

EDITORIAL

The use of the Mixed Methods approach to research in health

The historical, political and economic contexts experienced nowadays have generated complex demands for researchers in the most diverse areas of knowledge and, consequently, scientific productions. Added to the need to search for the best evidence that aims to contribute to the issues of society, the use of innovative methodologies, which reach the different facets that study problems can reveal. Thus, the use of Mixed Methods, or multimethod research as it is also recognized, has been used as an approach to account for the complexity of the problems of the contemporary human being.

Mixed Methods provide for the use of assumptions of quantitative and qualitative research in the same investigation, each approach with its particularities, in order to have several perspectives of the studied phenomenon¹. In turn, the "quanti-qualitative" or "quali-quantitative" approach should not be confused with Mixed Methods, since its interest is not only the knowledge of a phenomenon from different perspectives, but the integration of various approaches, which is relevant to deepen the theme of the study and even approximate the theoretical perspectives of quantitative and qualitative research².

Its origin is recent (mid-2000), with its most detailed description in the publication of the work *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research: Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative*. As an embryonic fact, in the mid-1960s to 1970s, social science researchers began to discuss about the mixture of various methods, which became known as "triangulation of results". Since the 1980s, a slight increase in the production of research with Mixed Methods began, with the emergence of the first design of studies involving data mixing³.

American researcher John W. Creswell is one of the best known in the area, whose work consolidated strategies and drawings of studies of mixed approach in the most diverse areas of knowledge, which in itself seeks to broaden the understanding of issues involving the context of research¹.

Thus, when seeking to evaluate the impact and frequency of the object, complex and rigorous quantitative research methods should be used; as well as using adequate methods of qualitative research when one intends to reveal, in depth, a given study question among the participants. .

The main scholars of Mixed Methods point out as principles that determine the research to be mixed when: *distribution of time* – the data will be collected in different stages (sequentially) or at the same time (concomitantly); *weight allocation* - prioritisation to the

quantitative or qualitative approach; *combination of data* – refers to how the data will be mixed, i.e. whether the data will be fused, retained, separated or if it will be somehow combined; and *the theorization* – there is some assumption or theoretical perspective that guide the study⁴⁻⁵.

The Mixed Methods are a possibility for studies in the areas of Social Sciences, Humanities and Health, as they focus on understanding complex contexts, which may favor the chances of answering and investigating such questions. A study that analyzed the best research resources with mixed methods in health systems identified that, in addition to a theoretical perspective, Mixed Methods are a third research approach, increasingly used in the health area⁶.

Considering the advances, there are still gaps in the production of evidence in relation to Mixed Methods, mainly related to strategies for operationalization of data mixing⁷. Nevertheless, the use of Mixed Methods is relevant and is increasingly being used in research undertaken in the health area.

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