

REVIEW

Collective Health

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The research data are available in the body of the document.

Conflict of interest

The author declare that there is no conflicts of interest.

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Analysis of qualitative dissertations and theses in Brazilian Nutrition postgraduate programs (2019-2024)

Análise das dissertações e teses com abordagem qualitativa nos programas de pós-graduação em Nutrição no Brasil (2019-2024)

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ABSTRACT

We conducted a bibliographic analysis of qualitative dissertations and theses produced in Brazilian Nutrition postgraduate programs from 2019 to 2024. The systematic search was performed in the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations and the Catalog of Theses and Dissertations of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel databases. A total of 44 dissertations and 13 theses were included, defended between 2019 and October 2024, in 13 of the 30 postgraduate programs linked to the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel Nutrition assessment field. The five most frequent central themes were cooking, obesity, food and nutritional security, breastfeeding, and school meals. The semi-structured interview was the most frequent data collection procedure, predominating the content analysis proposed by Bardin. Minayo appeared as the primary theoretical reference in the definitions of qualitative research. In the set of dissertations and theses analyzed, we observed an attempt to construct an identity pattern to form a scientific habitus aimed at sharing the same paradigms among members of the scientific community in qualitative research in Nutrition.

Keywords: Academic dissertation. Health postgraduate programs. Qualitative research. Nutritional sciences.

RESUMO

Realizou-se análise bibliográfica das dissertações e teses com abordagem qualitativa produzidas nos programas de pós-graduação em Nutrição no Brasil no período de 2019 a 2024. A busca sistemática foi feita nas bases Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações e Catálogo de Teses e Dissertações da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior. Foram incluídas 44 dissertações e 13 teses, defendidas entre 2019 e outubro de 2024, em 13 dos 30 programas de pós-graduação vinculados à área de avaliação Nutrição da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior. As cinco temáticas centrais mais frequentes foram: culinária, obesidade, segurança alimentar e nutricional, aleitamento materno e alimentação escolar. A entrevista semiestruturada foi o procedimento de coleta de dados mais frequente, com predomínio da análise de conteúdo proposta por Bardin. Nas definições de pesquisa qualitativa,

Minayo apareceu como o principal referencial teórico. No conjunto das dissertações e teses analisadas observou-se uma tentativa de construção de um padrão identitário, de formação de um habitus científico voltado ao compartilhamento dos mesmos paradigmas entre os membros da comunidade científica do campo da pesquisa qualitativa em Nutrição.

Palavras-chave: *Dissertação acadêmica. Programas de pós-graduação em saúde. Pesquisa qualitativa. Ciências da nutrição.*

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, evidence has pointed to few studies on analyzing dissertations and theses produced within Brazilian stricto sensu postgraduate programs in Nutrition in Brazil [1-3]. A systematic search in the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO Brazil) and Google Scholar databases found 11 articles published between 2003 and 2024 [1-11]. However, this study type has been produced by researchers from different fields of knowledge in the last five years, such as Nursing [12], Physical Education [13], Medicine [14], Public Health [15], Psychology [16], Social Work [17], Education [18], and Information Sciences [19].

Regarding the analyses of qualitative dissertations and theses produced in Brazilian stricto sensu postgraduate programs, we observed that the number of studies located is much smaller [20-22]. A study by Knauth and Leal [21] on the expansion of qualitative research in Public Health from the 1990s onwards indicated that the growth of this study type was undeniable in more open areas, such as Nursing and Nutrition, and traditionally more closed areas, such as Medicine and Epidemiology, with the supremacy of quantitative approaches.

In Health Sciences, Nursing is the area of knowledge with the most significant number of qualitative studies historically [1-3,12]. In Nutrition, a study by Vasconcelos [1], which aimed to analyze the dissertations and theses produced in postgraduate programs in Nutrition in Brazil from 2003 to 2012, identified a hegemonic quantitative approach adopted by 92.5% (n=890) of the studies to the detriment of only 7.3% (n=70) of qualitative and mixed approaches.

Among the studies that analyzed data collection and analysis procedures, methodological characteristics, bibliometric components, and other qualitative research aspects, Manzini's [20] aimed to analyze the adoption of interviews as a data collection instrument in 67 dissertations and theses in Education and concluded that more theoretical basis and methodological rigor were still needed for this type of procedure. In temporal sequence, we identified the study by Knauth and Leal [21], who, although they did not focus on the analysis of dissertations and theses, recommended that researchers in qualitative research needed to delve deeper into epistemological, methodological, and political aspects typical of or specific to the Social Sciences in their studies.

A recent study by Barros and Vasconcelos [22] investigated how concerns about scientific rigor have been taking shape in qualitative research in Brazilian postgraduate studies in dissertations and theses produced between 2008 and 2018. The authors observed that 41% (n=99) of the studies analyzed pointed out concerns or criteria regarding methodological rigor, albeit not always reported. On the other hand, discussions about biases and strategies aiming at the reliability or validity of results (quantitative research typical procedures) were not observed in the reports of the studies analyzed.

This article aimed to conduct a bibliographic analysis of dissertations and theses, using a qualitative approach, produced in Brazilian postgraduate programs in Nutrition from 2019 to 2024.

METHODS

This is a bibliographic analysis of qualitative dissertations and theses produced in Brazilian postgraduate programs in Nutrition from 2019 to October 2024. Similar studies have used different ‘typologies’, among which the most used terms stand out: “analysis, study, research, or bibliometric mapping” [3,10,17] and “analysis, study, research, or bibliographic, or documentary review” [1-2,5-9,11-12,18-22].

The methodological procedures adopted or adapted in this study aimed to freely follow the following steps, traditionally reported in systematic, integrative, and narrative reviews [23,24]: (i) Definition of the theme under study; (ii) Formulation of the research question or study objectives; (iii) Definition of descriptors and databases; (iv) Definition of eligibility criteria (selection, inclusion, and exclusion of studies); (v) Categorization and analysis of studies (data); (vi) Discussion of results and synthesis of knowledge.

The bibliographic survey was conducted in the electronic databases of the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD) [25] and the Catalog of Theses and Dissertations of the *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* (CAPES, Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel) [26]. The BDTD has a broader database, providing 927,372 documents (253,758 theses and 673,614 dissertations) produced by 147 Brazilian institutions in the period consulted. Furthermore, it offers ample possibilities for advanced search, combining descriptions and several filters, which facilitates screening the located bibliographic records.

Another important advantage of BDTD is that it is possible to proceed with the steps of title identification, reading the abstract, and accessing the documents in full, as the database provides links (hyperlinks) for connecting with the depository libraries or primary libraries of the group of partner institutions [25]. Therefore, in BDTD, definitive search sessions were performed from September 10 to 15, 2024, using advanced strategies specific to each of the 30 PPGs in Nutrition investigated [27], such as the following: “(All fields: Postgraduate Program in Nutrition AND All fields: Federal University of Rio de Janeiro AND All fields: Qualitative Research)” [25].

In the CAPES Theses and Dissertations Catalog database [26], the definitive search sessions were also conducted in the same period and adopted the string word “Qualitative Research and Nutrition”, which returned 166 documents. Therefore, since the initial survey was performed in the BDTD database, which identified a more significant number of eligible studies, the CAPES database survey served as a complement, since a minimal number of eligible articles in this database expanded the total number of studies included in the review. However, we should underscore the relevance of search sessions in multiple bibliographic databases, as from the search in the CAPES database, for example, some records of qualitative theses and dissertations produced by the PPG in Nutrition at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) were inexplicably not included in the BDTD catalog.

The third methodological strategy used was to visit the homepages or websites of these programs, a procedure employed in previous studies [1-2]. This strategy was much more “time-consuming” and “painful” due to multiple factors, such as the vast diversity of functionalities of the 30 homepages of the programs, the difficulty in locating information on the pages, the lack of interconnection (links) between the lists of dissertations and theses produced with the primary libraries (the institution’s depositories) and the national databases; and the constant operational/functional errors in electronic access to documents that occurred for most homepages of the PPGs in Nutrition. This strategy, however, increased the number of studies eligible for the analyzed period

(2019-2024), since dissertations and theses defended in more recent years may not have yet been registered in the BDTD and CAPES databases.

The following inclusion criterion was adopted because of the article's objective: Qualitative dissertations and theses conducted in the 30 postgraduate programs linked to the CAPES Nutrition assessment field [27] in the academic modality defended from 2019 to 2024. The exclusion procedures adopted the following criteria: Studies conducted in postgraduate programs in other fields of knowledge; repeated or duplicate studies in the databases; quantitative studies; and studies defended before 2019. Notably, the exclusion criterion (filter) by defense date was established a posteriori, since 152 dissertations and theses published from 2004 to 2024 were considered eligible. Therefore, to facilitate data extraction, analysis, and reporting of results, we decided to present only the review of dissertations and theses defended from 2019 to 2024 in this article.

Figure 1 shows the study identification, screening, and inclusion flowchart, prepared based on a free adaptation of the PRISMA protocol (The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) [28]. In the initial stage, 1,514 titles were retrieved from the two databases (BDTD and CAPES); in the end, 57 studies were included after the screening and eligibility stages.

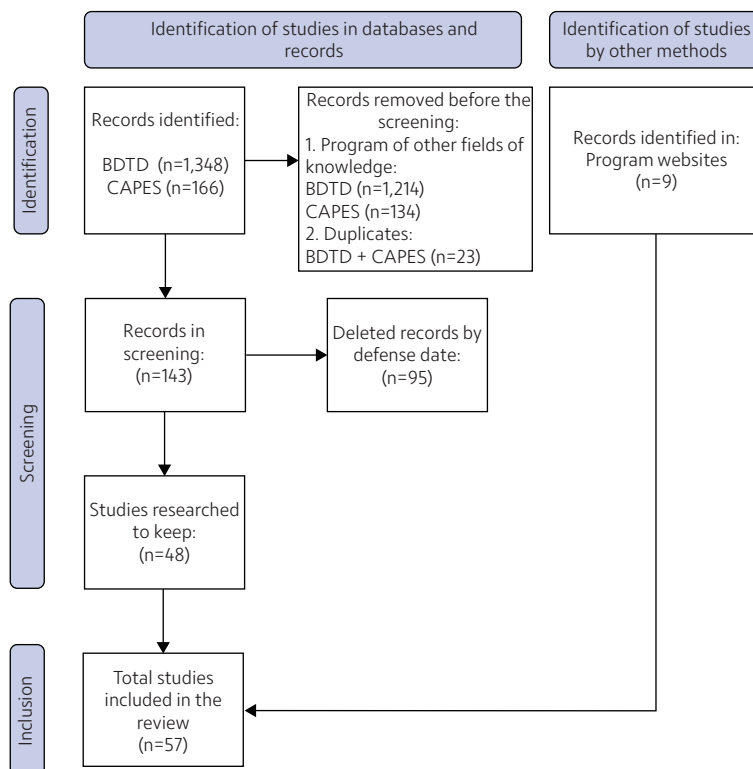


Figure 1 – Flowchart of the study search, selection, and inclusion procedures.

An electronic spreadsheet was created in Microsoft Excel® to extract the data, organizing the dissertations and theses under the following characteristics: author's name, study title, defense year, final paper type, postgraduate program, central theme (study object), data collection procedures, analysis type, theoretical framework used in the analysis, characteristics of the subjects investigated (number, gender, age group, and profession), use of an explicit definition of qualitative research,

theoretical framework used in defining qualitative research, use of expressions or terms typical of qualitative research in the title and abstract with sufficient information about the study's characteristics. The following procedures were performed to extract these characteristics: 1) Reading the titles; 2) Reading the abstracts; 3) Reading the section/chapter on the investigation's methodological procedures when the two previous procedures were insufficient to extract the information; 4) Reading and analyzing the list of bibliographic references; and 5) Using the command to locate or search in the files, when it was necessary to search for specific information.

The results are presented as absolute and percentage frequency distributions. The article includes five illustrations (figures and chart). WordArt.com was adopted to construct word cloud illustrations to express the central themes (study objects) and the data analysis procedures used.

RESULTS

In this article, only 57 studies were included in the analysis, 44 dissertations and 13 theses, defended from 2019 to October 2024, in 13 of the 30 PPGs linked to the CAPES Nutrition assessment field. Chart 1 shows the list of studies included in the review by author, title, defense year, and work type.

Chart 1 – List of 57 dissertations and theses produced between 2019 and 2024 with a qualitative approach by the Postgraduate Programs in Nutrition, included in the review by author, title, year of defense, and type of work. Brazil, 2024.

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Number	Author	Study title	Year	Type
UFSC Nutrition Postgraduate Program				
1	Mazzonetto, Ana Cláudia	<i>Significados e práticas relacionados ao ato de cozinhar: estudo intergeracional com mulheres utilizando a Teoria Fundamentada nos Dados</i>	2019	Thesis
2	Zanlourensi, Clorine Borba	<i>Fornecimento de alimentos provenientes da agricultura familiar quilombola para o Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar: uma abordagem etnográfica</i>	2019	Dissertation
3	Gomes, Thaise	<i>Alimento de qualidade: a opinião de atores do sistema alimentar</i>	2019	Dissertation
4	Tasca, Cassiani Gotama	<i>Instrumento avaliativo para práticas de sustentabilidade ambiental, social e econômica em unidades de alimentação e nutrição institucionais</i>	2020	Thesis
5	Silva, Barbara Leone	<i>A trajetória das conferências nacionais de segurança alimentar e nutricional no Brasil: uma análise histórica e conceitual de 1994 a 2015</i>	2020	Dissertation
6	Fabri, Rafaela Karen	<i>Aspectos simbólicos e sustentáveis sobre alimentação saudável em guias alimentares e na percepção de indivíduos adultos de Florianópolis.</i>	2020	Thesis
7	Melo, Jackeline Nass Machado	<i>Ser mulher e cozinhar: experiências e sentimentos de mulheres de três gerações</i>	2021	Dissertation
8	Florintino, Camila da Silva	<i>Análise da implementação de ações de educação alimentar e nutricional em unidades de educação infantil e fundamental da rede pública municipal de Florianópolis, Santa Catarina</i>	2022	Dissertation
9	Camargo, Anice Milbratz de	<i>Mídias sociais no contexto da socialização culinária: estudo multimétodos sobre conteúdo veiculado e utilização por adultos jovens fundamentado na Teoria Social Cognitiva</i>	2022	Thesis
10	Gavioli, Fernanda	<i>Motivações e fatores envolvidos no preparo e no consumo de marmitas por estudantes de uma Universidade Pública de Florianópolis-SC</i>	2022	Dissertation
11	Buôgo, Mariana da Silva	<i>Recomendações para um guia de alimentação sustentável para a população brasileira: consenso entre especialistas</i>	2024	Dissertation
12	Gatinho, Lorena Cristina Guerreiro	<i>Práticas e percepções de adolescentes sobre seu envolvimento em atividades culinárias no ambiente doméstico</i>	2024	Dissertation

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Number	Author	Study title	Year	Type
UFBA Food, Nutrition, and Health Postgraduate Program				
13	Araujo, Maria Cristina Espírito Santo	<i>“Eu me sinto muito bem...”: os efeitos produzidos pelas Práticas Integrativas e Complementares em pessoas com obesidade no contexto da Rede de Atenção à Saúde</i>	2022	Dissertation
14	Souza, Natalia Ferreira Diniz de	<i>Influência social nas práticas alimentares do binômio mãe - filho nos primeiros seis meses de vida: estudo de caso em uma capital nordestina</i>	2022	Dissertation
15	Magalhães, Carolina Gusmão	<i>Obesidade, Educação e Mudança: mobilização do pensar na saúde</i>	2022	Thesis
16	Souza, Gimena Barbosa	<i>“Quarentenar”: narrativas sobre as práticas alimentares durante a pandemia de COVID-19</i>	2023	Dissertation
17	Rocha, Noemi Evelin Santos	<i>Sentidos e significados atribuídos por nutricionistas para utilização de abordagens não prescritivas no cuidado nutricional</i>	2023	Dissertation
18	Alves, Juliede de Andrade	<i>Corpos, obesidades e práticas integrativas e complementares em saúde: etnografando modos de cuidado em um centro de referência da rede SUS</i>	2023	Thesis
19	Almeida, Ida Oliveira de	<i>Memórias alimentares de funcionários públicos envelhecidos participantes do ELSA-Brasil com diabetes mellitus tipo 2 e outras doenças crônicas não transmissíveis</i>	2024	Dissertation
UERJ Food, Nutrition, and Health Postgraduate Program				
20	Fonseca, Renata Borchetta Fernandes	<i>Práticas Cotidianas de Nutricionistas no Âmbito da Alimentação de Coletividades em Unidades de Alimentação e Nutrição Terceirizadas</i>	2019	Thesis
21	Grassi, Pedro Henrique	<i>Uma outra alimentação é possível? Uma reflexão acerca dos modos de produção, distribuição e consumo global a partir do café</i>	2019	Dissertation
22	Conde, Thais Nascimento	<i>Fábrica Digital de subjetividades Body Positive: uma análise dos perfis no Instagram</i>	2020	Dissertation
23	Pereira, Clarissa Magalhães do Vale	<i>Sentidos e práticas do consumo dos alimentos da agricultura familiar por atores gastronômicos na cidade do Rio de Janeiro</i>	2022	Thesis
24	Ramos, Doralice Batista das Neves	<i>O cuidado à saúde de pessoas com obesidade na perspectiva de profissionais da Atenção Primária no estado do Rio de Janeiro</i>	2023	Thesis
25	Minuzzo, Daniela Alves	<i>Entre o individual e o coletivo: as estratégias de resistência adotadas por trabalhadoras de cozinha em restaurantes no Brasil e na Espanha</i>	2023	Thesis
UFPR Food and Nutrition Postgraduate Program				
26	Koubik, Nathalie Alves dos Santos	<i>A entrevista do recordatório de 24 horas: um estudo qualitativo sobre a percepção de indivíduos</i>	2019	Dissertation
27	Furtado da Silva, Adriella CGF Silveira	<i>Mulheres e soberania alimentar: saberes agroecológicos entre assentadas</i>	2019	Dissertation
28	Garmus, Lenine Maria,	<i>Estudo qualitativo sobre a percepção de nutricionistas na quantificação alimentar em indivíduos adultos com obesidade</i>	2020	Dissertation
29	Sedlmaier, Amanda Waleska	<i>Potencialidades e desafios da produção e da aquisição de alimentos da agricultura familiar no âmbito do Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar: um estudo de caso em Piraquara/PR</i>	2021	Dissertation
30	Rezende, Isabella Bahia Dutra	<i>Sobre outras formas de ser alimentado: significados do uso de sonda enteral em domicílio</i>	2021	Dissertation
31	Sedlmaier, Amanda Waleska	<i>Potencialidades e desafios da produção e da aquisição de alimentos da agricultura familiar no âmbito do Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar: um estudo de caso em Piraquara/PR</i>	2021	Dissertation
32	Frauches, Ariel de Moraes	<i>Desafios na coleta de dados sobre consumo alimentar: estudo qualitativo das experiências e percepções de participantes e equipe de pesquisa</i>	2023	Dissertation
UNIFESP Nutrition Postgraduate Program				
33	Mucinhato, Raisa Moreira Dardaque	<i>Água e alimentação escolar: diálogo global sobre a segurança dos alimentos</i>	2019	Dissertation
34	Albuquerque, Regiane Aparecida Dos Santos	<i>O significado da alimentação para idosos longevos que moram sozinhos</i>	2020	Dissertation
35	Pereira, Tatiana Caldas	<i>Água para o consumo humano da rede de abastecimento público ofertada às unidades escolares da região metropolitana da Baixada Santista: qualidade, ações, fragilidades e potencialidades</i>	2020	Dissertation

Chart 1 – List of 57 dissertations and theses produced between 2019 and 2024 with a qualitative approach by the Postgraduate Programs in Nutrition, included in the review by author, title, year of defense, and type of work. Brazil, 2024.

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Number	Author	Study title	Year	Type
UNIFESP Nutrition Postgraduate Program				
36	Zanin, Laís Mariano	<i>The interplay between food handlers and food safety culture: assessment strategies and educational actions to the proactive evolvement</i>	2021	Thesis
37	Freitas, Rayane Stephanie Gomes de	<i>Por que os trabalhadores de cozinha não colocam em prática o que aprendem sobre segurança dos alimentos?</i>	2022	Thesis
38	Amaral, Aline Oliveira Zoia do	<i>Horta comunitária no bairro de Nova Heliópolis, região de alta vulnerabilidade social: estudo de caso engajado</i>	2023	Dissertation
UFF Nutrition Sciences Postgraduate Program				
39	Souza, Patrícia Rodrigues Dias de	<i>Concepções sobre práticas alimentares e amamentação de puérperas de uma maternidade pública de Niterói</i>	2022	Dissertation
40	Santos, Andressa Assumpção Abreudos	<i>Fatores condicionantes da amamentação sob a ótica de puérperas de maternidade de alto risco</i>	2022	Dissertation
41	Menezes, Marina Messas Siqueira	<i>Implementação do cardápio escolar de acordo com a nova resolução do Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar no município de Niterói - Rio de Janeiro</i>	2023	Dissertation
42	Lima, Rebeca Benevides Dias	<i>Inserção da educação interprofissional nos cursos de graduação da área da saúde</i>	2023	Dissertation
43	Mota, Bruno Ribeiro da	<i>Percepção de professores do ensino fundamental de Paracambi-RJ a respeito da educação alimentar e nutricional</i>	2023	Dissertation
44	Costa, Elizabeth Souza da	<i>As ações de educação alimentar e nutricional proposta nos Projetos Políticos Pedagógicos das escolas públicas de Niterói.</i>	2023	Dissertation
Postgraduate Program in Nutrition da UFRJ				
45	Martins, Bianca Cristina Camargo	<i>Maternidade editada: O processo de introdução alimentar no Instagram</i>	2020	Dissertation
46	Nicolau, Amanda Cunha	<i>Comida e Refúgio: mudanças e permanências nas práticas alimentares de refugiados sírios</i>	2021	Dissertation
47	Coutinho, Leticia da Silva	<i>Estratégias alimentares em um território de pobreza: O caso de Jardim Gramacho</i>	2021	Dissertation
48	Ribeiro, Lorena Silva	<i>Percepções corporais e comensalidade nos memes da pandemia</i>	2023	Dissertation
UnB Human Nutrition Postgraduate Program				
49	Almeida, Géssica Mércia de	<i>Formação e atuação do nutricionista em educação alimentar e nutricional</i>	2019	Thesis
50	Machado, Juliana Gonçalves.	<i>Análise dos atores-chave e líderes de opinião envolvidos na implementação em larga escala de estratégias de prevenção da obesidade infantil e cuidado de crianças com obesidade no Brasil</i>	2023	Dissertation
UFMG Nutrition and Health Postgraduate Program				
51	Thomaz, Ludmilla Rodrigues Coelho	<i>Concepções de puérperas e profissionais de saúde de uma maternidade pública acerca da doação de leite materno.</i>	2020	Dissertation
52	Santiago, Liziane Aline	<i>Internacionalização da Política Pública de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional no contexto da Paradiplomacia em uma Metrópole Brasileira</i>	2020	Dissertation
UFLA Nutrition and Health Postgraduate Program				
53	Furtado, Sílvia Aline	<i>Programa Bolsa Família: percepção dos profissionais e beneficiários quanto ao acompanhamento das condicionalidades em saúde</i>	2019	Dissertation
54	Neri, Mayara Márcia Silva	<i>Compreensão dos comportamentos alimentares de mulheres grávidas de Lavras-MG: um estudo qualitativo</i>	2021	Dissertation
UFV Nutrition Sciences Postgraduate Program				
55	Santos, Laís Cardozo dos	<i>Análise crítica das narrativas das estratégias de enfrentamento do Zika vírus e da Síndrome Congênita pelo Zika vírus no Brasil: utilizando o método WPR</i>	2023	Dissertation
UFOP Health and Nutrition Postgraduate Program				
56	Venturi, Aniquele Costa	<i>A sucessão na agricultura familiar em São Gonçalo do Rio Abaixo-MG a partir da vivência/percepção dos agricultores e possíveis sucessores.</i>	2020	Dissertation
UFGD Food, Nutrition, and Health Postgraduate Program				
57	Marques, Juliana Mara Elora	<i>Felicidades e tristezas no trabalho em saúde indígena: um estudo com profissionais do polo base de Dourados, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brasil</i>	2022	Dissertation

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of the 57 qualitative dissertations and theses included in the review. The Postgraduate Program in Nutrition at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC, Federal University of Santa Catarina) leads with 12 studies, followed by the Postgraduate Program in Nutrition at the Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA, Federal University of Bahia) and the Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR, Federal University of Paraná) (with 7 studies each), the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ, State University of Rio de Janeiro), the Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP, Federal University of São Paulo), and the Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF, Fluminense Federal University) (with 6 studies, each), the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) (n=4), the Universidade de Brasília (UnB, University of Brasília), the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG, Federal University of Minas Gerais), and the Universidade Federal de Lavras (UFLA, Federal University of Lavras) (n=2, each) and the Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV, Federal University of Viçosa), the Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (UFOP, Federal University of Ouro Preto) and the Universidade Federal de Grande Dourados (UFGD, Federal University of Grande Dourados) (n=1, each).

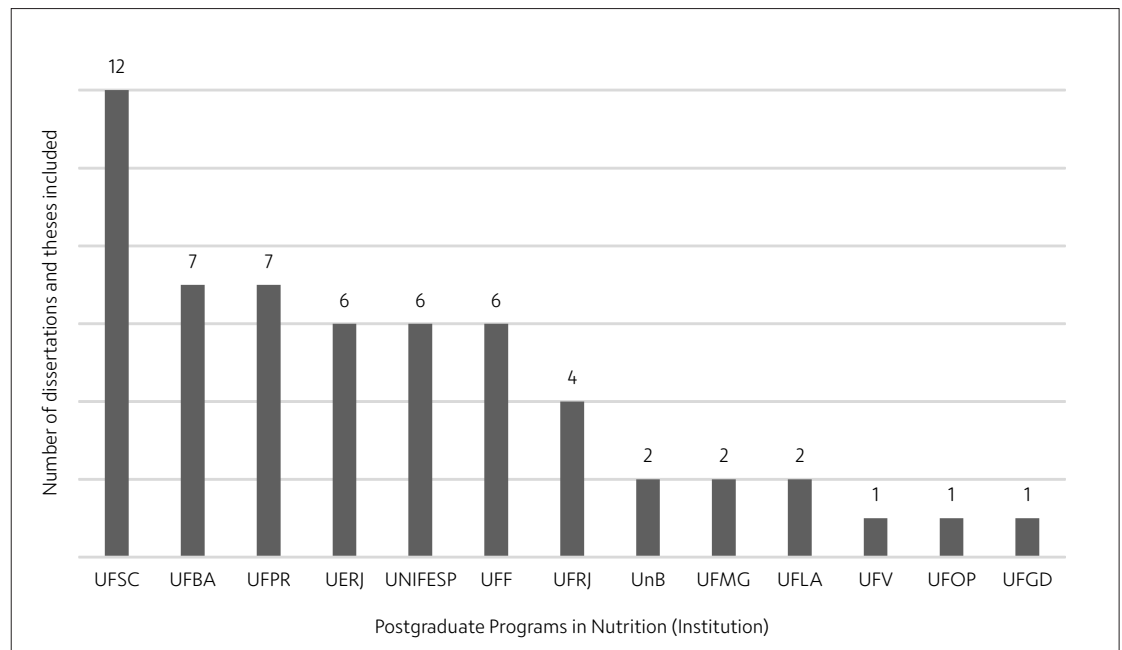


Figure 2 – Distribution of the 57 qualitative dissertations and theses produced in the period.

Regarding the central themes investigated in the 57 dissertations and theses analyzed, approximately 20 themes were identified, distributed as follows: cuisine (n=7), obesity (n=6), food and nutritional security (n=6), breastfeeding (n=5), school meals (n=5), nutritionist training/performance (n=4), eating behavior/habits/practices (n=4), commensality and body (n=3), food and nutritional education (n=3), healthy eating (n=2), family farming (n=2), food consumption assessment (n=1), elderly nutrition (n=1), Indigenous nutrition (n=1), home nutritional care (n=1), community gardens (n=1), food memories (n=1), Bolsa Família Program (n=1), water quality (n=1) and other theme (n=1). Figure 3 shows the word cloud created from the central themes investigated.

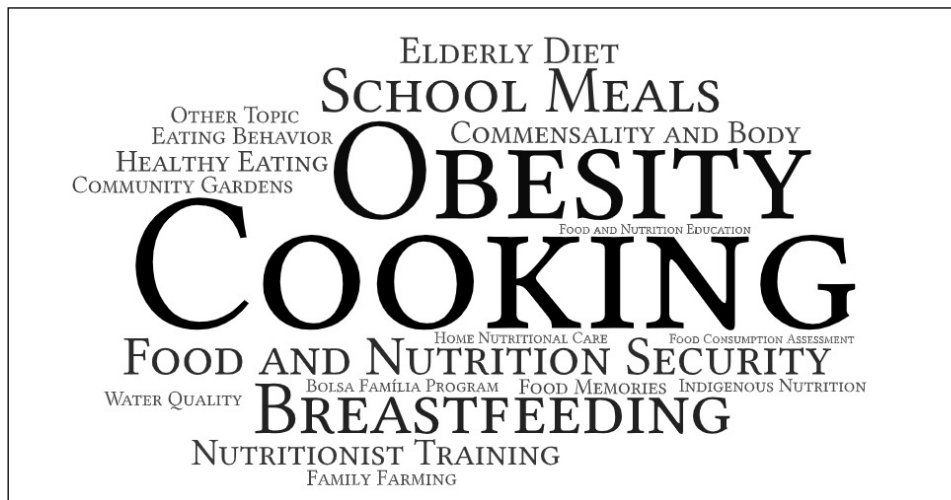


Figure 3 – Word cloud created from the central themes (study objects) of the 57 dissertations and theses included in the review. Brazil, 2024.

Regarding data collection procedures, semi-structured interviews appeared as the dominant collection method and were adopted in isolation in 23 (40.3%) of the 57 studies. Semi-structured interviews associated with other collection techniques, such as participant observation, document analysis, literature review, and focus groups, appeared in 18 (31.6%). The focus group technique in isolation or association with another data collection procedure was identified in 5 (8.8%). Document analysis used in isolation or association with literature review and other data collection techniques corresponded to 8 (14.0%). Another three studies (5.3%) used electronic data collection techniques, analyzing posts, memes, films, magazines, and the like (Data not shown in figures and tables). Notably, in recent years, primarily since the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the studies analyzed have used semi-structured interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and consensus workshops using virtual or electronic procedures.

Regarding the analysis procedures employed, a predominance of (thematic) content analysis was observed using the technique proposed by Laurence Bardin [29] (n=29; 51.0%). Next, analyses of the content of the statements or narratives of the interviewed subjects appeared based on the application of different theoretical references such as MCS Minayo [30] and Eni Orlandi [31] (n=12; 21.0%), followed by multi-referential analysis (n=3; 5.3%) and thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke [32] (n=2; 3.5%). Eight other analysis types (n=1; 1.8% for each) were ethnographic (Clifford Geertz [33]), based on grounded theory (GT) [34], based on research methodology authors (Gil [35], Yin [36]), life narratives (Bertaux [37]), Actor-Network Theory (Latour [38]), discourse of the collective subject [39], based on evaluative research [40], and the What's the Problem Represented to be? (technique proposed by Carol Bacchi [41]). Figure 4 presents the word cloud created from the analysis procedures used by the dissertations and theses investigated.

Regarding the characteristics of the subjects investigated, the information analysis reveals a profile specific to the qualitative research modality. Regarding the number of subjects investigated, 12 (21.0%) studies investigated between 2 and 10 individuals, 24 (42.0%) between 2 and 20, and 37 (54.4%) between 2 and 30. On the other hand, 13 studies (22.8%) investigated more than 30 to 200 subjects. Another nine studies (15.8%) analyzed documents, institutions, or virtual

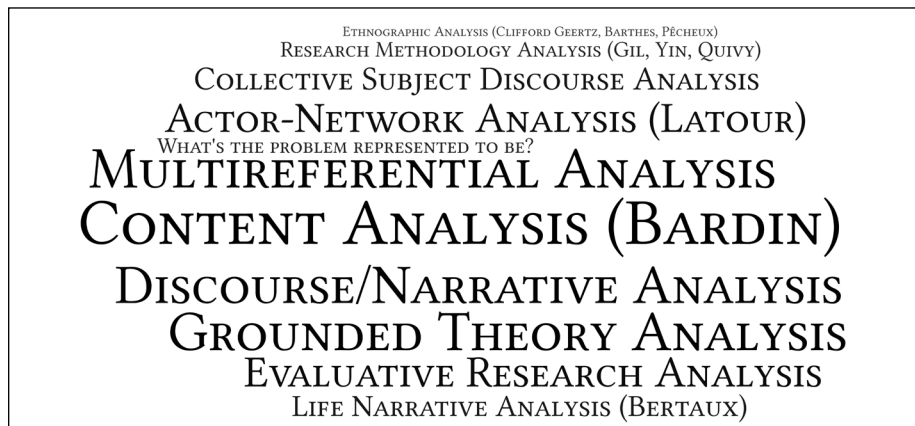


Figure 4 – Word cloud created from the data analysis procedures used by the 57 dissertations and theses included in the review. Brazil, 2024.

objects. Yet another four (7.0%) that studied humans did not show the investigated amount. The distribution of the 57 dissertations and theses by gender of the investigated subjects had the following frequency: 16 (28.1%) female; 2 (3.5%) male; 30 (52.6%) of both genders; and 9 (15.8%) not applicable. Regarding the investigated age groups, 46 (80.7) were adult individuals; 1 (1.8%) studied adolescents; 1 (1.8%) older adults; and 9 (15.8) were not applicable. The professional profile of the subjects investigated had the following distribution: 12 (21.0%) studied patients in hospital or outpatient settings; 8 (14.0%) interviewed health professionals, mainly primary care teams; 7 (12.3%) investigated people in community settings; 5 (8.8%) studied teams responsible for school meals; 4 (7.0%) were directed to nutritionists, 4 (7.0%) to cooks or chefs, 3 (5.3%) to teachers, 3 (5.3%) to students, and 2 (3.5%) to family farmers (Data not shown in tables).

In the analysis of the use of terms, concepts, or expressions related to or typical of qualitative research in the titles of the 57 dissertations and theses included, we observed that 35 (61.4%) of the studies had titles with expressions associated with qualitative research, such as understanding, experiences, memories, motivations, narratives, opinion, perception, perspectives, practices, reflections, senses, feelings, meanings, and experiences. Some of these studies (n=13; 22.8%) express in the title or subtitle the specific typology used, such as ethnographic approach, qualitative study, critical analysis, historical and conceptual analysis, case study, and study using grounded theory (GT). Chart 1 lists the 57 studies analyzed where such expressions can be observed.

The analysis of the abstracts of the dissertations and theses included found that 65% (n=37) did not provide the information needed to fully complete the data extraction spreadsheet, making it necessary to read the method section or other study sections. On the other hand, we noted that 91.0% (n=52) explicitly stated in the abstract that they were qualitative research.

In the definitions and characterization of qualitative research presented in the methodological sections or chapters, we identified that 61.4% (n=35) of the studies cited Minayo [39] as the main or one of the theoretical references that supported the data collection and analysis methodological procedures of the qualitative approach employed. A diverse list of theoretical references was observed to support the data collection and analysis procedures from a qualitative perspective, among which the following stand out: Gil [35], Yin [36], and Creswell [42].

DISCUSSION

The analysis included 57 qualitative studies, including 44 dissertations and 13 theses defended from 2019 to October 2024 in 13 of the 30 PPGs linked to the CAPES Nutrition assessment field. The six PPGs with the highest frequency of studies were UFSC, UFBA, (UFPR, UERJ), UNIFESP, and UFF.

When analyzing the dissertations and theses defended from 2003 to 2012 in seven Nutrition Postgraduate Programs, Vasconcelos [1,2] identified 962 studies, of which 890 (92.5%) were quantitative, 52 (5.4%) were qualitative and 18 (1.9%) had a mixed method. The Postgraduate Programs with the highest frequency of qualitative studies were UFBA (n=18), UFSC (n=14), UERJ (n=12), Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE, Federal University of Pernambuco) (n=4), UFRJ (n=3), and UNIFESP (n=1). At the time of Vasconcelos' study [1,2], on May 15, 2013, 22 PPGs were linked to the CAPES Nutrition field.

In turn, at the time of data collection for the present study, we identified 30 PPGs linked to the CAPES Nutrition assessment field [27]. We should highlight the limitations of the possibilities of comparing our results with the study by Vasconcelos [1-2], since a survey of the total number of dissertations and theses of the 30 Nutrition PPGs was not conducted in the present study, as we focused only on the survey of qualitative dissertations and theses. We observed a growing number of PPGs in Nutrition between the two studies. Consequently, the total number of dissertations and theses produced must have increased, keeping the hegemonic quantitative research verified by Vasconcelos [1-2] and hypotheses to be confirmed by new studies. On the other hand, the current results indicate that three PPGs (UFSC, UFBA, and UERJ) remain the main qualitative research production centers but that there was dissemination to other PPGs (among which, UFPR, UNIFESP, and UFF).

Multiple and complex are the determinants or reasons that can explain the low frequency of qualitative dissertations and theses verified in only 13 (43.3%) of the 30 PPGs linked to the CAPES Nutrition field. Notably, the low frequency of qualitative studies against the hegemonic quantitative is not a specific characteristic of PPGs in Nutrition, as observed in other knowledge fields, such as Physical Education [43-44], Nursing [45], Medicine [46], and Dentistry [47]. A previous study by Vasconcelos [1], when addressing this quantitative versus qualitative dichotomy, listed possible explanations for the greater adherence of researchers linked to PPGs to quantitative approaches. Vasconcelos [1] affirms that such reasons would include: "a) Financial incentives from public and private funding agencies, which almost always establish as priorities research projects focused on the positivist and biological paradigm; b) The characteristics of the education and research evaluation system in postgraduate studies, centered on quantitative criteria, productivity indexes, citation, visibility, and circulation of the knowledge produced; and c) The competitive struggle between scientists in the field in the production and distribution of scientific capital, which is always defined by the state of power relations between the leading figures of the disputes, involving elements such as authority, hierarchy, dogmatism, legitimacy, social recognition and accumulation of symbolic capital" (p. 343). Therefore, these are clues for future research on the subject.

Around 20 central themes were identified in this analysis of qualitative dissertations and theses produced by the Nutrition PPGs, the five most frequent of which were cooking, obesity, food and nutritional security, breastfeeding, and school meals. Fogolari et al. [3] analyzed 323 dissertations and theses produced from 2003 to 2022 by the UFSC PPG in Nutrition. They observed that the five most frequent themes were obesity, food consumption assessment methods, functional foods, food and nutritional security, and nutritional therapy. However, the themes of cooking, breastfeeding

and school meals also appeared among the most frequent. Notably, in a certain way, the 20 central themes observed align with the trends of Nutrition science in its global context, as pointed out by Mozaffarian et al. [48], Swinburn et al. [49], Bassaganya-Riera et al. [50], and Varzakas [51].

According to the authors listed, the concern with non-communicable diseases and conditions prevails on the global stage, centered on the relevance and consequences of obesity, combined with the discussion on the global syndemic of hunger, obesity, and climate change. New and old paradigms are being incorporated, such as encouraging breastfeeding, the relevance of culinary skills, promoting healthy eating, school meals as a right, and sustainability, sovereignty, and food and nutritional security [48-51].

The analysis showed that the semi-structured interview, used in isolation or associated with other collection techniques, such as participant observation, document analysis, literature review, and focus groups, was the most frequent data collection procedure. These findings are similar to those reported by Vasconcelos [1] when analyzing the studies produced by the PPGs of UFBA, UERJ, and UFSC, who concluded that the data collection and analysis procedures converged between the three programs in the use of coherent methodological strategies and characteristics of research with a qualitative approach [30-31,35-36,42]. It also resembles the results reported by Medeiros et al. [52], who conducted a study on the aforementioned research methods, data collection techniques, and theoretical support used by 147 dissertations produced between 2004 and 2014 in a PPG in Education at the State University of Ceará. The results of the study by Medeiros et al. [52] indicated that 97.3% (n=143) of the dissertations adopted the qualitative approach, and the case study method prevailed. The most frequent data collection techniques were interviews and observation, and the theoretical contribution focused on national literature, with a predominance of the book genre.

The content analysis using the technique proposed by Bardin [29] prevailed among the data analysis procedures. However, other techniques were also identified based on a broad and diverse range of national and international theoretical references [30-42]. The widespread use of the Bardin-based content analysis technique [29] has been highlighted by many researchers, among which we highlight a study by Palmeira et al. [53]. These authors conducted a systematic review of studies developed in Education fields from 2015 to 2019 in several databases, including BDTD, where 2,033 dissertations and theses were identified in all areas of knowledge and 152 in Education, which applied the Bardin technique [29] and reinforced the authors' conclusion about the relevance, usefulness, pertinence, and dissemination of this technique in Brazilian qualitative studies.

Also noteworthy is the extensive literature review by Sampaio et al. [54], who analyzed 3,484 articles that applied content analysis, published between 2002 and 2019 in the SciELO Brazil database. The results showed that the content analysis technique was more prevalent in the areas of knowledge linked to Life Sciences, followed by Humanities and Social Sciences, with a predominance of the use of Bardin [29] in both. The authors concluded that the concentration observed in this technique showed a mismatch between the advancement of specialized literature and its use by the Brazilian scientific community.

The characteristics of the subjects investigated, with a reduced number of subjects, a higher frequency of adults of both sexes, composed of patients from hospital or outpatient units, health professionals or teams linked to the management of public food and nutrition policies, reveal a profile specific to the qualitative research modality [30-31, 35-36, 42, 55].

The analysis of the studies' titles also revealed the use of terms, expressions, or concepts typical of qualitative research [30-31, 35-36, 42, 55] in most of the dissertations and theses analyzed. Seeking to discuss the dilemmas regarding the issue of sampling and saturation in qualitative research, Minayo [55] warns, among other relevant conclusions, that quantifying the number of subjects to be investigated, a priori, escapes the logic that governs qualitative studies. According to Minayo [55], "*an ideal qualitative sample reflects, in amount and intensity, the multiple dimensions of a given event and seeks the quality of actions and interactions throughout the process*" (p.10). Although the present study did not aim to analyze the quality and methodological rigor of the included studies, we observed that the researchers were concerned with sharing the same methodological procedures for data collection and analysis typical of qualitative approaches [30-31,35-36,42,55].

Therefore, corroborating a previous study by Vasconcelos [1] based on the paradigm and scientific community by Thomas Kuhn [56] and scientific field and habitus by Pierre Bourdieu [57], an attempt was identified in the set of dissertations and theses analyzed to construct an identity pattern, to form a scientific habitus, a scientific action to share the same paradigms among members of the scientific community in qualitative research in the field of Nutrition.

The analysis of the dissertations' and theses' abstracts, in turn, found that most did not show the information needed to complete the data extraction spreadsheet. We should underscore the relevant need for greater criteria in preparing abstracts, considering their importance in the dissemination of scientific production, since they must present the research syntheses, which are a source of information for the visibility of dissertations and theses made available in databases, arousing or not the reader's interest.

Thus, studies that focused on screening and analyzing dissertations and theses based on the exclusive reading of abstracts have recommended that researchers pay greater attention when preparing their research abstracts [58-60]. In Education, Silva et al. [58] analyzed the abstracts of 57 theses defended between 2013 and 2016 in a postgraduate program in the Northeast, and 87.7% (n=50) used a qualitative approach. However, only 32% (n=16) explicitly stated this type in the abstracts. The research method was explained in 42.0% (n=21) of the theses, emphasizing documentary research. Interviews and document collection were the most frequent multiple data collection procedures. The data analysis technique was specified in 46.0% (n=23) of the studies, where content analysis predominated. Finally, the authors reinforced the importance of Education researchers communicating all the methodological elements of their theses in their respective abstracts.

On the other hand, almost all dissertations and theses mentioned in the abstract that they were qualitative research. In the definitions and characterization of qualitative research shown in the methodological sections or chapters of the dissertations and theses analyzed, Minayo [30] appeared as the main or one of the theoretical references, with a diverse list of theoretical references used to support data collection and analysis procedures from a qualitative perspective, among which the Creswell [42], Gil [35], and Yin [36] stand out.

In the literature review by Sampaio et al. [54], a study previously mentioned when we discussed the centrality of Bardin's work as the primary procedure in the content analyses in dissertations and theses, these authors also found that in the areas of knowledge linked to Life Sciences and Human and Social Sciences, several works by Minayo [30] appeared as the second most frequent references, besides other references in the field of research methodology, including Creswell [42], Gil [35], and Yin [36].

In Nursing, a study by Assunção et al. [61] to characterize the theoretical/methodological references of dissertations and theses with a qualitative and mixed approach of public stricto sensu

postgraduate programs in Minas Gerais, produced from 1996 to 2019, found that in the 345 (38.9%) dissertations with a qualitative approach and 40 (4.5%) with a mixed approach and in the 64 (39.0%) theses with a qualitative approach and 8 (4.9%) with a mixed approach, Bardin [29] and Minayo [30] also appeared among the predominant references of thematic and content analysis procedures.

A limitation of the present bibliographic analysis is that the search was not conducted in the universe of dissertations and theses produced in each of the 30 Nutrition PPGs in the period examined, which could measure the current percentage of qualitative research against the hegemonic quantitative research, which has traditionally been found in this scientific knowledge field [1-3]. There may have been an underestimation of qualitative dissertations and theses produced in the 30 Nutrition PPGs during the period examined. However, different procedures were employed to avoid this possible inclusion bias. However, we should clarify that the present study focused on analyzing exclusively the production of dissertations and theses by the 30 PPGs linked to the CAPES Nutrition field.

The information sources used – BDTD [25] and CAPES Catalogue [26], are the primary official sources in which dissertations and theses must be registered. Therefore, with the rigor of the data collection and analysis procedures, we can deduce that the data obtained consistently and accurately reflect the reality of qualitative dissertations and theses produced by the PPGs analyzed in the period examined. We should note, however, that the production of Food and Nutrition qualitative studies is not limited to dissertations and theses produced in postgraduate studies but encompasses other types of production with a qualitative approach not investigated in this study, such as scientific articles published in journals, course completion papers, abstracts and papers presented at scientific events, monographs, technical documents and other types of studies, which are not registered or are not part of the collection of the investigated databases.

CONCLUSION

Qualitative dissertations and theses derived from only 13 of the 30 PPGs linked to the CAPES Nutrition assessment area. The six PPGs with the highest frequency of studies were UFSC, UFBA, UFPR, UERJ, UNIFESP, and UFF.

Around 20 central themes were identified, and the five most frequent were cooking, obesity, food and nutritional security, breastfeeding, and school meals. The most frequent collection procedure was the semi-structured interview used alone or in combination with other collection techniques, such as participant observation, document analysis, literature review, and focus groups. We identified a predominance of content analysis using the technique proposed by Bardin. However, other data analysis techniques were adopted based on diverse national and international theoretical references.

The characteristics of the subjects investigated (reduced number, greater frequency of adults of both sexes, comprising patients from hospital or outpatient units, health professionals, or teams linked to the management of public food and nutrition policies) reveal a profile specific to the qualitative research modality. The analysis of the abstracts, in turn, revealed that most of them did not show complete information. On the other hand, almost all of them mentioned in the abstract that they were qualitative research. Minayo appeared as the primary theoretical reference in the definitions and characterization of qualitative research presented, and we observed a diverse list of theoretical references used to support the data collection and analysis procedures.

In the set of dissertations and theses analyzed, we identified an attempt to build an identity pattern to form a scientific habitus and act scientifically to share the same paradigms among members of the scientific community in Nutrition qualitative research.

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