

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERS OF RESEARCH GROUPS IN THE FIELD OF COLLECTIVE HEALTH: ANALYSIS OF THE DIRECTORY OF RESEARCH GROUPS IN BRAZIL (DGP/CNPQ)

Renan William Mesquita

State University of Western Paraná, Study
Group on Collective Health Francisco
Beltrão, Brazil

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/9952482657497087>

Guilherme Welter Wendt

State University of Western Paraná, Study
Group in Public Health and Medicine
Course, Francisco Beltrão, Brazil.

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/3121742068507086>

Lirane Elize Defante Ferreto

State University of Western Paraná, Study
Group in Public Health and Graduate
Program in Applied Health Sciences,
Francisco Beltrão, Brazil

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/5828944409163245>

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Abstract: The leader of a research group has the function of organizing and integrating the activities developed by the team members. In this descriptive research, we sought to understand the characteristics of the leaders of research groups in the field of public health, according to data registered in the directory of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). Data available until December 2015 were analyzed, totaling 116 research groups. About 72% of leaders are linked to public teaching and research institutions. There was a predominance of 42% of groups located in the Southeast region. Among the leaders, 92.2% have a doctoral degree, and of these, 94.8% were obtained in Brazilian universities. In the period studied (2011 – 2015), the leaders published 1,645 articles, with an average of 329 articles/year. Of this total of published articles, 83.9% occurred in journals indexed in Qualis, with 3.5% published in stratum A1. Despite the record of growth in the area - with the insertion of new *Stricto sensu* programs and an increase in the number of researchers linked to research groups - there is still an inexpressive scientific production in strata A1 and A2. Thus, it can be concluded that the field of public health is still in the process of consolidation and in search of quality scientific production.

Keywords: Collective Health; Research Groups; Leadership.

INTRODUCTION

It is possible that the research activity had a lonely beginning. Probably old researchers turned to their peers to debate ideas and opinions about what they discovered and about underlying hypotheses, but solitary intellectual work predominated (MEADOWS, 1999).

As Ziman (1981) points out, the first more solid indications about collective or team

research work emerged with the advent of Science, consolidating themselves only in the 19th century in the form of research teams. Ziman (1981) points out that the dilemma of modern scientists consisted of assuming or refusing administrative responsibilities, thus remaining either an individual researcher or having under his command a large team, thus accepting administrative responsibilities that compromised the time dedicated to research and testing of hypotheses. Thus, it was from that time onwards that Science began to be seen as an organized social activity (ZIMAN, 1981).

In these first teams, the leader (who normally worked with a group of colleagues) had the task of organizing and integrating all the activities inherent to the good functioning of the group. Therefore, the quality and performance of the teams would be linked to the capacity of integration of the members and, equally, of the capacity of the one who exercised the coordination.

Indeed, the link that aims at integration and coordination is the team leader himself. Thus, the leader becomes a more visible researcher, in contradiction to the figure of the solitary researcher described above.

However, the individual profile of each researcher and the organizational capacity of collective work determine the success of group research. These characteristics, however, still preserve the particularities of the researcher (FERRETO, 2011).

The success of research and discoveries is related to the individual profile of each researcher. However, the success is also due to the organizational capacity of a work aimed at a single purpose. For Domenico De Masi (2007), the success of a research group is linked to several aspects. Thus, geographical proximity and also that of thought, as well as the interest in science were - and probably still are - the factors that guarantee the cohesion

of a group, in which social relations are self-regulated by a scientific ethos that promotes bonds (MERTON, 1984).

In Brazil, research groups were similarly designed. Thus, they bring together researchers integrated into a structure centered around one (or more) research leader(s). These, in turn, have the presence of linked professors, associates, postgraduate students in general and undergraduate students. All share similar research objects and objectives. Furthermore, the daily activities of the research groups are divided into action, production and reflection, which are materialized in readings, debates, meetings and scientific dissemination events.

The field of collective health investigates the health-disease process in populations from the perspective of social determinants. It also investigates the production and distribution of diseases in society, conducts analyzes of health practices and their relationships with other practices, as well as seeks articulation to identify, plan and solve health problems (PAIM and ALMEIDA FILHO, 1988; OSO and SCHRAIBER, 2015).

Consequently, the objective of the present work is to know the characteristics of the leaders of research groups in the field of Brazilian public health. Specifically, we seek to analyze the data of those researchers registered in the Directory of Research Groups in Brazil (DGP), linked to the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq).

METHODOLOGY

The present study assumes a descriptive design and, like other investigations, seeks to know the profile of the leaders of research groups registered in the country (COSTA et al., 2014; MINASSE et al., 2022). A descriptive study aims to provide elements for the understanding of aspects related to the constitution of the area of Public

Health through the mapping of the leaders of research groups belonging to the field. In this investigation, the name research group defined by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) was adopted “as a set of individuals hierarchically organized around one or, eventually, two leaders”, being composed of researchers, students and technicians. with a view to producing knowledge (CNPq, 2010).

Initially, searches were carried out in the database of the Directory of Research Groups in Brazil, on the CNPq’s online page. Such searches were intended to identify the research groups registered in the area of Health Science, a subarea of Public Health, in Brazil, and their respective leaders until December 2015.

732 groups were identified whose predominant area of public health, according to the 2010 census. Of these, we chose to work with a random sample of 15%, totaling 116 groups. Subsequently, the characteristics of the groups were evaluated and, based on the identification of the leader, the Lattes Platform was visited. At this stage, the following data were extracted: gender, academic training, institution of affiliation, geographic location of the HEI, affiliation to a graduate program, CNPq productivity scholarship and scientific production in the last 5 (five) years. Furthermore, the Qualis/Capes database was consulted to verify the classification of journals.

Data collection took place between March and April 2016. After organizing the information in tables in Excel format, the data were grouped. Frequency analyzes and comparative percentages between areas of knowledge, as well as scientific production of leaders were carried out afterwards.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The leader has the function of organizing and integrating all research activities, serving

as an element of integration and coordination of the research team. Given the above, this research aimed to map the leaders of research groups in the field of public health registered in the directory of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq).

Up to December 2015, 116 research groups and their respective leaders were analyzed. The majority, that is, 72% of the group's leaders, were linked to public teaching and research institutions. There was also a predominance (42%) of groups and researchers located in the Southeast region. Among the leaders, 92.2% had a doctorate degree, with the vast majority (94.8%) awarded by Brazilian national institutions.

In the period studied, namely 2011 to 2015, the leaders identified in this study had 1,645 full-length articles published in scientific journals. In other words, this production can be understood in terms of an annual global average of 329 articles (Figure 1). Furthermore, of the total number of articles, the majority (83.9%) were published in journals indexed in Qualis/CAPES. However, only 3.5% had an A1 classification.

Despite the record of growth in the area with the insertion of new master's and doctoral programs in the area, as well as the increase in the number of researchers linked to research groups, there is still a low scientific production in the higher strata (A1 and A2). This demonstrates that Collective Health is still a field in consolidation.

Figure 1 shows a certain homogeneity in relation to the scientific publication of the leaders of research groups in the field of public health, despite a slight drop in production in 2015. Despite the growth of the area, expressed through the insertion of new graduate programs, increase in the number of researchers linked to research groups, the inexpressive scientific production in strata A1 and A2 can still be observed, demonstrating that it is a field in consolidation in research.

It is worth remembering that other results from the research work are also important. These products are part of the requirements imposed by regulatory bodies and the promotion of Science and Technology Policies, such as the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher

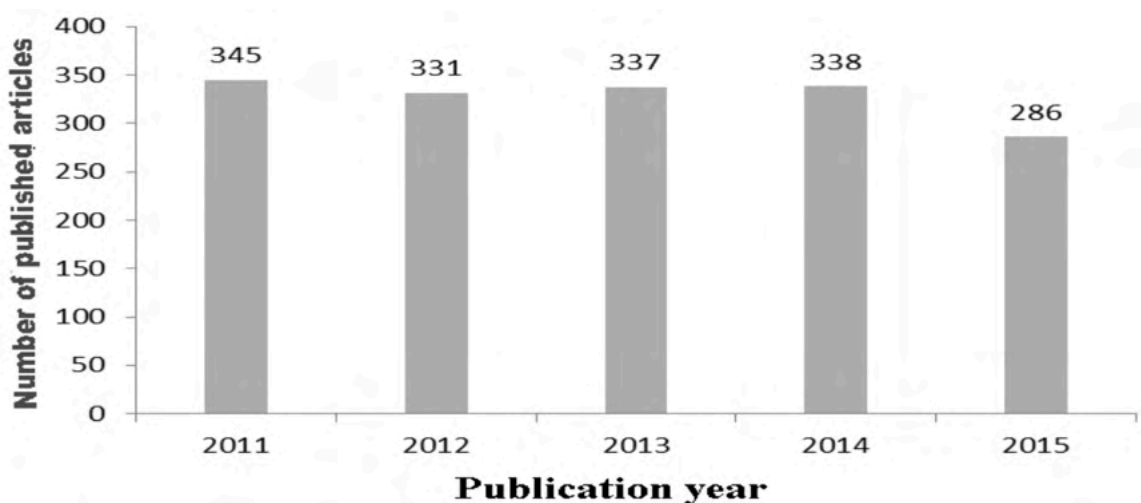


Figure 1- Distribution of the number of articles published/year in scientific journals by the leaders of research groups in public health (2011 - 2015).

Source: National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, 2016.

Education Personnel (CAPES) and the State and International research promotion.

It is worth noting that, despite advances in expanding the items scored by regulatory bodies as part of scientific production, the emphasis is on publications in international journals. These, in turn, stand out among their peers for greater prestige. Thus, researchers with greater insertion in the international community end up having greater scientific capital, which will affect the processes of fundraising for research promotion, grants, editorial assistance, among others.

Scientific production is the result of research carried out. The completion of a research project is linked to the resulting publications. Thus, areas of knowledge in which Brazil stands out can also be verified through scientific production (FERRETO, 2011).

Consequently, the importance of publishing the research results in foreign vehicles emerges, which usually have higher impact factors (IF) and, thus, also have higher Qualis strata. Figure 2 presents the scientific production of the leaders according to the Qualis Capes classification for the area of Public Health (2011 – 2015).

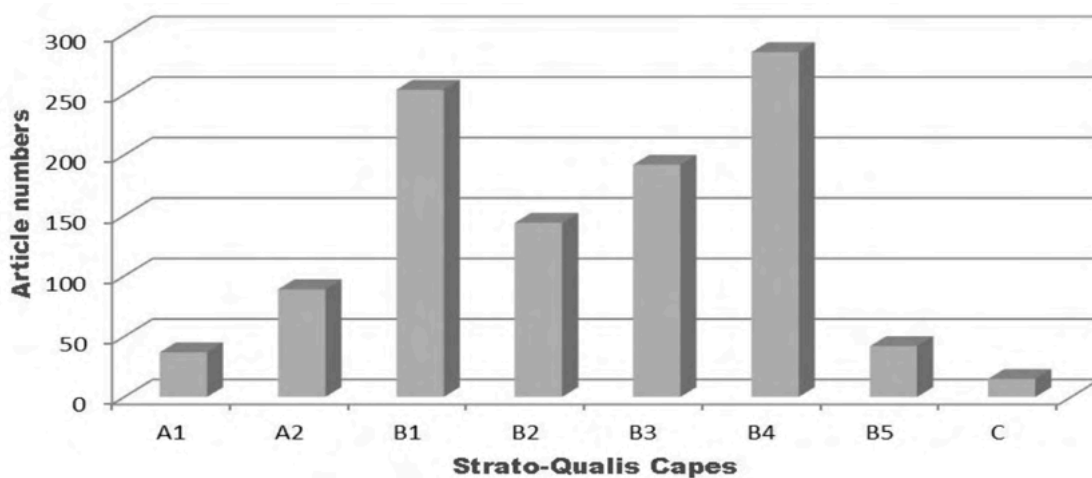


Figure 2 – Distribution of scientific production of leaders according to Qualis Capes classification for the area of Public Health (2011 – 2015).

Source: National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, 2016.

CONCLUSIONS

Studies that aim to raise aspects related to the characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of certain fields of knowledge are important to understand gaps and possibilities within a given region. In the present study, a profile of leader in the field of collective health was identified, predominantly female, with a doctorate degree, working in public institutions and with greater concentration in the Southeast region. Regarding the type of publication, it was concentrated in strata B1, in national scientific journals whose IF was less than 1.

Due to the diversity of themes and disciplines with which it converges, collective health produces knowledge and links it mostly in publications that discuss topics of national interest. However, factors such as the English language, research networks and funding can still be impediments to the advancement of this scientific field.

It can also be pointed out that, although there may be an increase in the incentive to research through public notices, postgraduate courses and the encouragement to strengthen research networks and institutional

partnerships, challenges still remain. Therefore, it is concluded that the field of public health is still in a stage of consolidation and in search of scientific productions of greater quality and impact.

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