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RESEARCH

Teses e dissertações em enfermagem baseadas na teoria das representações sociais: análise bibliométrica

Theses and dissertations in nursing based on the theory of social representations: bibliometric analysis

Tesis y disertaciones de enfermería basadas en la teoría de las representaciones sociales: análisis bibliométrico

Kalyane Kelly Duarte de Oliveira [1], Clécio André Alves da Silva Maia [2], Francisco Arnoldo Nunes de Miranda [3]

ABSTRACT

Objective: describe the panorama of the scientific literature in Nursing based on the Theory of Social Representations (TSR). **Methodo:** this is a descriptive, bibliometric, research with a quantitative approach. After reading the abstracts and systematizing the material, a descriptive statistical analysis took place. **Results:** based on the reading and analysis of abstracts listed online at the Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (DLTD), from 2006 to 2014, 5,165 papers produced by nurses in Brazil, between 1997 and 2014, were found. Out of these, 119 correspond to the research object "Theory of Social Representations and Nursing," representing 2.30% of the national literature by nurses. Out of this total, 74.78% refer to dissertations and 25.22% to theses. The literature is concentrated in the regions Southeast (47.05%); South (29.41%); and Northeast (23.52%). **Conclusion:** the representativeness of the theme in the Brazilian context contributes to advances in knowledge in the field of Nursing. **Descriptors:** Nursing, Nursing research, Social psychology.

RESUMO

Objetivo: descrever o panorama da produção científica em Enfermagem baseada na Teoria das Representações Sociais (TRS). **Método:** trata-se de pesquisa bibliométrica, descritiva, de abordagem quantitativa. Depois da leitura dos resumos e da sistematização do material, fez-se uma análise estatística descritiva. **Resultados:** com base na leitura e análise dos resumos catalogados on-line na Biblioteca Digital de Teses e Dissertações (BDTD), de 2006 a 2014, onde foram encontrados 5.165 trabalhos produzidos por enfermeiros no Brasil, entre 1997 e 2014. Desses, 119 correspondem ao objeto de pesquisa "Teoria das Representações Sociais e Enfermagem", compondo 2,30% da produção nacional dos enfermeiros. Desse total, 74,78% referem-se a dissertações e 25,22% a teses. A produção concentra-se nas regiões Sudeste (47,05%); Sul (29,41%); e Nordeste (23,52%). **Conclusão:** a representatividade do tema no contexto brasileiro contribui para o avanço do conhecimento na área da Enfermagem. **Descritores:** Enfermagem, Pesquisa em enfermagem, Psicologia social.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: describir el panorama de la literatura científica de Enfermería basada en la Teoría de las Representaciones Sociales (TRS). **Método:** esta es una investigación bibliométrica, descriptiva, con abordaje cuantitativo. Después de leer los resúmenes y sistematizar el material, hubo un análisis estadístico descriptivo. **Resultados:** con base en la lectura y el análisis de los resúmenes catalogados en línea en la Biblioteca Digital de Tesis y Disertaciones (BDTD), de 2006 a 2014, se encontraron 5.165 trabajos producidos por enfermeros en Brasil, entre 1997 y 2014. De ellos, 119 corresponden al objeto de investigación "Teoría de las Representaciones Sociales y Enfermería", lo que representa 2,30% de la literatura nacional de enfermeros. De este total, 74,78% se refieren a disertaciones y 25,22% a tesis. La literatura se concentra en el Sudeste (47,05%); Sur (29,41%); y Nordeste (23,52%). **Conclusión:** la representatividad del tema en el contexto brasileño contribuye al avance del conocimiento en el área de Enfermería. **Descriptores:** Enfermería, Investigación en Enfermería, Psicología social.

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INTRODUCTION

This research was designed starting from the need for a more systematic and analytical understanding of the Brazilian scientific literature on Nursing, based on the Theory of Social Representations (TSR). For over half a century, the TSR has been disseminated, discussed, criticized, reviewed, and reformulated.[1] Thus, the aim is providing an overview of the use of this theoretical set in Nursing in the Brazilian scenario.

The TSR, conceived by the French man Serge Moscovici, in 1961, with the publication of *La psychanalyse, son image et son public*, translated into English as *Psychoanalysis: Its image and its public*, has been remarkable in understanding the various objects and the consequent knowledge production.[2]

This is a field of knowledge that comes from a criticism that tries to break away from the traditional and hegemonic thinking that conceives the subject as detached from her/his social context. This critical position taken by Moscovici is the starting point for the development of the new theory, which claims there is no separation between the inner and outer worlds of an individual. The theory proposes a link between the psychological and the social and it regards subject, object, and society as undetachable.[2]

Clarifying the theory, social representations refer to a set of phenomena and the concepts that make them up, as well as to a theoretical corpus structured to explain them.[3]

This theory had already come to the country through the experience of researchers who knew it in doctoral courses abroad and at scientific meetings. Just over half a century ago in Brazil, the TSR finds fertile ground for its expansion and becomes widely adopted by the academy[4], as evidenced by the hundreds of publications available in major national databases, such as the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), or in many theses and dissertations coming from graduate programs of various Brazilian universities.[5]

Thus, the TSR is applied in various fields of knowledge, guiding the understanding of different search objects and marked by many research processes, not limited to their primary field, social psychology, but producing interfaces and links with other kinds of knowledge, thus contributing to their application in new contexts[1], among which Nursing stands out. The TSR is widely employed in this field, due to the possibility the researcher captures the very participants' interpretation of reality that she/he aims to investigate, enabling her/him to grasp attitudes and behaviors of a particular social group in face of a psychosocial object. Considering that social representation favors knowing the practice of a particular group, the

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TSR allows nursing to provide interventions that, by observing the specific characteristics of each social sector, will be more efficient.[6]

In this way, the analysis of scientific literature developed by nurses using the TSR, in their theses and dissertations, arouses reflection on the nursing practice and knowledge construction, structured in various graduate programs where nurses seek their education. This justifies the significance of a bibliometric survey of such scientific products, through the TSR, it is possible to grasp the directions of research in Nursing and Health, its benefits and drawbacks, its interfaces and advancement possibilities.[7]

The analysis aims to describe the panorama of the Brazilian scientific literature in Nursing based on the TSR.

METHOD

This is a document-based bibliometric survey, descriptive, with a quantitative approach, whose research unit consisted of abstracts from theses and dissertations published by nurses in Brazil having the TSR as a basis.

Bibliometrics is a methodology to obtain evaluation indicators of scientific literature, which relies on empirical objects, mostly reference databases of dissertations and theses, as they provide structures and representations for analyzing the literature panorama in several fields of knowledge.[7]

Data collection was made in October 2014, by searching the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (DLTD), available at <http://bdtd.ibict.br/busca>. The expression "Theory of Social Representations and Nursing" was used the search guide.

The DLTD interconnects the information systems of theses and dissertations existing in the Brazilian teaching and research institutions and it encourages the registration and publication of theses and dissertations electronically. This project, in partnership with Brazilian teaching and research institutions, enables the Brazilian community to publish their theses and dissertations produced in the country and abroad, giving greater visibility to the national scientific literature.[8]

Put into practice online on May 26, 2006, the survey of this research aims to identify papers published between May 2006 and May 2014. It is worth highlighting that the catalogue year refers to when the studies were received, organized, and systematized by the DLTD, i.e. it does not necessarily reflect the study's year of publication. Thus, there were many years of publication, since 1997, however, catalogued and organized in the DLTD between the years specified for the search.

The theses and dissertations based on the TSR were included in the database, either applying this theory alone or along with other methodologies, papers that made available the

necessary data, such as year of publication, institution of the graduate program, type of paper, thesis, or dissertation, with free abstract, in full text, online, and papers produced by nurses.

The search provided 126 results, out of which 6 abstracts were excluded, because they resort to other theories, such as the Grounded Theory and Paulo Freire's Educational Theory. One abstract written by a psychologist was also excluded. Thus, this paper was done with 119 studies.

After the selection, all abstracts from theses and dissertations were read, and a bibliometric analysis instrument, designed exclusively for this research in the software *Microsoft Excel*, started to be filled. The instrument enabled the systematization of data into tables and graphs, and two general information structures for analysis could be obtained:

1) from all studies found in the database, the following information were collected: total number of abstracts, type of study (thesis/dissertation), and year of publication; and

2) from all specific tests on the TSR in Nursing, the following information were collected: numerical identification, distribution by year of publication, type of studies (thesis/dissertation), exclusive use of the TSR as a methodology or combined with another method, educational institution, and Brazilian geographic regions (South, Southeast, North, Northeast, and Central-West).
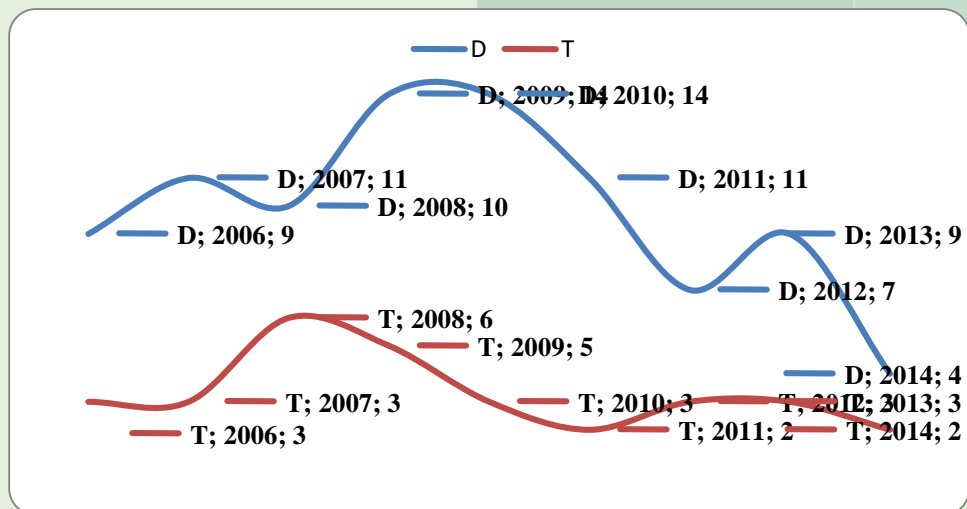
Having the duly completed instrument in hands, the descriptive statistical analysis was conducted, registering the frequency of information obtained. Thus, the selected theses and dissertations were compared and correlated, in order to grasp the TSR trends in Nursing and to respond to the objective proposed.

The approval of this research by an Ethics Committee on Research Involving Human Beings was not necessary, since the study has a bibliometric nature, without direct involvement of human beings as research subjects, and data available in the database are public domain.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

By reading and analyzing the abstracts catalogued online on the DLTD from 2006 to 2014, 5,165 studies produced by nurses in Brazil, between 1997 and 2014, were found, out of which 119 correspond to the research object "Theory of Social Representations and Nursing", making up 2.30% of the national literature by nurses. Out of these, 74.78% refer to dissertations and 25.22% to theses. Graph 1 shows the distribution in absolute numbers of the theses and dissertations using the TSR and Nursing, according to type of study (thesis/dissertation) and year of publication (2006-2014).

Graph 1. Distribution of theses and dissertations in Theory of Social Representations and Nursing in Brazil, according to year of publication.

Source:

Prepared by the authors.

Table 1. Distribution of theses and dissertations on Theory of Social Representations and Nursing, produced by nurses, according to educational institution.

Institution	Abbreviation	Region	N	%
Rio de Janeiro State University	UERJ	Southeast	19	15.96
Federal University of São Paulo	USP	Southeast	18	15.12
Federal University of Minas Gerais	UFMG	Southeast	18	15.12
Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte	UFRN	Northeast	14	11.76
Federal University of Bahia	UFBA	Northeast	12	10.08
State University of Campinas	UNICAMP	Southeast	8	6.72
Ceará State University	UECE	Northeast	7	5.88
Federal University of Rio Grande	FURG	South	4	3.36
State University of Londrina	UEL	South	4	3.36
Federal University of São Carlos	UFSCar	Southeast	3	2.52
Federal University of Santa Maria	UFSM	South	3	2.52
Federal University of Paraíba	UFPB	Northeast	2	1.68
Federal University of Santa Catarina	UFSC	South	2	1.68
Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul	UFRGS	South	2	1.68
Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo	PUC-SP	Southeast	1	0.84
Mackenzie Presbiterian University	MACKENZIE	Southeast	1	0.84
West São Paulo University	UNOESTE	Southeast	1	0.84
			119	**100**

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding the primary area, there are 109 in the large field of Nursing and 10 in other areas, namely: 2 MA graduates in Education, 3 MA and 3 Ph.D. graduates in Health Sciences, 1 Ph.D. graduate in Collective Health, and 1 MA graduate in Science, Technology, and Society.

Concerning educational institutions, 47.05% are in the region Southeast, followed by 29.41% in the South, and 23.52% in the Northeast. The North and Central-West regions did not have representatives. Table 1 indicates the distribution by Higher Education institution (HEI).

As for the use of the TSR alone or combined to other theoretical and methodological frameworks, 85.71% use the theory as their sole framework and 14.29% combined to other frameworks and methods.

In Brazil, we notice that MA courses in Nursing are offered for longer when compared to Ph.D. courses, and this is due to the fact that the first started in the 1970s, while the latter were instituted in the late 1980s and the early 1990s.[7]

Graduate courses portray a consolidated fraction of the Brazilian education and, in recent decades, they have contributed decisively to the education of qualified individuals and to the consolidation of education in the country. In 1974, the field of Nursing had only 2 MA courses and, in the end of 2010, there already were 48 programs, with 72 courses (MA and Ph.D.), indicating a significant expansion at the national level.[9]

The primary area of the graduate programs in these papers is predominantly Nursing. However, this does not necessarily indicate that the actual literature is insignificant in other areas, so that, from a methodological viewpoint, the TSR is an exponent of social psychology and it permeates many research areas.

The field of Education has been a pioneer in using the TSR in Brazil, it accounts for most papers in the International Conference on Social Representations (ICSR) until 2003. Since then, the health field now provides most of the papers in this kind of scientific meeting, although the two fields are not equivalent in this regard.[6] However, when it comes to focusing on the TSR, instead of the phenomenon, Education has a greater number of papers than the field of Health. The increased number of papers in Nursing based on the TSR since the 2003 ICSR was preceded by the presence of a considerable number of papers in the Brazilian graduate system between 1995 and 2005. This production of theses and dissertations still remains in a somewhat lower volume nowadays.[6]

The institutions with greater production of research in Social Representations and Nursing are the Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ), the University of São Paulo (USP), through the School of Nursing at Ribeirão Preto (EERP), and the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), in the Graduate Program in Nursing (PPGE). The last two institutions are among the oldest in Brazil in the field of Nursing, as their graduate programs have more than 30 years, whose historical pathway is widely recognized and they are still highly qualified according to the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES).[10]

Therefore, the scientific literature on Education in Nursing and Health makes clear a greater concentration in the Southeast and South regions, a reality which is not new in the Brazilian scientific research sector. Even with encouragement from the Brazilian National Policy on Science, Technology, and Innovation in Health (PNCTIS), there are still regional inequities, since both in the Health research sector and in the distribution of its products there are funding concentration in centers of excellence to the detriment of poor areas, such as the North, Northeast, and Central-West regions.[7]

Analyzing the contents of the abstracts of these academic papers identified the following areas: infectious diseases, mental health, nursing care, health-illness process, and women's health, themes with a rather pragmatic nature, a feature of the Health field, particularly Nursing. The interest of the studies is aimed at common sense knowledge on care and assistance related to the nursing practice.[6]

The TSR has been widely used in the Health field and using specialized knowledge started taking into account non-specialized knowledge, lay knowledge of various social groups, in order to deal with the complexity of this issue.[11]

Nursing research not always makes clear the difference between the TSR and the phenomenon of social representations, which refers to common sense theories, adopted to organize social practices observed in everyday life, in addition to the knowledge that lay

individuals have on the social environment where they live in. In turn, the TSR addresses conjectures about this phenomenon, by using scientific knowledge, i.e. the TSR determines definitions and assumptions to carry out scientific research in the so-called lay theories.[11]

CONCLUSION

This research found out that the TSR is used to investigate psychosocial objects related to everyday nursing care. And the interest in health focuses on specific groups that require priority care, such as infectious diseases and women's health.

The idea of taking into account non-specialized knowledge (social representations) in the understanding of what is health and health care has a pragmatic interest: providing elements for the implementation or improvement of nursing services.

The small number of studies addressed and the focus only on abstracts may be regarded as biases of this analysis, however, this research favored a preliminary analysis as for the theoretical and methodological aspects adopted in studies in Nursing. It is emphasized that knowledge in the Brazilian Nursing goes beyond data published in theses and dissertations. The data provided herein indicate the need to develop in-depth papers on using the TSR.

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