

The place of qualitative in nursing research

By Antônio Candio about literature, paraphrased to meet nursing research: “Here I understand as humanization [...] the process that confirm that in man those traits that are called essential, such as exercise for reflection, the acquisition of knowledge, the good availability with other, the fine tuning of emotions, the ability to overcome life problems, the sense of beauty, the perception of the complexity of world and human-beings, and the cultivation of humor. The literature [qualitative research] [must develop] develops within us the part of the humanity and turns us more comprehensive and open to nature, to society, and to others”.⁽¹⁾

In the current health and nursing world, especially in research, diffusion and assessment of scientific output using the quantitative approach is fully accepted as a synonym of scientificity. Since undergraduation, students are guided to believe that qualitative approach is the best one, if not the single approach to approximate reality in terms of researching or diffusing or evaluating.

This editorial, which I thank the journal Editor-in-Chief for the honor to invite me, aims to show, very briefly, that quantitative approach would not survive without the qualitative approach as a complement or as central for scientific output, specially in studies that focus is human, both single individuals or groups. My goal is not to defend quantitative, because I accept that it is extremely important to quantify parts of phenomena that, fractioned, are presented as more universal “dots” which can give universal or general responses. In defense of qualitative, I have chosen some aspects that deserve to be thinking, such as: the importance of quality; the possibility or the imperative for complex phenomena, and in the end, the qualitative approach as important approach to advance studies, to diffuse and to evaluate scientific output.

I always inspire myself in Minayo to talk about quality. In her book, co-authored by Costa “Techniques that use speech, observation and empathy: qualitative research in action”, the authors claim that qualitative research has as raw material, the group of nouns in which each complete the other’s meaning: experience, living, common sense and action. The movement that inform any approach or analysis [...] is based on three verbs: understand, interpret and guide.”⁽²⁾

The book “qualitative investigation: innovation, dilemmas, and challenges – volume 2” is a must reading for those who thinking seriously about research.⁽³⁾

To Egry and Fonseca⁽⁴⁾ the quality signals. the intensity that is oposed to extensity, the first pointing to improve and second pointing to the greater and seeking to observe dimensions of phenomena that: present deep marks, such as love, react routine seeking renewal such as happiness, consider committement such as political engagement, or militance, indicate the plenitue of human realization such as santity, value to human participation such as demography, citizenship, and point out to valorization dimensions to be human such as dedication, ethical, abnegation, envolviment, help, solidarity, etc.

A rapid look into international indexed publication about the topic show that there is growing of articles within this broad spectrum of qualitative methods. If one side there is expansion, to the other side there is type of banalization of studies concerning the method. The big difference and importance of qualitative method in the attempting to approximate the object of study is this theoretical framework, or fundamental of methods. If these information is not clear in the study, this is only because of the reduced and specific framework that could be quantitative, but lacks “quantities” for demonstration.

To provide the in-depth viewing of reality, and by seeking to essence of phenomeno, the qualitative research can be key to produce critical knowledge, emancipation, and deep committement with social transformation.

However, the Thorne et al.⁽⁵⁾ study contests the extensive use of conventional approaches to aligned drawing to researchers in social sciences. To these authors instead of right aligning, there should be support in nursing epistemology, such as step highly productive to define the framework of problem of the study. We agree with authors that, althought Nursing is characterized by coherent phylosophical core that is unified during the practices of more diversity in terms of configuration and contexts, the complexity and nature of nursing make exceptionally hard to define these markers.

I consider extremely interesting that authors advocate, considering the premise that nursing research question is never free of context, but what appears is that “instead arises on the basis of critical reflection, informed by a conscious awareness of the limitations of current knowledge for the practice of the profession. [...] And it assumes an inherently praxis orientation in the sense that the dialectic between knowledge and the action on which it is based will ultimately determine its utility and value”.^(5,6)

I believe I can conclude that other areas of knowledge already get here before us, and it is that understand the objective reality in sense of intervation – and this is mission of nursing care – the most fertile way is alliance between quantitative and qualitative. In other words, there are no way to approach complex phenomeno, such as acessibility to care and therapeutic, the facing of domestic violence, the inusitated expansion of diseases that

appears and stays in the history, the development of new manners of critical epidemiologic look in territory or in strengthened displaced populations (migrants).

We know that science is distant to be right and definitive, even with all scientific rigorosity of methods, because they came from continuous movements of dialectic superation of previous knowledges.

Quality of qualitative research depends on adoption of philosophical theoretical marker that can cover complex phenomenon and do not reduce description of numbers, the object to be studied and how they behave of qualitative approximation, methodology and methodological pathway, which must be chosen as a form to illuminate the phenomenon in total-part and final to reconstruct them as summary contradictions to be overcome. The rigorosity and transparency of theoretical framework, and methodological pathway of categories of analysis and techniques of data analysis. The deep analysis of findings mediating intertextus with results of researches, broad and current, of synthesis that contemplate dimensions of singular, particular and general, the ethical in conduction of research and devolution and diffuse results.

Finally, it is important to recognize the quality of qualitative research which is dependence of production of significant social knowledge and to the society.

Prof^a Dr^a Emiko Yoshikawa Egy

(<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0974-0315>)

*Retired full professor of Nursing School at Federal University of São Paulo.
Visiting Professor of Nursing School of São Paulo at Federal University of São Paulo (2019-2020). Editor-in-Chief of
Revista da Escola de Enfermagem da Universidade de São Paulo. Senior
Researcher of Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological
Development - CNPq.*

How to cite:

Egy EY. The place of qualitative in nursing research.

Acta Paul Enferm. 2020;33:e-EDT2020002

DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.37689/acta-ape/2020EDT002>



References

1. Candido A. Direitos Humanos e literatura. In: Fester ACR, organizador. Direitos humanos e São Paulo: Brasiliense; 1989.
2. Minayo MC, Costa AP. Técnicas que fazem uso da palavra, do olhar e da empatia: pesquisa qualitativa em ação. Aveiro: Ludomedia; 2019. 64 p.

3. Costa AP, Coutinho C, Sánchez C, Souza DN, Egry EY, Souza FN, et al. Investigação qualitativa: inovação, dilemas e desafios. Souza FN de, Souza DN de, Costa AP, organizadores. Aveiro - Portugal: Ludomedia; 2014. vol. 1, 152 p.
4. Egry EY, Fonseca RM. Acerca da qualidade nas pesquisas qualitativas em Enfermagem. In: Costa AP, Neri de Souza F, Neri de Souza D, organizadores. Investigação qualitativa: inovação, dilemas e desafios. Aveiro: Ludomedia; 2014. p. 75–102.
5. Thorne S, Stephens J, Truant T. Building qualitative study design using nursing's disciplinary epistemology. *J Adv Nurs*. 2016;72(2):451–60.
6. Reed PG. The practice turn in nursing epistemology. *Nurs Sci Q*. 2006;19(1):36–8.