail: joseenfermagem@gmail.com ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3186-8286>; ³PhD, Post-Graduation Program in Health and Community, Federal University of Piauí / UFPI, Floriano (PI), Brazil. E-mail: josewictoborges@gmail.com ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3292-1942>; ⁴Doctorate student, Postgraduate Program in Nursing, Federal University of Santa Catarina / UFSC, Florianópolis (SC), Brazil. E-mail: murilopedrosoalves@gmail.com RCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2704-6848>; ⁵PhD, Postgraduate Program in Production Engineering, Federal University of Santa Catarina / UFSC, Florianópolis (SC), Brazil. E-mail: dalton.andrade@ufsc.br ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4403-980X>; ⁶PhD, Postgraduate Program in Nursing, Federal University of Santa Catarina / UFSC, Florianópolis (SC), Brazil. E-mail: alacoque@newsite.com.br ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3964-1115>

INTRODUCTION

The use of psychometric instruments and tests is considered as an important advance in the area of health evaluation because it allows the investigation of several phenomena.¹ This is due to the fact that the tests allow the establishment of a referential and, consequently, reduce the subjective biases of the evaluations.²

In the nineteenth century, the development of instruments for psychological evaluation, parallel to the advance of positivist science and the identification of the importance of objective and valid measures for clinical research, was started.¹ The need for theories to assess the psychometric properties of measuring instruments emerged.^{1,3}

In this context, two main theoretical lines of psychometry are identified: Classical Test Theory (CTT) and Item Response Theory (IRT). As a focus of the TCT, the instrument itself is used to determine the properties or metric parameters of the test.⁴ The focus of the IRT focuses on the individualized study of the component items of a test group or bank of items - unlike its predecessor.³

IRT, an expression of modern psychometry, is a group of mathematical models that allow advances in the validity and reliability studies of instruments based on robust analyzes applied to the different types of measurement instruments. Among the IRT models, the following are included: nominal response model; modified standard model; multiple choice model; model of scale of estimation; partial credit model; generalized partial credit model; model of gradual response and continuous model.⁵

In many countries, as well as in Brazil, IRT was widely disseminated and used in the evaluation of educational tests,⁶⁻⁷ of quality management,⁸ marketing,⁹ among others.¹⁰ In the health area, some of the IRT models for construction,¹¹ validation¹²⁻³ and evaluation of instruments and programs.¹⁴ The importance of public health as a science that fosters the development of strategies and tools to improve the quality of life of the population through management is emphasized care and health services, the prevention of diseases and diseases to the health of the disease, health promotion and the education of the patient, family and community. It contributes to the practice of the various health professionals, especially Nursing.

When considering the possibilities of using IRT, the development of a study aiming at the

identification of which are and are being used the mathematical models of the IRT in the area of public health presents itself as a contribution to researchers interested in using it in investigations. So far, there is no synthesis of knowledge that makes it possible to analyze the panorama and the perspectives of the use of IRT in the area of public health. Therefore, an advance in the scientific knowledge related to the subject is presented. In addition, an analysis in this sense may show perspectives for advances in health behavior measurement studies. Thus, the question is: how has IRT been used in public health research?

OBJECTIVE

- To analyze the use of Item Response Theory (IRT) in public health research.

METHOD

Integrative review using an intervention tool called Knowledge Development Process - Constructivist (Proknow-C).¹⁵ This instrument subsidized the process of formation of the bibliographic portfolio (BP) referring to the fragment of the literature: use of IRT in health research public.

There is the first stage of Proknow-C with the objective of identifying the scientific publications related to the theme defined by the researchers. This stage consists of three substeps: (1) selection of the gross articles bank; (2) filtering the articles bank and (3) performing the representativeness test of the articles. In each substep, researchers need to make choices resulting in portfolio selection, which is a restricted and relevant set of scientific articles representative of the literature fragment under investigation.

The following criteria were adopted for the inclusion of the studies in the review: to explain the use of IRT in research in the public health area from the "item response theory" AND "public health" in the title, abstract or keywords, key; be in Portuguese, English or Spanish; be available online. It was decided not to establish a time limit in view of the small number of studies published until the year 2010. These criteria were applied to the LILACS and SCOPUS databases, to the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SCIELO) and to the Online System Research and Analysis of Medical Literature and Retrieval System Online via PUBMED.

Figure 1 shows the process of application of Proknow-C for the selection of the portfolio of articles representative of the fragment of the literature.

Figura 1. Etapas do processo de formação do portfólio bibliográfico. Florianópolis (SC), Brasil, 2018.

The bibliographic portfolio was composed with 56 scientific articles available online and fully aligned with the research theme.

After the formation of the portfolio of scientific articles, some characteristics of the publications of the fragment of the investigated literature were counted in order to build knowledge in the researchers and, later, in the scientific community.¹⁵⁻⁶ They were defined as characteristics to be analyzed: (1) who are the researchers with trajectory in the area of knowledge; (2) which English/Portuguese

J Nurs UFPE online., Recife, 12(6):1800-12, June., 2018

are the journals that have dedicated space for the publication of the subject and (3) which are the articles most quoted by the scientific community, by counting citations on the Google Scholar platform, on August 25, 2017.

In the last step, regarding content analysis, a critical analysis of the selected BP was performed, describing the data and grouping them by similarity. For that, a priori categories were established, such as: study objectives, latent traits evaluated and IRT models used. At the end of the three stages,

it was identified where and how it is possible to intervene scientifically in relation to the subject investigated and to justify these choices.

RESULTS

Two authors were highlighted by the highest number of scientific publications using IRT in public health research, both with 11 publications. One of these authors is Professor of Law, Policy and Health Management at the Medical University of Shanghai, China. Another prominent author is Professor of Health Policy and Management at the Boston University School of Public Health in the United States, whose research focuses on disability, physiotherapy, and gerontology.

Quality of Life Research (seven articles), Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (six publications) and Journal of Clinical Epidemiology (three publications) stood out as the three journals with more space for publications using IRT in health research public. Quality of Life Research is a multidisciplinary journal dedicated to the

communication of original research, theoretical articles and methodological reports related to the field of quality of life in all health sciences, with an impact factor of 2,344. The journal Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation focuses on the creation and use of knowledge in the rehabilitation process, through original research and clinical reports on trends in medical rehabilitation, whose impact factor is 3,289. The third journal that has devoted more space to publications using IRT in the field of public health - Journal of Clinical Epidemiology - aims to promote the quality of clinical health care research through the promotion and application of innovative methods, with special attention the formation of new scientists and leaders of clinical practice, and its impact factor is 4,978.

With regard to the articles in focus, figure 2 presents the ten articles most cited by the scientific community, with emphasis on the study Development of an easy-to-use Spanish Health Literacy Test,¹⁷ with 170 citations.

Title	Journal	Year	First author	Num. of quotes
Development of an easy-to-use Spanish Health Literacy test	Health Services Research	2006	Lee ¹⁷	170
The grounded psychometric development and initial validation of the Health Literacy Questionnaire (HLQ)	BMC Public Health	2013	Osborne ¹⁸	156
A two-tier full-information item model analysis model with applications	Psychometrika	2010	Cai ¹⁹	131
Development of a Japanese version of the Epworth Sleepiness Scale (JESS) based on item response theory	Sleep Medicine	2009	Takegami ²⁰	110
The European KIDSCREEN approach to measure quality of life and well-being in children: development, current application, and future advances	Qualityof Life Research	2014	Ravens-Sieberer ²¹	100
Short Assessment of Health Literacy- Spanish and English: a comparable test of health literacy for Spanish and English speakers	Health Services Research	2010	Lee ²²	73
Mokken scale analysis of mental health and well-being questionnaire item responses: a non-parametric IRT method in empirical research for applied health researchers	BMC Medical Research Methodology	2012	Stochl ²³	65
Unidimensionality and bandwidth in the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression (CES-D) Scale	Journal of Personality Assessment	2006	Stansbury ²⁴	63
The development of the S-QoL 18: a shortened quality of life questionnaire for patients with schizophrenia	Schizophrenia Research	2010	Boyer ²⁵	57
Can item response theory reduce patient burden when measuring health status in neurological disorders? Results from Rasch analysis of the SF-36 physical functioning scale (PF-10)	Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry	2001	Jenkinson ²⁶	48

Figure 2. Articles most cited by the scientific community that used TRI in the area of public health. Florianópolis (SC), Brazil, 2018.

It is noted that an article published in 2006 obtained the largest number of citations. However, articles published in 2013 and 2014, are also among the most cited, with 156 and 100 citations, respectively. The articles presented in table 1 are important sources of research because they show greater scientific

recognition about the application of TRI in public health research.

Diversified objectives were presented, however, one can observe greater occurrence of verbs to evaluate, develop and validate. Figure 3 shows the characteristics of the studies regarding the objectives, latent traits and TRI models used.

Firstauthor	Year	Objective	Latent trace	TRI Models
Jenkinson ²⁶	2001	Validate a construct	Physical function in neurological motor disease and Parkinson's disease	ML1P ^b
Gulliford ²⁷	2004	Assess reliability and validity	Family food safety	ML2P ^c
Lee ¹⁷	2006	Develop a measure	Literacy in health for adults	ML1P, ML2P, ML3P ^d
Metz ²⁸	2006	Evaluate a psychometric adjustment	Quality of life of patients with asthma	MCPG ^e
Stansbury ²⁴	2006	Evaluate a psychometric adjustment	Depression	ML1P
Filiatrault ²⁹	2007	Assess reliability and validity	Balance for activities in the elderly	MRG ^f
Jette ³⁰	2008	Develop a measure	Use of research on aging	DIF ^g
Tao ³¹	2008	Develop a measure	Mobility, daily activities and cognitive abilities	Não especifica
Allen ³²	2009	Validate a construct	Pediatric outcomes	ML1P
Forjaz ³³	2009	Assess reliability and validity	Autonomic symptoms in Parkinson's disease	ML1P; DIF
Forjaz ³⁴	2010	Evaluate a psychometric adjustment	Anxiety and hospital depression	ML1P; DIF
Haley ³⁵	2009	Evaluate an item bank	Physical function in children with cerebral palsy	ML1P; DIF
Haley ³⁶	2009	Evaluate a psychometric adjustment	Physical function in children with cerebral palsy	ML2P; DIF
Jette ³⁷	2009	Develop a measure	Physical function in people with osteoarthritis	ML2P
Takegami ²⁰	2009	Assess reliability and validity	Somnolence	MCPG
Boyer ²⁵	2010	Evaluate a psychometric adjustment	Quality of life	MCPG; DIF
Brodersen ³⁸	2010	Evaluate a psychometric adjustment	Consequences of screening for lung cancer	MCPG
Cai ¹⁹	2010	Validate a construct	Quality of life	ML2P
Cherepanov ³⁹	2010	Evaluate a psychometric adjustment	Quality of life	ML2P
Conrad ⁴⁰	2010	Assess reliability and validity	Crime and violence	ML1P
Perron ⁴¹	2010	Validate a construct	Inhalant use / abuse disorders	ML2P
Villaveces ⁴²	2010	Develop a measure	Prevention of injuries and violence	ML1P, ML2P, ML3P
Conrad ⁴³	2011	Assess reliability and validity	Psychological abuse in the elderly	ML1P; DIF
Dregan ⁴⁴	2011	Develop a measure	Medical Codes	ML2P
Fang ⁴⁵	2011	Evaluate a psychometric adjustment	Quality of life of people with disabilities	DIF
Riley ⁴⁶	2011	Evaluate a psychometric adjustment	Mental health	MRG; DIF
Bann ⁴⁷	2012	Develop a measure	Public health surveillance of well-being	DIF
Chan ⁴⁸	2012	Evaluate item equivalence	Aging	ML2P
Fang ⁴⁹	2012	Evaluate a psychometric adjustment	Quality of life of the elderly	MCPG; DIF
Jette ⁵⁰	2012	Calibrate a bank of items	Functional spinal cord injury	MRG; DIF
Stochl ²³	2012	Develop an instrument	Health and wellness	Mokken
Lee ⁵¹	2013	Develop an instrument	Oral health literacy	DIF

Lee ²²	2010	Develop a measure	Literacy in oral health for adults	ML1P, ML3P	ML2P,
Marfeo ⁵²	2013	Evaluate a psychometric adjustment	Behavioral health	MRG; DIF	
Marfeo ⁵³	2013	Validate a construct	Health behavior at work	ML1P, ML3P	ML2P,
Mcdonough ⁵⁴	2013	Evaluate a psychometric adjustment	Ambulatory Rehabilitation	CAT ^h	
Osborne ¹⁸	2013	Develop a measure	Health literacy	MRG	
Parsons ⁵⁵	2013	Assess reliability and validity	Hypersexual disorder	MRG	
Waller ⁵⁶	2013	Develop a measure	Knowledge about HPV	ML1P, ML3P	ML2P,
Bevans ⁵⁷	2014	Calibrate a bank of items	Quality of life	CAT	
Hahn ⁵⁸	2014	Develop a measure	Social health in chronic diseases	ML2P; DIF	
Onishi ⁵⁹	2014	Develop a measure	Symptoms of ascites in cirrhosis	MCPG	
Ravens-Sieberer ²¹	2014	Develop an adaptive test	Quality of life related to child health	MCPG	
Rose ⁶⁰	2014	Calibrate a bank of items	Physical function	MRG	
Spiegel ⁶¹	2014	Develop a measure	Gastrointestinal symptoms	MRG	
Zhong ⁶²	2014	Assess reliability and validity	Depression scale	DIF	
Chan ⁶³	2015	Evaluate a psychometric adjustment	Cognitive performance in aging	MRG	
Epstein ⁶⁴	2015	Assess reliability and validity	Impact of health education	MRG; ML2P; DIF	
Gerrard ⁶⁵	2015	Assess reliability and validity	Integration of adults injured by burns	Não especificado	
Honda ⁶⁶	2015	Develop a measure	Quality of life in gastrointestinal surgery	MCPG	
Michel ⁶⁷	2015	Develop a measure	Quality of life in patients with multiple sclerosis	DIF	
Schalet ⁶⁸	2015	Develop a measure	Physical and mental health	MRG	
Teicher ⁶⁹	2015	Develop a measure	Exposure to maltreatment and abuse	ML1P	
Coster ⁷⁰	2016	Evaluate a psychometric adjustment	Mobility, fatigue and pain in children with cerebral palsy	MRG; DIF	
Mcdonough ⁷¹	2016	Evaluate a psychometric adjustment	Cognitive function in outpatient rehabilitation	CAT	
Marino ⁷²	2017	Develop a set of items	Social impact of burns in adults	CAT	

Figure 3. Objectives, latent traits and TRI models used in studies in the area of public health. Florianópolis (SC), Brazil, 2018.

- b: Logistic model of a parameter
c: Logistic model of two parameters
d: Logistic model of three parameters
e: Generalized partial credit model
f: Gradual response model
g: Differential operation of the item
h: Computerized adaptive test

DISCUSSION

Among the most representative journals, it was found that the Journal of Clinical Epidemiology seeks to highlight the application of innovative methods in the health area, while the journal Quality of Life Research has been dedicating space for publications related to the quality of life being this the latent trait more evaluated in public health research using IRT.^{19,28,32,35,41,45,56,59,66-7} Therefore, the evaluation of the quality of life, through the use of mathematical and statistical models of IRT, has been gaining more space in scientific publications and can be considered an innovative combination.

Regarding the objectives of the articles, it was verified that the IRT has been used with three main purposes: to evaluate instruments,^{27-9,32-3,35,39,41-2,44-5,51-2,62,65,70} validate constructs^{28,31,40,54,37} and develop instruments.^{51,62,75} These findings confirm the possibilities and benefits of using IRT indicated in classic studies.^{4,5,73} It was identified as well as diversified goals such as: developing the Japanese version of a drowsiness scale,²⁰ measuring gastrointestinal symptoms reported by patients,⁶¹ exploring the feasibility of a functional adaptation system in mobility, daily activities and cognitive abilities³¹ and describing the process of calibration of the functional spinal cord injury index.⁴⁹ Four scientific studies sought to

harmonize, together, the results of other research.^{44,63,68}

With the purpose of developing or evaluating instruments as well as evaluating latent traits, the one-dimensional, one-, two- or three-parameter model was the most recurrent and used in¹⁷ studies analyzed. The logistic model of three parameters (ML3)⁷⁴ is the most complete because, in addition to the parameters of difficulty and discrimination of the items, it also considers the likelihood of success at random when the respondent has a low level of fitness or latent trait.⁷³ However, only five studies adore ML3, generally in comparison to the one- and two-parameter models,^{17,38,48,51,55} because randomization seems to make less sense when compared to its application in the educational area, which seeks to represent the probability of a student with low ability to respond correctly to the item, at random, or kick.

By ML3, the one-dimensional logistic model of two parameters (ML2) is easily obtained,⁷⁵ for example, when there is no possibility of chance matching. Thus, this model stands out as the most used in public health research,^{19,28,30,35,37-38,40,44,48,51,55,57,64} because, besides the difficulty of the item, contemplates the item discrimination parameter that refers to the ability of the item to discriminate respondents with different levels of fitness or latent trait.⁷³

Among the unidimensional IRT models for dichotomous items, those corrected as right or wrong, belong or do not belong, satisfied or dissatisfied, among others, the logistic model of a parameter (ML1) or Rasch model is the simplest, considering that all items have the same power of discrimination and includes, in its formula, only the difficulty parameter of the items. After the two-parameter model of IRT, ML1 was identified as the most used.^{17,26-8,31-4,36,38-9,48,51,55,69}

Regarding the models for polytomic items, the GRM assumes that the response categories of an item can be ordered among themselves.⁷⁶ In these cases, multiple choice items are evaluated in a graduated way, elaborated with intermediate categories in order to obtain more information about the individuals' responses and not only to identify if they gave correct or incorrect answers. It was identified the adoption of this model in 11 studies that applied IRT in public health research.^{29,42,46,50,55,60-1,63-4,68,70}

Another finding evidenced in this study refers to the use of the generalized partial credit IRT (GPCM) model for polytomic items in public health research.⁷⁷ The model is related to items with IRT's gradual polytomic

responses and considers the probabilities of choice for each of the response categories as adopted in eight scientific studies related to public health.^{28,33,45,58-9,66} In the model, the respondent earns more credit (would have a higher value for his latent trait) as measured that your answer is closer to the more complete answer.⁷⁸

Among the selected studies, 19 of them performed the analysis of the differential function of the item (DFI) in order to verify if the probability of agreement or agreement with the item varied among groups of respondents by sex, age, educational level, geographical location and/ or level of disease severity.^{28-9,32,34,39,41-3,45-6,48,50,57,62,64,67,70} The use of DFI in public health and, consequently, by Nursing professionals, may allow the investigation of variables that influence the health assessments, allowing to highlight the vulnerabilities or social determinants of health.

The DFI analysis aims at the detection of items whose probability of success differs between distinct groups whose respondents have the same level of latent trait in the measured variable. A good model of measurement should require that the most capable person, or with a higher level of a latent trait, is always more likely to hit an item than a less able person. Every person should be more likely to hit an easy (or common) item than a difficult one (or rare), and finally, these conditions should be product of the person and the position of the item in the dash or skill and not based on the race, sex or other characteristics of the respondents.⁷⁹

In the studies, benefits derived from the use of IRT in public health research have been identified, such as: creation of evaluation tools that can be applied to populations of different languages in the case of cross-cultural research;⁵⁷ response of the items;³³ identification of bias among the groups of respondents due to their characteristics, through the analysis of DFI;^{33-4,44,70} elaboration of tests that do not need many items, because the analysis of its parameters allows the identification of the items with greater power of discrimination, which can reduce the error and the size of the sample;^{39-40-1,56} iterative change or replacement of items, made possible by the methodology of computerized adaptive tests (CAT), in which the presentation of an item is based on the information obtained from the answers to previously applied items.^{29,42,60}

More specifically, some studies have presented, as benefits of IRT, the possibility

of validation of measures such as self-report of psychological abuse in the elderly,³⁶ the evaluation and comparison between the level of health literacy of Spanish and English speakers, aspect positive, and also to subsidize the process of awareness of Nursing professionals in relation to the needs of patients with low level of health literacy, which can help reduce the linguistic complexity used in communication between professionals and patients.⁴⁹

Some care is taken to develop tools for evaluating latent traits related to public health, such as the calibration of the parameters of the items from the application of the instrument to people with different levels of latent trait and the elaboration of items with different levels difficulty of reiterating the indication presented in classic studies about the use of IRT.^{5,73}

This review has as limitation the use of a descriptive design in relation to the studies that applied the IRT in public health research, without incurring in an in depth analysis of the latent traits most explored in public health as quality of life, health of the elderly and literacy in health. In addition, some articles did not show the IRT model used, which made it difficult to analyze these studies.

CONCLUSION

Using IRT, it is possible to evaluate several constructs relevant to public health by mathematical means, transforming the subjective results of evaluations into probabilities. For this passage, a variety of models were used, mainly the one and two parameter models, in order to determine the validity and reliability qualities of the instruments that sought to evaluate, mainly, the latent traits quality of life, health of the elderly and literacy in health.

The latent traits were also worked out, from the differential functioning of items, to observe if certain characteristics can influence the responses of individuals. Thus, when answering the question: how has IRT been used in public health research, new possibilities are presented to analyze the reliability and validity of public health measurement instruments. Such perspectives could be used in the establishment of new instruments considering latent traits relevant to public health, such as the integrality of basic health care, vulnerability perspectives, health promotion behavior, user bonding and equity in access to health services. contributing to future research in the area of public health and Nursing..

As a fruitful field for future investigations, the theoretical-analytical panorama presented, especially, in the area of Nursing is evidenced. The importance of Nursing professionals in the search for emancipation of users in the context of the discussions about the social determinants of health conditioning for the process of living healthy related to the socioeconomic, cultural and environmental vulnerabilities.

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Gomes DE, Santos JLG dos, Borges JWP et al.

Theory of the response to the item in...

Submission: 2018/02/15
Accepted: 2018/03/19
Publishing: 2018/06/01

Corresponding Address

Diego Eller Gomes
Rua Professor Milton Sullivan, 28 / Ap. 103
Bairro Carvoeira
CEP: 88040-620 — Florianópolis (SC), Brazil