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INTEGRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

POTENTIALITIES, FRAGILITIES AND CHALLENGES OF NURSING RESEARCH-ACTION

POTENCIALIDADES, FRAGILIDADES E DESAFIOS DA PESQUISA-AÇÃO NA ENFERMAGEM POTENCIALIDADES, FRAGILIDADES Y DESAFÍOS DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN-ACCIÓN EN LA ENFERMERÍA

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to identify the potentialities, weaknesses and challenges of research-action (R-A) in national nursing publications. **Method:** this is a bibliographical study, of integrative type, with searches in the LILACS and MEDLINE databases, from national publications from 2012 to 2017, using Thiollent's Research-Action methodological framework. The studies were critically reviewed, following the precepts of the R-A method, according to Thiollent. The results are presented in figures and tables. **Results:** 15 articles were selected and the majority presented the exploratory phase, conceptualizing R-A and emphasizing the joint construction of knowledge. **Conclusion:** Potentials, fragilities and challenges of the use of R-A for nursing research were identified. As a potential of the method, the possibility of transforming reality due to the close relationship between researchers and participants is highlighted; as fragilities, the methodological variability of the studies, which makes replication difficult due to the lack of a phase pattern, the disconnection of the field and the adequate return to the participants. It becomes a challenge for researchers to maintain methodological rigor. It is intended, with this study, to subsidize researchers who opt for the use of the R-A method and contribute to its strengthening in Nursing research. **Descriptors:** Review; Research; Nursing Methodology Research; Methods; Qualitative Research; Nursing.

RESUMO

Objetivo: identificar as potencialidades, as fragilidades e os desafios da pesquisa-ação (P-A) em publicações nacionais de Enfermagem. **Método:** trata-se um estudo bibliográfico, tipo revisão integrativa, com busca nas bases de dados LILACS e MEDLINE, de publicações nacionais de 2012 a 2017, que utilizavam o referencial metodológico de Pesquisa-Ação de Thiollent. Analisaram-se criticamente os estudos, seguindo-se os preceitos do método da P-A, segundo Thiollent. Apresentam-se os resultados em figura e tabelas. **Resultados:** selecionaram-se 15 artigos e a maioria apresentou a fase exploratória, conceitua P-A e realça a construção conjunta do conhecimento. **Conclusão:** identificaram-se potencialidades, fragilidades e desafios do uso da P-A para as pesquisas em Enfermagem. Destaca-se, como potencialidade do método, a possibilidade de transformação da realidade devido ao estreito entrosamento entre pesquisadores e participantes; como fragilidades, a variabilidade metodológica dos estudos, que dificulta a replicação por ausência de um padrão de fases, o desligamento do campo e o adequado retorno para os participantes. Torna-se um desafio para os pesquisadores manter o rigor metodológico. Pretende-se, com este estudo, subsidiar pesquisadores que optarem pelo uso do método da P-A e contribuir para o seu fortalecimento nas pesquisas em Enfermagem. **Descritores:** Enfermagem; Revisão; Pesquisa; Pesquisa Metodológica em Enfermagem; Metodologia; Pesquisa Qualitativa.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: identificar las potencialidades, las fragilidades y los desafíos de la investigación-acción (P-A) en publicaciones nacionales de Enfermería. **Método:** se trata de un estudio bibliográfico, tipo revisión integrativa, con búsqueda en las bases de datos LILACS y MEDLINE, de publicaciones nacionales de 2012 a 2017, que utilizaban el referencial metodológico de Investigación-Acción de Thiollent. Se analizaron críticamente los estudios, siguiendo los preceptos del método de la P-A, según Thiollent. Se presentan los resultados en figura y tablas. **Resultados:** se seleccionaron 15 artículos y la mayoría presentó la fase exploratoria, conceptualiza P-A y realza la construcción conjunta del conocimiento. **Conclusión:** se identificaron potencialidades, fragilidades y desafíos del uso de la P-A para las investigaciones en Enfermería. Se destaca, como potencialidad del método, la posibilidad de transformación de la realidad debido al estrecho entramado entre investigadores y participantes; como fragilidades, la variabilidad metodológica de los estudios, que dificulta la replicación por ausencia de un patrón de fases, el cierre del campo y el adecuado retorno para los participantes. Se convierte en un desafío para los investigadores mantener el rigor metodológico. Se pretende, con este estudio, subsidiar a investigadores que opten por el uso del método de la P-A y contribuir a su fortalecimiento en las investigaciones en Enfermería. **Descriptor:** Revisión; Investigación; Investigación Metodológica en Enfermería; Metodología; Investigación Cualitativa; Enfermería.

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INTRODUCTION

Nursing care is considered to be the basis of the nurse's professional practice and is constantly evolving, and the production of knowledge in this area aims to produce the best evidences to be applied in practice, completing a virtuous cycle of production-dissemination- application and development of information with a major impact on the health of the population.

It is evidenced that the use of Research-Action (R-A) in the development and evaluation of Nursing knowledge for publications can increase Nursing as a science. It is limited, however, this method in Nursing teaching.¹

R-A is characterized as a method that allows the reflection and, consequently, a more critical knowledge of the participants about the studied phenomena.¹⁻² It is revealed - for Nursing care, whose premise is an interactive and intersubjective action, that this type of research constitutes a relevant methodological tool for fostering an approach that aims at "the dialectical integration between the subject and his existence , between facts and values, between theory and action and, mainly, between researcher and researcher ".^{2:722}

R-A is respected while a research process that seeks to establish communication with the social research approach, relies on experience to identify a collective issue and has close affinity with an action or with the resolution of that question, implying the participatory involvement of researchers and participants, which makes it possible to exchange information and reflection among these actors of the process.³⁻⁴

It is understood that the junction of research and action suggests the existence of research with action and action with research, that is, there is "concomitance, intercommunication and interfeineness" between both,^{5: 496} implying a circularity between research and action as a double direction track.⁶

It is known that there are authors who are considered as references for the methodology of R-A^{3,5,7} and who present, as the basis for the construction of R-A, the exploratory phase, planning, action and subsequent evaluation. However, there are differences between the classifications of steps and classifications, making uniform the use and the use of terms and their definitions, representing a variety of possible theoretical-

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methodological approaches, depending on the intentionality of the authors.⁵

For this research, it was decided to carry out an integrative review, analyzing the articles developed from the perspective of the methodological reference of research-action described according to Michel Thiollent.³ In this referential, detailed actions are developed for the development of this type of research, as well as being the most used author in national R-A studies in the health area, based on a previous search in dissertations and theses available on the Coordination Portal of Improvement of Higher Level Personnel (CAPES).

In Nursing, the increasing use of R-A is observed, since it makes possible the intervention in reality based on scientific knowledge and development.

OBJECTIVE

- To identify the potentialities, weaknesses and challenges of action research (R-A) in national nursing publications.

METHOD

It is a bibliographical study, type integrative review, through the following steps: 1) formulation of the problem; 2) data collection; 3) data evaluation; 4) analysis and interpretation of studies and 5) dissemination of data.⁸

The following research question was delineated: "What are the potentialities, fragilities and challenges of the application of R-A in the Brazilian scientific production of Nursing?". To answer this question, the following databases were searched: Latin American and Caribbean Literature in Health Sciences (LILACS) and Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE), in the month of November, 2017 As a search strategy, using the Boolean operator AND, the term "action research" and the descriptor "Nursing".

They were listed as inclusion criteria: original articles published in the Portuguese language with online access to the full text; indexed in said databases in the period between 2012 to 2017; which deal with the theme proposed in the title, in the abstract and in the descriptors; which contain the terms "action research" and "Nursing" in the abstract and use, as a methodological reference, R-A according to Michel Thiollent. Exclusion criteria were: texts of dissertations and / or theses; less than the established period; articles in other languages and that did not present the combination of the

descriptors in their summaries. Duplicate articles were considered only once.

130 productions were found, according to established criteria; of these, 123 productions in LILACS and, after reading the abstracts, 110 productions were excluded (70 productions because they were outside the established period, nine because they did not deal with the subject, 12 because they were theses or

dissertations and nine because they did not use the The authors also excluded the seven productions found in MEDLINE, after reading titles and abstracts and applying the inclusion criteria, three articles because they were out of the given period, two because they did not treat of the thematic, with two productions left. A total of 15 productions were then read in full, according to figure 1.

Figure 1. Flowchart of the method of searching and selection of studies. Curitiba (PR), Brazil, 2017.

An instrument constructed by the authors to evaluate the production was used, respecting the organizational phases necessary for the development of R-A, according to Thiollent,⁴ based on a methodological study that evaluated publications about the Ground Theory method.⁹

The studies were classified as to the level of evidence in: Level I - systematic review or meta-analysis; Level II - controlled and randomized studies; Level III - controlled studies without randomization; Level IV - case-control or cohort studies; Level V - systematic review of qualitative or descriptive studies; Level VI - qualitative or descriptive

studies and Level VII - opinions or consensus.¹⁰ Only original studies with level of evidence VI were included, since the R-A consists of a method of qualitative character.

The studies were critically analyzed, following the basis of the integrative research and the precepts of the R-A method, according to Thiollent⁴, organizing them as follows: the articles were divided among the authors for the application of the evaluation instrument and made the analysis of the articles together and, if any article generated doubt in the answers to the questions of the instrument, it was submitted to the analysis and the consensus of the group of researchers. Results were synthesized descriptively,

making possible the classification and analysis of the data for the condensation of the knowledge generated about the subject explored.

RESULTS

A careful reading of the productions that were described in chronological order and numbered in figure 1.

Year of publication	Selected article
2012	Manenti SA, Ciampone MHT, Mira VL, Minami LF, Soares JMS. The construction process of managerial profile competencies for nurse coordinators in the hospital field. <i>Scho Nurs Journ USP</i> . 2012 June;46(3):727-33.
2012	Lanzoni AC, Pagnussatti C, Brum MLB, Krauzer IM. Investigating community health workers' knowledge of cervical cancer. <i>Cogitare nurs</i> [Internet]. 2012 July/Sept [cited 2017 Nov 16];17(3):478-84. ¹²
2012	Vasconcelos SVM, Frota MA, Martins MC, Machado MMT. Child care in nursing and health education: mother's perception in family health strategy. <i>Anna Nery Scho Nurs Journ</i> . 2012 Apr/June;16(2):326-31
2012	Reberte LM, Hoga LAK, Gomes ALZ. Process of construction of an educational booklet for health promotion of pregnant women. <i>Latin-Am Nursing Jour</i> . 2012 Jan/Feb; 20(1):101-8. ¹⁴
2012	Oliveira APC, Coelho MEAA, Almeida VCF, Lisboa KWSC, Macêdo ALS. Systematization of nursing assistance: implementation in an intensive care unit. <i>Jour RENE</i> . 2012;13(3):601-12. ¹⁵
2013	Ferreira AGN, Vieira NFC, Trasferetti JA, Galvão MTG, Gubert FA, Pinheiro PNC. Talking with adolescents from religious groups about HIV: challenges for nursing. <i>Nurs Text-Context</i> . 2013 Oct/Dec;22(4):952-60. ¹⁶
2014	Pina-Oliveira AA, Moreira RL, Pécora RAF, Chiesa AM. Analysis of the process of translation of knowledge regarding early childhood at the undergraduate level. <i>Scho Nurs Journ USP</i> . 2014 Aug;48(Spe):164-71. ¹⁷
2014	Corral-Mulato, Bueno SMV. Nursing students' unawareness of Burnout Syndrome. <i>Nurs Journ UERJ</i> [Internet]. 2014 Mar/Apr [cited 2017 Nov 16];22(2):206-11. ¹⁸
2015	Castelo Branco FMF, Monteiro CFS, Vargas D. Knowledge of nursing students about drugs and drug control policies. <i>J res fundam care online</i> . 2015 Apr/June;7(2):2215-28. ¹⁹
2015	Eduardo EA, Peres AM, Almeida ML, Roglio KD, Bernardino E. Analysis of the decision-making process of nurse managers: a collective reflection. <i>Braz Nurs Journ</i> . 2015;68(4):668-75. ²⁰
2015	Sade PMC, Peres AM. Development of nursing management competencies: guidelines for continuous education services. <i>Scho Nurs Journ USP</i> . 2015 Dec ;49(6):991-8. ²¹
2016	Oliveira E, Soares CB, Silva JA. Emancipatory action research with young school children: experience report. <i>Gaúcha Nurs Journ</i> . 2016 Aug;37(3):e62059. ²²
2016	Faustino TN, Pedreira LC, Freitas YS, Silva RMO, Amaral JB. Prevention and monitoring of delirium in older adults: an educational intervention. <i>Braz Nurs Journ</i> . 2016 July/Aug;69(4):678-85. ²³
2016	Labegalini CM, Nogueira IS, Rodrigues DM, Almeida EC, Bueno SM, Baldissera VD. Educational action research on Facebook®: combining leisure and learning. <i>Gaúcha Nurs Journ</i> . 2017 Apr;37(Spe):e64267. ²⁴
2017	Mendonça FTNF, Santos AS, Buso ALZ, Malaquias BSS. Health education with older adults: action research with primary care professionals. <i>Braz Nurs Journ</i> . 2017;70(4):792-9. ²⁵

Figure 1. Selected articles in the LILACS and MEDLINE database. Curitiba (PR), Brazil, 2017.

The characterization of the studies analyzed in table 1 is described below. The results were organized and described,

according to the application of the previously structured instrument for the data collection, in table 2.

Table 1. Characterization of the articles. Curitiba (PR), Brazil, 2017.

Year of publication		Origins of the journal		Origins of the authors		Training of authors	
	N (%)		N (%)		N (%)		N (%)
2012	5 (33.34)	North	0 (0)	Southwest	22 (36.07)	Undergraduate student	2 (3.24)
2013	1 (6.66)	Northeast	1 (6.67)	Northeast	20 (32.79)	Undergraduate	3 (4.92)
2014	2 (13.34)	South	4 (26.67)	South	15 (24.59)	Specialist	1 (1.65)
2015	3 (20)	Southwest	7 (46.67)	Midwest	4 (6.55)	Master	3 (4.92)
2016	3 (20)	Midwest	3 (20)	TOTAL	61 (100)	Master	8 (13.12)
2017	1 (6.66)	TOTAL	15 (100)			Doctorate student	9 (14.75)
TOTAL	15 (100)					Doctor	29 (47.54)
						PhD	2 (3.30)
						Not identified	4 (6.56)
						Total	61 (100)

Table 2. Results of analyzed items. Curitiba (PR), Brazil, 2017.				
Data on the methodological framework	Yes		No	
Conceptualize research-action?	13	87%	2	13%
Does the article present an exploratory phase?	14	93%	1	7%
Was the delimitation of the problem carried out together with the actors involved?	8	53%	7	47%
Is there a theoretical framework that bases the study?	10	67%	5	33%
Does the study highlight hypotheses for solving the problem?	7	47%	8	53%
Were the implemented actions discussed in seminars?	13	87%	2	13%
Is the cut of the sample justified as to its representativeness?	13	87%	2	13%
Is the joint construction of knowledge between the actors and the researcher identified?	14	93%	1	7%
Is there evidence of the construction of the action plan described in the article?	10	67%	5	33%
Does the article cite ways of disseminating external interventions?	4	26 %	11	73%
Does the study show the transformation of the reality addressed?	13	87%	2	13%
Are study limitations described?	9	60%	6	40%

The use of educational actions is used to collect data (53.33%),^{12-3,16-7,22-5} the semi-structured interview (33.33%),^{12-3,17,19,21} the observation (33.33%)^{15-6,18-9,23} and the questionnaire (33.33%);^{17-8,20,24-5} other techniques used were the seminars (26.66%)^{19-21,23} followed by field diary (20%)^{12,15-6} and focus group (13.33%).^{11,17}

DISCUSSION

In the analysis of the studies, potentialities with the use of the R-A method were evidenced. The level of training of the authors stands out, a massive presence of doctors, doctoral students, masters and the involvement of professional experts from the studied practice. This characteristic is relevant in the use of the method, since the R-A involves an empirical process that includes the identification of the problem within a social and/or institutional context, the collection of data related to the problem and the analysis and significance of the data collected the participants. In addition to the identification of the need for change and the search for possible solutions, action research in practice in the sense of provoking its transformation.⁴

It is understood that this method corresponds to an important methodological tool capable of allying theory and practice through an action that aims at the transformation of a certain reality.^{1,3,26} This theorization becomes effective only with the involvement of experienced and sensitive researchers to the problems of practice.

The use of different techniques for data collection is also identified as a potential in the articles, since it is evident that the R-A should be flexible⁴ and that the studied reality is respected, using different techniques that allow the involvement of researchers, participants and, mainly, the elaboration of solutions to the problems listed. Among the different data collection methods adopted, the seminars, meetings and, where relevant, interviews and document analysis, as well as techniques for situational diagnosis, problem solving, mapping representations and techniques of dissemination and/or communication, according to the basic purpose of the study. It is evident, therefore, that the R-A appropriates data collection methods and techniques from social research, becoming a complex and comprehensive strategy, of a collective, participative and active nature in obtaining information and decision-making for the transformation of reality.^{1,4}

Also noteworthy was the presentation of the participants. The studies were organized by small groups of researchers and participants and qualitative representativeness is evidenced with intentional samples, where the collection of data is done in a small group of people who are chosen intentionally, given the relevance they present in relation to a certain subject.⁴

It is also verified as potentialities in all the articles, the construction of the knowledge of joint form between the actors and the researcher (100%); the majority (93%) presented, in some way, the exploratory phase^{12-5,17-25} and the implemented actions

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were discussed in seminars (87%).^{12-5,17,19-25} It is important to emphasize, through these aspects, the concern of the authors to consider the participants during the development of the research, an indispensable situation for the achievement of the objectives proposed when using R-A.^{1-2,4-5,7}

It is evident, as fragility, the impossibility of identifying, in the productions, all the necessary subjects for the execution of the R-A.⁴ It is pointed out that R-A planning is and should be very flexible, it does not follow strictly ordered phases,⁴ however, these productions being a source of guidance and guidelines for the development of other researches, this gap has raised some questions: the themes were not presented in full by the restrictions imposed by the rules of the journals or it was not possible to delve deeper into the researches developed?

The relevance of the R-A in the transformation of reality, however, in the analyzed dissertations, is described through authors who evaluated professional master's dissertations of a postgraduate program in Science and Mathematics teaching, the fragility in the contribution of the studies to the strengthening of this method was evidenced both in the explanation of the interaction between researchers and participants and in the need for greater epistemological coherence.²⁸

It is a challenge for the researchers that use R-A, since it has, as a purpose, the resolution or clarification of a collective problem by raising awareness of the actors involved in a joint construction of knowledge for the improvement of theory and the transformation of practice.⁴ It is warned that, given the potential of R-A, the challenge permeates its development based on research techniques and methodological rigor, strengthening it as a potential method to transform reality.

The use of R-A was identified in informative studies with a conscientizing approach (60%)^{11,13-4,16,18-9,22,24-5} and efficient studies focusing on the technical training of participants (40%).^{12,15,17,20-1,23} It is noticed, however, that no militant claim studies were identified.⁴

It was observed that the possibility of this finding in the literature can be attributed to the lack of experience of the researchers for the development of this type of study associated to lack of time, since it is usually carried out in *Stricto Sensu* programs, in which there is a rigidity in the rigor of meeting deadlines that may hinder the necessary coordination for the joint construction

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between researchers and participants, a primordial condition in this type of research.²⁸

It is inferred that an alternative to this question would be the possibility for the consolidation of Post-Graduate Programs capable of anchoring researches that can effectively contribute to transform society by strengthening research groups and favoring projects and partnerships of internationalization, expanding the discussion about R-A and the cooperation between researchers in the understanding of the studied phenomenon.²⁹

It was observed the lack of description, in the productions, as to the preparation for the exit of the field by the researchers. It is necessary to consider, in the necessary link between the researcher and the participant, to make the R-A effective, the process of disconnection of the researcher, since disregarding this aspect may make the participant a mere object of the research, distorting its real role played for the study.³⁰

It is also identified, as fragilities in the analyzed productions, the lack of external disclosure of the findings in the research, present in only 26.66% of the articles,^{12,14,21-2} in addition to the authors' lack of information about the limitations in the study development (40%).^{11-14,16,20} Through these aspects, it contributed to the dissemination and strengthening of this method as a potential strategy for the transformation of the practice and the reach of a greater level of awareness of the participants, since it would allow the replication by other authors.^{1,3,29}

It is evidenced that the actions developed to evaluate the impact of the use of R-A could be a possibility to promote the use of this method, identifying the effectiveness and continuity of the transformations achieved with the development of the research.³⁻⁴

It is a great challenge for researchers in the development of R-A to provide participants with the understanding that they are the main actors of the study, that the construction of knowledge and the transformation of practice need to be both at the time of study, but for the transformation of reality, which certainly goes beyond the period of research involvement.³¹

It is understood as another challenging aspect, in the development of the R-A, the description of the methodological course, presenting it clearly to the reader.⁴ However, it should be noted that the researcher is often faced with boundaries of lags imposed by the journals and sometimes inexperience may

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incur the eventual deletion of parts of the method relevant to their replication.

It can be seen that this difficulty can be associated with a certain "autonomy" given to the researcher regarding the flexibility of the phases that make up the R-A, ⁴ because, even with flexible phases, the construction of a path and its presentation in the productions need to be considered.

It is understood that maintaining methodological rigor with a method that allows for flexibility and provide the development of research that effectively transform the realities studied constitute major challenges to the development of R-A, since the development of research in the field of Nursing does not must follow a demand for scientific productions, but rather foster the researcher's role in society, that is, follow a method in the conventional way, however, without causing this to engross the study in what is really relevant to the profession.³¹

It is understood that maintaining methodological rigor with a method that allows for flexibility and provide the development of research that effectively transform the realities studied constitute major challenges to the development of R-A, since the development of research in the field of Nursing does not must follow a demand for scientific productions, but rather foster the researcher's role in society, that is, follow a method in the conventional way, however, without causing this to engross the study in what is really relevant to the profession.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to identify the potentialities, weaknesses and challenges of the studies that used R-A as a method of study in the Brazilian nursing literature. Through the analysis of the productions, the potential of the R-A in the improvement of the care developed by the Nursing was evidenced, mainly due to its characteristic of interaction between researchers and participants, favoring an effective transformation of reality. It is noted, however, that the weaknesses pointed out permeate the methodological variability of the studies, which hinders the replication and the follow-up of a phase pattern, as well as the detachment and the adequate return to the participants, mainly due to the high level of coordination required by the method.

As a challenge for the productions related to R-A, the maintenance of methodological rigor in the description of the method, which must be followed and explained in a way that

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facilitates the replication by other authors and contributes to the strengthening of this type of research and, mainly, for the realization of the transformation of realities and awareness of the participants.

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