

# ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC POLICIES: A NARRATIVE REVIEW

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**ABSTRACT:** Analysis of public policies can be understood as the analysis of those activities undertaken by a government with the objective of intervening in a specified context or social problem. The study object is to undertake a narrative review, seeking to identify the concepts and methods used for analysis of policies. The following were adopted as descriptors: Health Policies, Public Health Policies, and Formulation of Policies and Analysis, researched in the following databases: International Literature on Health Sciences, the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information, PubMed and the Base de Dados de Enfermagem (Nursing Database). The study was undertaken in June 2013 – March 2014. A total of 32 articles was eligible for the extraction of data, published between 2008 and 2012. After application of the exclusion criteria, 05 articles were analyzed, from which three categories emerged: Conceptual Bases; Methodological bases; and Challenges to nursing. The Policy cycle was identified as the instrument used most for analyzing policy.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Health policy; Public health policies; Formulation of policies.

## ANÁLISE DE POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS DE SAÚDE: REVISÃO NARRATIVA

**RESUMO:** Análise de políticas públicas pode ser entendida como análise das atividades realizadas por um governo com objetivo de intervir em determinada realidade ou problema social. O objetivo do estudo é realizar revisão narrativa procurando identificar os conceitos e métodos utilizados para análise de políticas. Foram adotados como descritores: Políticas de Saúde, Políticas Públicas de Saúde, Formulação de Políticas e Análise, pesquisados nas bases de dados: Literatura Internacional em Ciências da Saúde, Literatura Latino-Americana e do Caribe em Ciências da Saúde, Publisher Medline e Base de Dados de Enfermagem. A pesquisa foi realizada no período de junho de 2013 a março de 2014. Foram elegíveis 32 artigos para extração dos dados, publicados entre 2008 e 2012. Após critérios de exclusão, 05 artigos foram analisados, destes, emergiram três categorias: Bases Conceituais; Bases metodológicas e Desafios para a enfermagem. Identificou-se o Ciclo de política como o instrumento mais utilizado para analisar política.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Política de saúde; Políticas públicas de saúde; Formulação de políticas.

## ANÁLISIS DE POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS DE SALUD: REVISIÓN NARRATIVA

**RESUMEN:** Análisis de políticas públicas puede ser entendido como análisis de las actividades realizadas por un gobierno con objetivo de intervenir en determinada realidad o problema social. La finalidad del estudio fue realizar revisión narrativa buscando identificar los conceptos y métodos utilizados para análisis de políticas. Fueron adoptados como descriptors: Políticas de Salud, Políticas Públicas de Salud, Formulación de Políticas y Análisis, investigando en las bases de datos: Literatura Internacional en Ciencias de la Salud, Literatura Latinoamericana y de Caribe en Ciencias de la Salud, Publisher Medline y Base de Datos de Enfermería. La investigación fue realizada en el periodo de junio de 2013 a marzo de 2014. Fueron elegibles 32 artículos para obtención de los datos, publicados entre 2008 y 2012. Después de criterios de exclusión, 05 artículos fueron analizados; de estos, resultaron tres categorías: Bases conceptuales; Bases metodológicas y Desafíos para la enfermería. Se identificó el Ciclo de política como el instrumento más utilizado para analizar política.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Política de salud; Políticas públicas de salud; Formulación de políticas.

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## INTRODUCTION

Public policies are based on the context of conflicts and needs from different segments of society; these are the governmental responses to a variety of social problems<sup>(1)</sup>. Nevertheless, for these to be accepted, they need to be relevant and have significant scale, so as to gain space in the governmental agenda.

One can, therefore, define public policy as the field of knowledge which seeks, at the same time, to “put government in action” and/or to analyze this action (independent variable) and, when necessary, to propose changes in the direction or course of these actions (dependent variable)<sup>(2;26)</sup>.

The Analysis of Policies goes beyond observation and analysis of the results of a policy - it is concerned with the process of construction of the public policy, focusing on the definition of the agenda and highlighting aspects such as, for example, the interests of the actors to participate in the political game, the interaction between them, the architecture of power and decision-making, conflict negotiations, etc<sup>(3)</sup>. “It refers to the study of the actions undertaken, or not, by the government, in the attempt to achieve objectives in relation to a social problem or conflict”<sup>(4;5;12)</sup>.

The non-actions must also be analyzed and discussed, as these are considered a form of political manifestation and translate the political option of the policy-makers<sup>(5)</sup>. Nevertheless, in order to analyze policies, the existence is necessary of theoretical models which make it possible to understand the context, the meanings and the significations of the processes involved in the operations<sup>(4)</sup>.

There are different models which make it possible to analyze public policies, such as, for example, the classification into types of policies (distributive, redistributive, regulatory and constitutive); incrementalism; the “garbage can” model; the multiple streams model; the defense coalitions model; the social arenas; the punctuated equilibrium model; and the public policy cycle among others<sup>(5)</sup>.

In this context, the analysis of health policies is being consolidated in Brazil with a set of different methodological approaches. This article

proposes to identify, based in the literature, the principal concepts and methods used for analysis of policies, focusing upon the public health policies, with a view to extending knowledge and applicability in nursing.

## METHOD

This is a narrative review<sup>(6)</sup> regarding the issue, seeking to identify it through the literature produced under Analysis of Policy. Narrative review allows the description and theoretical-reflexive discussion of previously-produced studies relating to a relevant and current topic, when it is not yet possible to undertake a systematized analysis. It also viabilizes the access as well as the processing of knowledge and of new ideas regarding the issue studied, making it possible to frame it in a summarized form and in a short space of time<sup>(7)</sup>.

The study covered articles published regarding the analysis of policy in the recent period (2008 to 2012). The following were adopted as descriptors: Health Policies, Public Health Policies, Formulation of Policies and Analysis, in the English, Portuguese and Spanish languages, these being researched in the following databases: International Literature on Health Sciences (Medline), the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (LILACS), and the Base de Dados de Enfermagem (BDENF). For the PubMed database, the same descriptors were used translated to English.

Works were excluded which addressed: Editorials; Letters; Opinion articles; Comments; Abstracts of Congress proceedings; Essays; Duplicated publications; Epidemiological bulletins; Management Reports; materials published in languages other than Spanish, English and Portuguese; and studies which did not fall within the scope of this study.

In articles located through more than one such strategy, the suppression of repeated articles was undertaken. During the analysis of the works, the researchers began by reading the titles, followed by reading the abstracts, and later, the complete texts. The application of the exclusion criteria was undertaken at all stages, always by consensus of two readers.

The articles selected were analyzed through

qualitative summary based on the advice guide<sup>(7-8)</sup> so as to characterize the study undertaken; Type of policy; its conceptual bases and methodological strategies used for analysis of policies and the applicability for nursing practices. Literature remains scarce regarding the issue studied, which therefore makes it impossible to undertake a more thorough analysis as in the example of an integrative or systematic review. As a result, the narrative review was shown to be the most appropriate alternative.

## RESULTS

The search undertaken located 474 articles, of which 32 were selected for extraction of data. After application of the exclusion criteria, 27 were eliminated, the study being undertaken with 05 articles (Figure 1).

Table 1, below, presents the data referent to the authorship, date, year and place of publication, as well as: type of policy, conceptual bases, method used and methodological strategies.

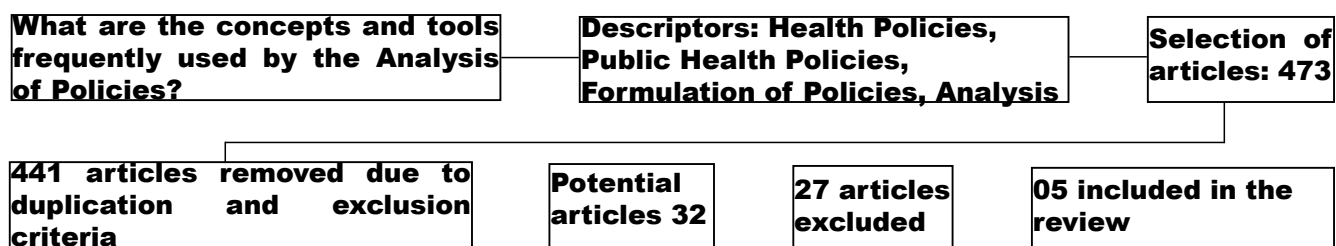


Figure 1 - Flowchart for selection of works identified. Florianópolis-SC, 2014

Table 1 – Description of the studies regarding Analysis of Policy. Florianópolis-SC 2014

Author, Date, Year, Place, Period	Type of Policy	Conceptual Basis	Method Used	Methodological Strategies
Machado; Salvador; O'Dwyer, 2011 <sup>(9)</sup> 2003 and 2010. Brazil	Emergency Mobile Care Service		Analysis of public policies.	Bibliographic review, analysis of documents, official data and interviews.
Pinto;Teixeira, 2011 <sup>(10)</sup> 2007 – 2008 Brazil	Policy for Management of Work and Education in Health	Analysis of policy covers analyzing the five steps which make up the policy: determination of the agenda, formulation and legitimation of policy, implementation of the policies and evaluation of policies.	Kingdon's theory of the policy cycle	Document analysis and participant observation.
Trevisani; Burlandy; Constante, 2012 <sup>(11)</sup> 2008 - 2009 Brazil	Health policies of the Family Allowance Program	Policy analysis aims to explain the repercussion generated by the mechanisms and effects of the formulation of the policy on the decisions and processes of the creation of the policy itself, interfering in the choice of specified political contents.	Analysis of multiple streams, proposed by Kingdon.	Analysis of the legislation and of official documents and interviews.
Leal, Figueiredo, Nogueira-da-Silva, 2012. <sup>(12)</sup> 2010-2012 Brazil	National Men's Health Policy	Analysis of Policy is not a simple measuring of the distance between the objectives and directives enunciated in the Policy documents. The policies must be understood in the context of the undertaking and that the implementation of the public policy has to do with the people who in fact implement it.	Framework of Anthropology, with the technique of ethnography.	Documental analysis, interviews and observation.
Rendeiro, 2011 <sup>(13)</sup> 2000 – 2010 Brazil	Oral Health Policy	Analysis of policy must obey the rigorous methodological and scientific procedures, which make it possible at the same time to advance in the production of knowledge and to guide the actions of this complex process which is State decision-making, regarding a series of questions and possibilities.	Policy cycle.	Documental analysis, interview

The studies selected were published in the period 2011 – 2012, with the data collection being undertaken between 2000 and 2012. In relation to the policy analyzed, the following were identified: the Emergency Mobile Care Service, the Policy for Management of Work and Education in Health, the Family Allowance Program Health Policy, the National Men's Health Policy and the Oral Health Policy. Three categories emerged from the analysis of data: Conceptual Bases, Methodological Bases, and Challenges for Nursing.

Of the five articles selected, four presented a conceptual basis regarding policy analysis. The method used for analysis of policy covered, in the majority of the articles, the policy cycle, with the analysis of multiple streams and the framework of anthropology also being identified. As the data collection method, the authors used: bibliographic review, documental analysis, interview and participant observation. In the articles selected, the applicability of the analysis of policy for nursing was not identified.

## DISCUSSION

In recent decades, public policies have become an increasingly-explored field of research, and have attracted the attention of various groups, including managers and researchers<sup>(3,14)</sup>. It is a field of research which is relatively consolidated outside Brazil and, increasingly, within Brazil as well<sup>(3)</sup>.

Evidence of this is the fact that the Ministry of Health (MS) is interested in sponsoring and increasing the higher number of publications directed mainly towards studies and analyses of policies. This fact ensures legitimacy to the field and contributes to the consolidation and professionalization of the analysis of policies in Brazil<sup>(15)</sup>.

Some factors contributed to the growing visibility of this area, such as: the adoption of cost-restrictive policies, new perspectives on the role of governments which substituted the Keynesian policies of the post-war period for cost-restrictive policies, besides the fact that developing countries are not yet capable of formulating policies which drive economic development and promote the social inclusion of the majority of their populations<sup>(3)</sup>.

Public policy, as an area of knowledge and an academic discipline, arose in the USA, with an emphasis on the studies on the action of the

governments. These studies take into account the fact that, in stable democracies, the actions undertaken or not by the government can be formulated scientifically and analyzed by independent researchers<sup>(3)</sup>.

In spite of the growing interest over recent decades in the analysis of policy, it was observed in this study that the publication of articles related to the theme remains incipient. The five articles selected were published after 2011, which identifies the non-publication of articles on this topic in the period 2008 – 2010. As a result, the discussion follows in three categories: Conceptual Bases, Methodological Bases, and Challenges for Nursing.

### Analysis of policies: Conceptual Bases

In the Analysis of Policy, the word policy is differentiated in three dimensions: "polity", which refers to political institutions and to the political system, "politics" in the processual dimension, that is, the political process, and "policy" which refers to public policies per se<sup>(16)</sup>. The articles selected<sup>(10-11)</sup> brought as the conceptual basis the analysis of the steps which make up the policy: the determination of the agenda, the formulation and legitimation of the policy, implementation and evaluation of policies, covering their mechanisms and effects, aiming to explain how these repercuss on decisions and processes, interfering in choices of specified contents of policies, to the detriment of others.

Another important point identified in the articles selected<sup>(13-14)</sup> is that policies must be understood in the context in which they are undertaken and that their implementation relates to the people who in fact implement them. It must obey rigorous methodological and scientific procedures, advance in the production of knowledge and guide the State's actions for decision-making.

It is necessary to emphasize the difference between Analysis of Policy and Evaluation of Policy. Evaluation is based in the appreciation of the results of the policy, paying attention to categories such as efficiency, efficacy and effectiveness, derived from the comparison between goals and results<sup>(17)</sup>. Analysis, on the other hand, is concerned with the process of the construction of the public policy, mainly in

relation to the definition of the governmental agenda<sup>(3)</sup>.

### **Analysis of Policies: Methodological Bases**

In order to analyze in greater depth the appearance and course of a political program, one must intensely evaluate the cycle of the policy, making it necessary to know the institutional arrangements, the attitudes and objectives of the political actors, the instruments of action and the political strategies<sup>(16:226)</sup>.

For this, the policy cycle is divided in five successive points, which are interlinked and dynamic: identification of problems, shaping of the agenda, formulation, implementation, and evaluation of the policy<sup>(3)</sup>.

In this study, it was identified that the method used most for analysis of policy was the policy cycle<sup>(10-11,13)</sup> involving the five steps above. It was also observed, however, that two articles used the policy cycle in Kingdon's approach<sup>(10-11)</sup>. This author proposes that the decision-making process in public policies could be represented by the linking of three major dynamic streams: the stream of problems, the proposals or alternatives, and the stream of the policy. In this regard, the governmental agenda follows a non-intentional process which is characterized by: the appearance or recognition of a problem by society in general; existence of ideas and alternatives for conceptualizing them and a political, administrative and legislative context which is favorable for the undertaking of the action<sup>(18)</sup>.

### **Analysis of Policies: Challenges for Nursing**

For nursing, knowing the public health policies is of essential importance, as the whole implementation of those actions related to individual and collective care is based on the political proposal established.

At the current time, these policies are being implemented in accordance with the present medical model through "packets", which cover the population's needs in a unique way, in this way detracting from the specific characteristics of each context of the population<sup>(19)</sup>.

It is fundamental to emphasize that the nursing interventions must take place through three

dimensions: the structural dimension, which corresponds to the legal-political and ideological apparatus, besides the economic infrastructure; the particular - which refers to the processes which are relative to the social groups; and the singular, which relates to the bio-psychological expression in the individual and social body<sup>(20)</sup>.

The commitment of nursing to the public health policies begins in the process of the nurse's training, where the actions for health promotion and prevention of harm to health were gradually included in the process of education, and culminated in curricular change, corroborating the new vision and change of paradigm under construction in the Brazilian health area.

In this scenario, conceptual changes in the ways of thinking and doing health need to be articulated with the entire social and environmental context<sup>(21)</sup>. This process does not require isolated changes, but, rather, requires articulation between teaching-learning in the training of the nurse, involving challenges in the search for improvements in primary care, as well as encompassing the practices of health promotion, ethical questions, and policies articulating the teaching-service process<sup>(22)</sup>.

One example is the Family Health Program (PSF), known today as the Family Health Strategy (ESF), which arose as a means of responding effectively to the principles of the Unified Health System (SUS). The professionals involved in both the construction and the consolidation of the system had to have previously possessed skills for acting in the promotion of health, through the main focus which is the prevention of harm to the population's health, and which respond satisfactorily and appropriately to the social and health problems of an entire population which receives attendance in the health services<sup>(23)</sup>.

It is very common for nursing to work in the management of the health services, and the structuring, elaboration and launch of a policy directly needs monitoring of the process of implementation on the part of the managers of these policies<sup>(24)</sup>.

In one study undertaken on management policies and technologies, in the health and nursing services, it was identified that the SUS was treated as a centrality in all the contexts discussed, with emphasis on the principle of comprehensiveness and the decentralization of health care. These two principles require the

nurse to be involved, to be instrumentalized, and to be prepared and committed, so as to develop her different skills, abilities and competences, not only technical but also political, technological, and related to management<sup>(25)</sup>.

Indeed, all the stages which relate to the work process – administrating, organizing, coordinating, monitoring, taking decisions, and evaluating the actions – are already part of the routine of the nurse's work. Nevertheless, it is necessary for this professional to empower herself with knowledge regarding public policies and their directives, in the directing and implementation of the actions. It is also necessary for her to participate, express opinions, decide and intervene when necessary, as the political dimension becomes effective based on peoples' ability for union in social groups, with needs and interests which are representative of the team and of the patients in accordance with the demand in question<sup>(26)</sup>.

In this regard, the understanding by nursing of the way in which social policies are structured, including health policies, is fundamental such that the interventions, both in health promotion and in prevention of harm to health, cover the reality of the issues experienced by the population, responding in a way that is capable of resolving problems.

## CONCLUSIONS

The productions on Analysis of Policies remain incipient in Brazil, as few studies are undertaken based on this issue. Nevertheless, there has been an increase in publications in the area, above all since 2011. The majority of the studies undertaken used the method of the policy cycle as the instrument for analyzing the policy.

It is suggested, therefore, that further studies should be undertaken and published, with greater methodological rigor, seeking to extend the range of knowledge which forms the basis for analysis of policies, assisting in their understanding and in decision-making.

It is also necessary to discuss the analysis of policy with a focus on nursing, as these professionals are directly related to the applicability of these policies.

This study described and discussed aspects related to the analysis of health policies and it is possible that biases may have occurred related to

the authors' critical evaluation, as literature was used which was personally critically appreciated by the authors.

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