

## INTEGRATIVE REVIEW: FROM CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH TO DESIGNING THE ACADEMIC PUBLICATION

REVISIÓN INTEGRADORA: DESDE LA REALIZACIÓN DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN HASTA EL  
DISEÑO DE LA PUBLICACIÓN ACADÉMICA

REVISÃO INTEGRATIVA: DA REALIZAÇÃO DA PESQUISA AO DESENHO DA  
PUBLICAÇÃO ACADÊMICA

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### Abstract

This manuscript aims to discuss the methodological process of conducting an Integrative Review (IR) and its structuring for academic publication. Methodologically, a narrative review was conducted on IR used as a method in bibliographic research, resulting in this essay. It was identified that IR is composed by the following stages: planning, execution, and completion. To this end, a roadmap for conducting IR was developed, consisting of the aforementioned stages and their respective specific activities. Its main contribution refers to the breadth of information that encompasses the aspects before, during, and after IR, which facilitate the understanding of the student or professional, who will have more theoretical and methodological foundations in the construction of IR studies. Regarding the design of the academic publication, the roadmap for structuring an IR manuscript lists elements belonging to each section of the article, which helps the authors access specific information about the

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issues that will be addressed for the organization of the manuscript. Both scripts are in line with the relevance of IR as an important method of bibliographic research, as they can assist in the appropriate proposition of practical solutions based on scientific evidence and in the dissemination of updated knowledge.

**Keywords:** Review Literature as Topic; Research; Writing; Publishing Scholarly; Theoretical essay.

### Resumen

Este manuscrito tiene como objetivo discutir el proceso metodológico de realización de la Revisión Integrativa (RI) y su estructuración para la publicación académica. Metodológicamente se realizó una revisión narrativa de las RI utilizadas como método en la investigación bibliográfica, dando como resultado la redacción de ensayos. Se identificó que la IR se compone de las siguientes etapas: planificación, ejecución y finalización. Para ello se elaboró una hoja de ruta para la realización del IR, conformada por los pasos antes mencionados y sus respectivas actividades específicas. Su principal aporte se refiere a la amplitud de información que abarca aspectos antes, durante y después de las RI, que facilitan la comprensión del estudiante o profesional, quien tendrá mayores fundamentos teóricos y metodológicos en la construcción de los estudios de RI. En cuanto al diseño de la publicación académica, el guion de estructuración de un manuscrito de IR enumera elementos pertenecientes a cada sección del artículo, lo que ayuda a los autores a acceder a información específica sobre los temas que serán considerados en la organización del manuscrito. Ambos guiones están en línea con la relevancia de las RI como un método importante de investigación bibliográfica, ya que pueden ayudar en la propuesta adecuada de soluciones prácticas basadas en evidencia científica y la difusión de conocimientos actualizados.

**Palabras clave:** Literatura de Revisión como Asunto; Investigación; Escritura; Publicación Académica; Ensayo teórico.

### Resumo

Este manuscrito objetiva discutir o processo metodológico de realização da Revisão Integrativa (RI) e sua estruturação para publicação acadêmica. Metodologicamente, foi realizada uma revisão narrativa sobre a RI utilizada como método em pesquisas bibliográficas, resultando nesta escrita ensaística. Foi identificado que a RI é composta das seguintes etapas: planejamento, execução e finalização. Para tanto, elaborou-se um roteiro para realização da RI, composta pelas etapas mencionadas e suas respectivas atividades específicas. A principal contribuição do mesmo refere-se à amplitude de informações que engloba os aspectos anteriores, durante e após a RI, que facilitam o entendimento do estudante ou profissional, que terá mais fundamentos teóricos e metodológicos na edificação de estudos de RI. Quanto ao desenho da publicação acadêmica, o roteiro para estruturação de manuscrito de RI lista elementos pertencentes a cada seção do artigo, o que colabora para que as autorias acessem informações específicas sobre as questões que serão contempladas para a organização do manuscrito. Ambos os roteiros apresentam consonância com a relevância da RI como importante método de pesquisa bibliográfica, pois podem auxiliar na adequada proposição de soluções práticas baseadas em evidências científicas e na divulgação do conhecimento atualizado.

**Palavras-chave:** Literatura de Revisão como Assunto; Pesquisa; Redação; Publicação Acadêmica; Ensaio teórico.

## Introduction

Research materializes the construction of scientific knowledge. Since the last decades of the 20th century, especially due to the popularization of internet access, there has been an increase in scientific communication, accompanying the quantitative growth of research. However, this picture is not always comparable to the technical-methodological quality of publications (Barbosa Filho, 2024).

In this context, the literature review allows the identification of how objects are treated in their respective areas and how sets of qualified investigations can bring scientific communities closer to what the evidence is about the contents. However, a diversity of methodological designs is recognized, according to the specific purposes, for the development of literature reviews (Munaro, Munaro, Souza, 2024; Medeiros Neta, Silva, 2024; Casarin et al., 2020; Sousa et al., 2018; Vosgerau; Romanowski, 2014), among which is the Integrative Review (IR).

The differential of IR is that in its development it accepts the gathering of findings resulting from empirical and theoretical productions (hence Integrative) (Casarin et al., 2020). However, it is worth noting that there is still concern regarding the best structuring of IR. As identified by Dantas et al. (2022), the problems consist both in what concerns the structuring propositions for the procedural development of IR, as well as in its organization for publication. These issues suggest the need for more analyses, discussions and publications that contribute to the technical, methodological and editorial qualification of IR.

Ganong's study (1987) was one of the first written on the guidelines for the development of an IR, specifically proposed for the field of Nursing. Then, it quickly became a characteristic study in this area (Crossetti, 2012), generating the emergence of other essays that addressed its methodological characteristics (Roman; Friedlander, 1998; Mendes et al., 2008; Whittemore; Knafl, 2005; Souza; Silva; Carvalho, 2010; Crossetti, 2012; Christmals; Gross, 2017; Dantas et al., 2022).

Ganong's (1987) publication highlighted the importance of the need for review studies to be brought closer to the standards presented in primary research, such as greater methodological rigor and the study's replication characteristics. To contemplate technical-scientific rigor, Ganong (1987) proposed 6 activities that should be met when carrying out IR, which are: 1- selection of hypotheses or questions for the review; 2- sampling; 3- representative characteristics of primary research; 4- analysis of findings; 5- interpretation of results; and, 6- reporting of the review.

Roman and Friedlander (1998) highlighted the ease of access to knowledge and the simple access to information provided by IR. The authors also present, based on Cooper's study (1982), the five stages that must be followed for the adequate preparation of an IR: 1- problem formulation; 2- data collection; 3- data evaluation; 4- analysis and interpretation of the collected data; and, 5- public presentation of the IR.

The concern of both publications regarding the imperative need to disseminate/publish the findings after the completion of the IR is highlighted, as mentioned in activity six in Ganong's (1987) proposal and in stage 5 of Roman and Friedlander's (1998) writing. It is understood that this concern emerges with the aim of expanding, or even guaranteeing, access to and reading of the results by more professionals and/or scholars. This action increases the probability of improving learning and/or adjusting professional practice related to the theme addressed in the IR, which goes beyond the understanding presented in the separate publication of the documents originating from the research writings (article, report, among others) included in the review, in the scientific community and perhaps outside it.

For Mendes et al. (2008), IR is perceived from the perspective of evidence-based scientific practice. To this end, they emphasize the applicability of IR in research as a way of using the results of investigations in professional practice itself. The authors propose six steps for its construction: 1- identification of the theme and selection of the hypothesis or research question guiding the IR; 2- establishment of criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies/sampling or literature search; 3- definition of the information to be extracted from the selected studies/categorization of studies; 4- evaluation of the studies included in the IR; 5- interpretation of the results; and, 6- presentation of the review/synthesis of knowledge.

Still considering the perspective of evidence-based practice, Souza, Silva and Carvalho (2010) defend the applicability of IR findings in professional action. The authors also structure the preparation of IR in six phases: 1- elaboration of the research question; 2- search or sampling in the literature; 3- data collection; 4- critical analysis of the included studies; 5- discussion of the results; and, 6- presentation of the IR. In this case, it is noteworthy that the authors introduced the analysis of the levels of evidence of the publications, in order to hierarchize the studies included in the IR. And, they propose a structured framework to assist in the collection and organization of data.

Souza, Silva and Carvalho (2010) based their study by Stetler et al. (1998) on the choice of levels of evidence according to the study design accepted for the composition of the IR, which were arranged as follows: Level 1: evidence resulting from the meta-analysis of multiple controlled and randomized clinical studies; Level 2: evidence obtained in individual studies with an experimental design; Level 3: evidence from quasi-experimental studies; Level 4: evidence from descriptive (non-experimental) studies or with a qualitative approach; Level 5: evidence from case reports or experience; and Level 6: evidence based on expert opinions.

Whittemore and Knafl (2005) and Crossetti (2012) reinforce what has already been discussed in the other proposals, especially the role of IR as a means of identifying scientific evidence published on the subject. Furthermore, it is mentioned that in addition to ensuring methodological rigor, IR has the important advantage of being able to include information from different methodological approaches (quantitative and qualitative) in its scope of data.

Christmals and Gross (2017) summarized the main IR structures with the aim of assisting researchers and students working in postgraduate studies. After evaluating different proposals, the authors recognize the importance of IR for the academic environment and defend the steps proposed by Ganong (1987) for the development of studies that use IR. The resulting understanding was that IR would sufficiently meet the technical-academic requirements for conducting research during postgraduate studies.

In a complementary way, Dantas et al. (2022) add the importance of applying strategies that are already structured, published and recognized in the academic field,

whenever the IR stage allows and/or requires it. Thus, the methodological possibility of replicating its phases/stages will be expanded, explaining the criteria related to methodological rigor and amplifying the reliability of its findings.

In view of the above, it is understood that IR, as an investigative method, aims, in addition to identifying scientific evidence (determined by applying a rigorous method of searching for sources, analyzing their quality and summarizing information), to facilitate the practical application of the theoretical synthesis of certain content/knowledge in the technical-professional field, which will be qualified by more assertive and faster decision-making.

Despite its origin, it is recognized that IR has gone beyond the limits of Nursing, starting to be used by other areas of health, such as Physical Education (Santos et al., 2019; Almeida; Casotti, 2021), Nutrition (Moura, 2021) and Psychology (Lima; Campos, 2018). But also outside the health field, such as in the teaching of History (Ruckstadter; Marcolino, 2023), science (Lemos; Jucá; Silva, 2023), mathematics (Brandão et al., 2023) and also in health teaching in the school environment (Engers et al., 2023; Alves; Mussi, 2023).

In spite of the advances and importance of the studies cited above on IR as a method, these have limited themselves to presenting the structure for developing research with IR, with little attention to detail (mainly in the methodology part) for building the IR, as well as to the procedures for the process of writing a manuscript resulting from research that used this method. Thus, this theoretical essay aims to discuss the methodological process of carrying out Integrative Review (IR) and its structuring for academic publication.

## Methods

This theoretical essay (Soares; Picolli; Casagrande, 2018) is based on a qualitative scientific approach (Mussi et al., 2019), and is procedurally carried out through a narrative review (Vosgerau; Romanowski, 2014). The sample consisted of publications in journals that theoretically address IR or themes that contribute to the understanding of theoretical or methodological issues demanded throughout the writing.

Due to the scarcity of references that addressed IR as a methodological contribution, a time frame was not defined, and the sources were initially searched for in the Capes Journal Portal using the keyword “Integrative Review”. Subsequently, new sources focusing on the Integrative Review method that had been cited in the texts were identified in the references of the selected articles.

As selection and eligibility criteria for the publications used, those that addressed IR were considered, and studies that treated it as a methodological approach were eligible. The data were extracted in order to identify the steps necessary to carry out an IR, and, subsequently, the data were compared and analyzed critically.

## Results and discussions

Given the diversity of content in the sample of this review, whether in physical or virtual format, the presence of aspects prior to, during and after the completion of the IR was noted. Thus, it was identified that the IR is composed of the following stages: planning, execution and completion. In addition, it was noted that, for scientific publication, it is important to recognize the pertinent elements in the structure of the writing.

- Proposal of a Roadmap for carrying out the IR

Based on the assumption that it is important to establish a set of actions with a theoretical-methodological basis in the planning of scientific research and considering the results of this study associated with the writing experience of the authors, a script was drawn up for carrying out the IR, which contains the stages, activities (technical procedures) and tasks (actions to be developed), as shown in Table 1.

Please note that, in this table, research is associated with writing for publication, so that both processes are integrated. The intention is to make it clear that certain tasks in the activities have a direct relationship with a specific section of the manuscript, aiming at academic dissemination.

**Table 1.** IR Roadmap: from research to publication.

IR Stages	Stage activities	Activity tasks	Manuscript section
Planning	Prior reading on the subject to be researched	Consult different references	Introduction
	Preparation of the research question and indication of hypothesis.	Formulate the research question based on the knowledge gaps and the hypothesis as a possibility of solving some professional practice.	Introduction
	Sample definition and selection in the literature	Identify and select descriptors/keywords; Structure the search routine; Define the search locations; Delimit (or not) the time frame; Establish the eligibility criteria; Develop the data collection/extraction instrument; Review the search planning and routine.	Methods
Execution	Execution of the plan and selection of the sample in the literature.	Standardize the process.	Methods
	Data collection	Detail the review process (steps and criteria); Complete the data collection/extraction instrument.	Methods
	Data tabulation	Highlight the main features and possible categories found.	Results
	Presentation and analysis of data	Explain the findings in a structured manner, critically and according to pre-established criteria.	Discussion
	Discussion of results	Discuss the results in a critical and referenced manner.	Discussion
	IR Synthesis	Relate the scientific findings of the review with professional applicability.	Discussion
Finalization	Conclusion/final considerations	Reinforce how the IR result(s) can be applied in the scientific field.	Conclusion
	Application of IR	Describe the relationship between the evidence generated in IR and technical-professional performance.	Conclusion

**Source:** Prepared by the authors (2024).

It is essential that the steps for carrying out the IR are developed with care and attention. Inadequate or rushed execution of these activities and tasks can compromise the quality and assertiveness of the review.



In this sense, a detailed explanation of the process is necessary, since this will allow for a broader understanding of how to carry out the IR and publish it. As previously explained, the script consists of three steps, each with its own activities and respective tasks.

The **first stage is called Planning** and consists of three activities: 1) Prior reading on the subject to be researched; 2) Elaboration of the research question and indication of the hypothesis; and, 3) Definition and selection of the sample in the literature.

Initially, it is strongly recommended that a careful prior reading on the subject to be researched, which can be done by consulting books, articles, magazines and newspapers, whose content is relevant to the research. Although it is important, the systematization of the search for these sources is not necessary or mandatory.

Reading is the act of seeking knowledge and interpreting knowledge, and is crucial for scientific research and for broadening understanding of content. However, it is important that this action be carried out after evaluating and selecting sources (Marconi; Lakatos, 2013). It is important to carry it out before beginning the review to better define the research question, analyze its viability, and familiarize yourself with the content (Pereira; Galvão, 2014).

Therefore, this initial assessment of the theme/object serves to enable the people involved to appropriate the fundamental conceptual and theoretical issues for the identification and understanding of the elements that guide/will guide the development of the IR: definition of the research question, the objective and the hypothesis. In addition, it helps in the definition and selection of the literature sample, since during these readings, potential descriptors and/or keywords emerge that will later be verified and confirmed as parameters for the composition of the search routine.

The elaboration of the research question and indication of the hypothesis corresponds to the definition of the question that is intended to be answered with the IR, and it is important that its formulation is based on knowledge gaps; as for the hypothesis, its recognition enhances the assertiveness of the analytical path of the review, as well as being based on the possibility of solving the problem encountered in professional practice.

Regarding the two elements (question and hypothesis), Marconi and Lakatos (2013) point out that the first is specifically presented in the interrogative form in the search for a resolution, which before its definition goes through an analysis of its viability, relevance, novelty, feasibility and opportunity; the second is an affirmative sentence considered as a possibility of response, of an explanatory or predictive nature, with external coherence (scientific knowledge) and internal coherence (logical consistency), making empirical validation possible.

Someone can use some technique that parameterizes the elaboration of the research question, such as the PICO strategy (Population, Intervention, Comparison and Outcome) (Huang; Lin; Demner-Fushman, 2006). In this case, the "Population" refers to the profile of the people who make up the sample/population of the study, the "Intervention" denotes the intervention or exposure that will be evaluated, the "Comparison" refers to the alternative intervention to the one that will be centrally evaluated (such as: standard treatment, no intervention, pedagogical proposal, educational intervention), and the "Outcome" refers to the expected or measured results to determine the effect or methodological reliability of the investigation.

The definition and selection of the sample in the literature encompasses seven tasks:

a) Selection of descriptors or keywords.

In the preliminary reading activity, or consultation of publications within the scope of the theme to be researched, it is proposed that the terminology commonly used as descriptors or keywords relevant to the subject be identified, which will guide the creation of the search routine and its application in the search for sources for the execution of the IR.

At this point, it is worth highlighting that there is a difference between descriptors and keywords (Brandau; Monteiro; Braile, 2005). Descriptors are part of a rigid structure that has been previously tested and are used to facilitate the search for works related to the theme they cover, while keywords do not follow any structure and therefore do not guarantee that there are works related to them. An example of the use of descriptors and keywords in IR was used by Almeida and Casotti (2021), who explained that, at the time of the research, the selected descriptors did not

demonstrate sufficient sensitivity for tracking sources on the topic, while the use of keywords enabled a more appropriate search for publications.

An assertive selection of terminologies will result in less problematic search routines. In this sense, the descriptors can be confirmed/consulted in some databases, such as: Health Sciences Descriptors (DECS/MeSH), Brazilian Education Thesaurus (BRASED), Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), among others, which allow the identification of similar terms and, in some cases, their translations and cross-cultural adaptations to other languages. It is worth noting that, in the same IR, structurally different/adjusted search routines can be used, developed with descriptors from the same databases, according to the needs/technical limitations of the locations in which the routines will be applied.

As already mentioned in specific cases, it will not be possible to use a standardized descriptor, which will require the use of keywords that refer to the theme/object. These keywords are selected or proposed based on theoretical or conceptual elements directly related to the question/objective of the study.

Locatorra et al. (2019) point out that the adoption of excessively broad terms (standardized or not) will result in a significant list of studies that will not be interesting for the theme or problem investigated; conversely, the option for highly restrictive terminologies will generate searches that result in an excessively reduced number of publications, preventing the analysis from being sufficient to address the problem. Thus, the positive and negative impacts of an incorrect or assertive screening of descriptors/keywords for the development of an optimized IR are highlighted.

b) Structuring the search routine by combining descriptors (or keywords) with Boolean operators: “AND”, “OR” or “NOT”.

The combinations of Boolean operators will depend on the space and format requested in the search locations. The terminologies can be used in quotation marks, parentheses or other expressions. It may be necessary to add terms in several languages, as well as their synonyms or similar terms.

Regarding the three Boolean operators, Pereira and Galvão (2014) explain how to use them. When the terms are distinct, “AND” is used to track research on the topics (intersection). With equivalent terms of a search component, “OR” is used,

which results in works that deal with one or the other topic (sum). In turn, the “NOT” operator is necessary when you want to eliminate a certain subject from the search.

In more detail, “AND” is a logical operator that represents the intersection between two or more elements (Picalho; Lucas; Amorim, 2022). In a search, it ensures that the system will display results that necessarily include all terms or expressions connected by this operator. The use of the Boolean operator “OR” instructs the system to provide documents that contain at least one of the terms specified in the query, that is, for the documents to be retrieved, they must include at least one of the terms used in the search expression (Picalho; Lucas; Amorim, 2022).

Properly defined strategies for searching for bibliographic sources strengthen academic-scientific rigor, regardless of the type of review, since incomplete and biased research can lead to an insufficient database and inaccurate results (Whittemore; Knafel, 2005), inadequately denying or confirming the hypothesis. Therefore, the appropriate definition of the search routine is essential to track ‘all’ publications related to addressing the research question and meeting the objective.

c) Definition of search locations (databases, electronic libraries, journals, search sites, among others).

The definition of locations for the application of the search routine must be careful and directed to the field that most likely and most widely published manuscripts related to the object/theme. Therefore, it is necessary for the people involved to track and describe ‘all’ the locations that can be included in the review. Then, an ordering and/or selection of those that are a priority must be carried out.

Regarding this task, Pereira and Galvão (2014) comment that such a choice is related to the research question, since it directs the need to establish criteria. The authors indicate as a strategy for their identification the verification of which bibliographic bases were used in other reviews published on the topic or similar subjects; and suggest the possibility of using gray literature (not controlled by an academic-scientific editorial process), such as government reports, theses, dissertations and publications in conference proceedings.

In short, the search sites, database and/or portals should be defined according to the publication proposals, scope or area in which they are located, and that they are in accordance with the research proposal. The number of search sites should be defined by their capacity to group publications. For example, when the option is to search in a virtual library or platform (which have a wide capacity to make productions available), one of these options may be sufficient. However, when the search is carried out in databases, journals or event proceedings (which have a more limited capacity to offer publications), it is suggested to define at least three sources.

d) Delimitation of the time frame.

The delimitation of a time frame must be presented based on a justification, and in compliance, preferably, with a milestone relevant to the object/theme, such as: before or after the implementation of legislation or policy, insertion or exclusion of practice, or even analysis of recent productions. This can be exemplified in the IR of Flores (2023), since the year 2002 was used as a time frame due to Mohr's conceptualization of Health Education; the IR of Alves and Mussi (2023) did not delimit a time frame, with the aim of broad coverage of the theme; while that of Almeida and Casotti (2021) used a snapshot of recent publications (last five years).

As a recent and striking general example, an emergency phase of the COVID-19 pandemic emerges, as mentioned in Amorim et al. (2020). In this case, the review used the years 2020/2021 as a parameter, but previous studies/publications can be studied, during the period, later studies or those that compare information from different moments.

Setting time limits during which studies will be considered helps ensure that the IR is relevant, up-to-date, and actionable. It also allows the focus to be on important and/or recent trends, thus preventing the IR from being overloaded with an excessive volume of literature, increasing the likelihood of its accuracy and coherence.

e) Establishment of eligibility criteria (inclusion and exclusion), considering their impact on the choice of filters that will be requested in the search sites.

The eligibility criteria for the productions to be accepted for composition of the IR explicitly and objectively explain the parameters that will be applied for the

inclusion and exclusion of publications, ensuring that the studies included are relevant and of high quality.

These actions aim to ensure that the research objective and question are directly addressed. Initially, inclusion criteria are established as a parameter for accepting publications.

The most common inclusion criteria include: defining the publication period (with justification), restricting the search to a specific time interval; the type of study (such as: intervention study/clinical trial, observational studies, previous reviews, qualitative studies, among others); the sample design of the reviewed study (statistically representative, intentional or with a type of participant). The criterion for assessing methodological quality may also be established, among other possible criteria, according to the scope of the IR.

The rigorous application of these criteria allows the construction of a solid and reliable evidence base, making the IR robust and informative. It is important to highlight that certain search sites already have filter options, which help in the operationalization of some of the inclusion criteria and composition of the first search, such as: publication period, publication language, journal, among others.

Then, the exclusion criteria are determined, defining which studies, initially included, will not be accepted for the composition of the review. Exclusion is a careful action aimed at successfully delimiting the profile of publications, productions, subthemes, sample profile, among other criteria, with the potential to generate confusion, bias and/or weaken the scientific and/or professional findings.

It is important to note that exclusion criteria should be considered in relation to the types of publications that were previously included, that is, they are not “the opposite of the inclusion criteria”, but should be defined considering the profiles of productions that have already been included and the reasons why they will not remain in the study. For example, if one of the inclusion criteria is “publications from the period 2000 to 2005”, “productions outside the period 2000 to 2005” are not considered as exclusion criteria, as these have never been previously included.

However, among those initially included in the search within the time frame mentioned, works with some type of research, writing design, that are not freely

accessible, that do not directly address the requested topic, among other possibilities, may be excluded.

Regarding the definition of these criteria, the RI of Flores et al. (2019) lists the inclusion and exclusion criteria, according to the guidelines mentioned above. This reading will help in understanding how to determine both, especially in the health area.

f) Development of the data collection instrument.

The development of the data collection instrument is developed (in accordance with the theme, objective, research question and hypothesis) to extract data from each of the productions that are definitively included in the investigation. This instrument contains sections, questions or topics for the completion of the review research, such as: objective of the investigation, location where the research took place, methodological design, characteristics of the participants, type of intervention, main results and conclusion. This information will later be summarized in a table, chart or written form, as a way of presenting the findings.

The appropriate instrument (form, spreadsheet, among other possibilities) for the standardized recording of predefined items ensures the ideal, assertive and complete extraction of relevant data, as well as limiting the possibility of errors at the time of transcription, offering precise verification of information, also functioning as a data recorder (Souza; Silva; Carvalho, 2010).

It is worth noting that this type of instrument can undergo a technical validation process. This action qualifies the instrument and increases its capacity to collect 'all' the necessary information and prevents unnecessary data from being collected. If the instrument does not undergo validation, it is important that, at the beginning of the extraction, it is tested and adjusted, to prevent aspects necessary for the success of the IR from being neglected.

To control biases and errors, it is recommended that the extraction be developed by two people involved in the review, with possible discrepancies being resolved by consensus or by third-person arbitration.

g) Review of the planning and search routine.

This review of the search routine should be carried out carefully and in line with the objective, question and hypothesis. After defining the search routine, it is

advisable to conduct a pilot test of the search routine in the locations determined for its application. If any need for adjustment or modification is identified, this will prevent a negative impact on the development of the research itself, increasing the success of the search and sample selection in the literature, and in the collection and tabulation of data.

The **second stage is called Execution**, and consists of six activities: 1) Execution of the plan and selection of the sample in the literature, 2) Data collection, 3) Tabulation of data, 4) Presentation and analysis of data, 5) Discussion of results and 6) Synthesis of IR.

In the execution of the plan and selection of the sample in the literature, it is important to standardize the process and record what was done to favor the reproduction of actions and increase the reliability of the review, developed, preferably, by two people involved in the research and a third for mediation in cases of disagreement about the inclusion/exclusion of production in the IR.

Therefore, it is suggested that two people simultaneously perform the search and review in the same location, using the same search routines and filters. The recommendation to perform the search simultaneously is due to the continuous updates that the search locations may undergo. In addition, it is important that a third person be responsible for indicating the files/publications repeated in both searches, as well as, based on the list presented by the first two, defining which materials will remain for the following stages of the source selection process, until the full text reading phase arrives; that is, their responsibility is to resolve possible disagreements, doubts and/or inconsistencies between the results presented in the two searches and the selection of each stage. It is important to note that all people involved in this process are considered potential authors of the research/review publication in question (as explained in Spinak, 2014), except in the case of hiring for the provision of services.

In addition, it is suggested that a folder be created for each search routine, where the selected files will be saved (e.g. by title and reading of the abstract). And that the quantitative data generated by the search locations be noted (e.g. total number of articles found after selecting the filters, how many were selected after reading the title and abstract, etc.).



In data collection, the qualitative process of composing studies for review occurs, according to the filtering stages and their criteria. After defining the studies included in the research, the data collection instrument is completed. This instrument can be referenced (adapted or in full) or even prepared according to the needs of each research. However, it is worth noting that some information has been used more frequently, such as: authorship and year, objective(s), main methodological characteristics (technical design, sample, location and period, procedures, analysis technique, among others), analysis of the levels of evidence, methodological consistency (for qualitative studies) and main findings.

Regarding the use of categorization of level of evidence, Flores (2023) warns of the need for greater attention to the classification of the level of scientific evidence for different areas, especially teaching, since the results of its IR were not able to be categorized. Thus, the need to strengthen the discussion related to the assessment of methodological consistency for the evaluation of publications/research with qualitative approaches, as suggested by Tong, Sainsbury and Craig (2007), is highlighted.

When tabulating data, it is suggested that they be presented highlighting their main general characteristics. First, it is necessary to present the searches quantitatively (overall sum, by search location and so on), followed by the exclusions at each stage (duplicates – internal and external to the search location -, reading of the title and abstract, complete reading, final quantity included).

However, the emphasis that is really needed will be on the description of the studies, both individually (detailing the study found) and collectively (e.g.: frequency distribution or recurrence of data/information, the effect of the intervention or its absence, among other elements of interest). The data may be grouped by agreement or disagreement of results, compliance (or not) with the objectives or criteria of the research being conducted. In some cases, it is important to highlight the sample profiles of the included productions (e.g.: statistically representative, by adherence, specific group/profile of participant, among others).

At this stage, the articles included in the study can be classified or selected according to their level of evidence. In addition to the study by Stetler et al. (1998), the

studies by Melnyk (2003) and Melnyk and Fineout-Overholt (2011) can also be consulted to guide such choices. In the case of qualitative studies, we suggest using the protocol developed by Tong, Sainsbury and Craig (2007) to analyze the methodological consistency of the source included in the review.

The presentation and analysis of data require the presentation of the main findings, and secondary findings (if any), with details for better understanding by the reader. Such information allows for critical analysis, considering the levels of evidence or methodological consistency and establishing analysis criteria that guarantee the reproducibility of the study (e.g.: descriptive statistics, content analysis, etc.).

When discussing the results of an IR-based study, one should initially address its main and secondary contributions (if any), according to the question and the research objective. This information will establish the parameters for the development of criticisms and reflections. For a discussion with the aim of academic-scientific publication, which will be discussed in more detail in the topic on writing an IR for publication, it is important that the results of the IR are discussed analytically and with references, whenever possible.

In the IR synthesis, it is important that the findings address the evidence and are related to applicability in professional practice. In addition to being presented, they must be discussed and indicate the possible contribution to the work action, e.g.: a technique, a teaching methodology, a test, among others.

The **last stage is called Finalization**, and consists of two activities: writing the conclusion/final considerations and indicating the application of the IR. In the first part, it is important to present the synthesis of the IR, in response to the objective and the research question, and to reinforce the objective of how the results can be applied in the scientific field.

The second part has applicability as its main characteristic, that is, it refers to the relationship between the evidence generated by IR and technical-professional performance, as well as the indication of the viability (or effectiveness) of using the technique or procedure. The presence of such information is essential, as interested

parties will not need to consult all the scientific literature to identify the solution to the problem or how a technique or procedure is applied in practice.

- Proposal for the structure of the IR writing for publication

The written presentation for academic publication challenges the writer to be sufficiently organized and to write in a way that enhances its reading, understanding, and analysis. In this sense, different authors have already proposed organizational dynamics that value identity and qualify the writing and publication of articles resulting from original research (Pereira, 2012), experience reports (Mussi, Flores, Almeida, 2021), academic interviews (Mussi et al., 2024), theoretical essays (Soares; Picolli; Casagrande, 2018), among other editorial designs.

Despite the debate regarding the development of research that uses IR as a method, the publications found, to date, related to the adequate presentation of IR writing differ from this proposal, given the reduced, or no, emphasis on the process of writing structure with the purpose of publication. In this sense, a proposed script aimed at the presentation of a manuscript originating from IR aimed at scientific publication is presented below (Table 2).

**Table 2** – Suggested script for structuring the writing of the original IR manuscript.

Section	Section elements	Facilitating question for writing.
Title	Points for overview	- What is the object of investigation? What is the empirical field? What is the methodological design of the study?
Abstract	Points for overview	Were the main points of the IR study highlighted?
Keywords	Points for overview	- Do the terms, preferably descriptors, indicate the main elements of the manuscript?
Introduction	Theoretical field	Are the fundamental theoretical and conceptual elements related to the topic found in the text? - Why is it necessary to conduct an IR on the topic?
	Objective	Is the objective explicitly presented in the text, and preferably, is it presented at the end of the introduction?
Materials and Methods / Methodological procedures	Study design	What is the approach and type of research? Are they supported and referenced?
	Guidelines for determining the research question	- How was the research question formulated? Was any method or guide used, such as PICO?

	Technique for identifying and selecting descriptors and/or keywords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are the descriptors/keywords found on a specific indexing platform?</li> <li>- Was a prior search performed to identify the descriptors/keywords?</li> <li>- If the descriptors/keywords were not found on the specific platforms, was the choice justified?</li> </ul>
	Description of the search routine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the descriptors/keywords and/or intersections (use of "OR" or "AND") between them?</li> <li>- Were synonyms considered for each term used?</li> <li>- Was the search routine described the same as that applied in the search location/platform/database?</li> <li>- Is the description of the search routine in text form within the sequence of paragraphs, or in the form of a table/frame?</li> </ul>
	Identification and selection of locations for searching sources	- Do the search locations cover the area of your research?
	Time frame	- What is the reason for using the time frame to limit IR?
	Eligibility criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Were the inclusion and exclusion criteria properly described in the text?</li> <li>- Did the exclusion criteria consider only the manuscripts that were initially included?</li> </ul>
	Description of the selection process for the sources that remain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Were the steps taken in selecting the sources described in the text?</li> <li>- What were the reasons for the exclusions at each stage? Describe them or present them in a flowchart.</li> </ul>
	Data extraction	What information was extracted from the full productions included in the review?
	Data analysis	What technique or analysis method is used in IR?
Results	Quantitative and/or qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the main result of your study?</li> <li>Are the qualitative or quantitative data adequately described?</li> <li>What data can be considered relevant in addition to the main result?</li> </ul>
	Analysis of the included productions	- What is the data analysis method and how it was carried out? Are they explicit in the manuscript (text, figure, graphic element, etc.)?
Discussion	Communication of findings	- Were all results interpreted and discussed with other scientific literature?
	Limitations	- What are the weaknesses of your study?
	Advantages	- How does your study stand out or contribute to science or society? Is there any methodological difference to be highlighted?
Final considerations or conclusion	Approach to the objective and research question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What does the study conclude, based on the literature researched?</li> <li>- Were the research objective and/or question met/answered?</li> </ul>

	Approach to the practical application of IR findings	- What does your study indicate that can be applied in professional practice? - What does your study indicate about the effectiveness of a given subject for its application in professional practice?
Reference	Origin of the information	- Were all references cited in the body of the review listed at the end of the text?

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024).

The **title** of a manuscript originating from an IR intended for scientific publication is a highly relevant element, as it will be the most read part of this production. It should be written as concisely as possible, containing only the information necessary to access the main elements of the complete work. A good title contains the object/theme investigated, the empirical field and the methodological design of the study (Pereira, 2013). In addition, it may include another point of specific relevance that promotes greater attraction to its reading.

In the case of an IR, it is important that the title of the text for dissemination contains the reviewed theme, the location or intervention accepted for review and the citation that it is an integrative review. It may also include the time frame, type(s) of study reviewed and/or the profile of the audience specifically selected as participants in the reviewed productions.

The **abstract** consists of the main points of the sections of the manuscript. The information contained in it helps in the decision to continue reading the full text. Given its importance, Pereira (2013) points out that this text is second only to the title as the most disseminated part, and also that its writing is directly related to the dissemination and promotion of appreciation of the full text.

According to Sousa (2006), there are two common types of abstract format: structured – when the information is organized by sections (with each element preceded by a subtitle, usually in bold); and unstructured – without divisions in the text, that is, with information presented in a paragraph or as a narrative, with the sections as part of the text. In this sense, the choice of abstract format depends on the standards of the journal or place where the study is to be published.

A good abstract of a review study should contain the objective of the research; the data sources, with their complementary information; the total number of studies reviewed and the eligibility criteria; information on the data collection procedures and

their application; the summary of the results; and the conclusion/final consideration, dealing with the evidence and its application (Pereira, 2013).

The extent of the information presented in the abstract depends on the author's choice, as well as on the regulations of the journal, event or publisher. Regarding the first situation, sometimes the authors consider it relevant to prioritize the presentation of the results arising from the study, opting to omit the introduction and/or presenting little methodological information. Regarding the second situation, journals/events/publishers define the maximum number of words or characters, inducing the use of an objective editorial structure.

The **keywords** selected for publication should identify the main elements that make up the text. As previously indicated (in the topic on IR research), it is recommended that terms or expressions that are already consolidated in the academic-scientific field (descriptors) be chosen. The terminology chosen may address the object, population, study design, main results or related themes that refer to the object(s) of study. The correct choice of keywords facilitates indexing and dissemination of the scientific text, increases the reach of the publication and the possibility of it being identified, tracked, retrieved, read and cited in new publications.

The **introduction** of a manuscript submitted to a journal should be structured in a way that captures the reader's interest and establishes the context and relevance of the study. This section of the academic essay answers the following questions (Pereira, 2012, p.352): "What is the study about? Why was the research conducted? What was known about the subject at the beginning of the research? Or rather, what was not known about the subject that motivated the research?"

It usually begins with a text aimed at contextualizing or presenting the general theme, followed by the conceptual and theoretical foundations, identifying the gap in knowledge and/or problem that the study intends to address. In this sense, the relevance of the object and the justification for carrying out the research are explained, highlighting how the proposed work will contribute to the understanding of the content, and ending with the presentation of the objective of the investigation, which should use the same wording as its presentation in the abstract.

The **Materials and Methods** section is the section of the text responsible for the transparency and reproducibility of the research. The methodological design

requires that its outline be objective, complete, and use accessible, explicit and assertive language regarding all the elements necessary for the adequate development of the IR. According to Pereira (2012, p.352), this section of the academic publication answers in detail “how was the research conducted?”. Roughly speaking, this item is responsible for the step-by-step description of how all the research actions were developed.

In this section of the scientific dissemination text, it is important to indicate the approach and type of research. The approach refers to the nature of the data (quantitative, qualitative) (Mussi et al., 2019) and also the type of research (Integrative Review). In both cases, it is necessary to present references that support the indication.

As previously mentioned, the writing of the research question can be based on the application of some technique, such as the PICO strategy (Huang; Lin; Demner-Fushman, 2006). However, there are other dynamics for its elaboration; however, the one used as an example represents an interesting contribution to the organization and structure of the question. However, every IR necessarily has a research question that will be answered/addressed.

As indicated in the topic related to IR research, it is essential to describe the procedure for identifying and selecting descriptors and/or keywords, as this action will result in a more assertive search routine. The importance of consulting specialized databases (DECS/MESH, BRASED, ERIC, among others) is reinforced to confirm that the selected terminologies are among those most frequently used and to identify similar ones and translate them into other languages.

A detailed description of the search routine is required, including all the steps followed, the Boolean technique used, and the truncation used to refine the search results according to the databases selected for consultation, demonstrating the precision and complexity of the search.

The search routine that will be described will consider the descriptors/keywords and the intersection between them, as well as the accepted synonyms for each term used. Its description must be presented in the same structure that was applied in the search site/platform/database, including and exactly as the Boolean terms were used, such as: (Word a1 OR Word a2 OR Word a3) AND (Word b1

OR Word b2 OR Word b3) AND NOT (Word c1 OR Word c2). Its presentation can be in text form (within the sequence of paragraphs) or in a table/frame.

The locations where the searches were conducted (portals, databases, directories, journals, proceedings, among other locations) should be explicitly mentioned, explaining the criteria and/or motivations for selecting these locations. This will confirm that these choices guarantee the breadth and reliability of the collection of sources on the theme/object under review, avoiding limited or erroneous searches.

If a time frame is defined (or not) for limiting the IR, it is important that it be presented and that the motivation for the delimitation be described. Among the possibilities, already recognized, are the verification of updated knowledge (productions from recent years, according to the characteristics of the area, theme or volume of publications); impactful facts in science, the profession, legislation, history, or society.

Regarding the eligibility criteria, a careful and detailed description of the inclusion criteria (especially when applying a technique to assess the level of evidence or methodological quality of the production) and exclusion criteria is required. It is important to note that the exclusion criteria necessarily include as a starting point the manuscripts that would, in the first analysis, be included in the study, but that for some reason will not be considered/accepted to compose the investigation.

Regarding the description of the selection process of the sources selected after the search, and that remain in the text at the end of the research, it is important to note that the stages may include reading the title, the abstract and finally the complete works. It is important to note the importance of describing (in text, chart, table or flowchart) the quantity that is being excluded and the reason for the exclusions at each stage.

In the paper intended for publication, the data extraction stage will be presented, which was conducted in a systematic and standardized manner to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the information collected (Whittemore; Knafl, 2005). To this end, a specific description of the data extraction instrument (such as a form or spreadsheet) and the elements that it will capture to be included in the IR is necessary. It is also important to report whether the extraction of information from the sources



accepted for review was carried out by more than one person and whether there was any provision and/or occurrence of arbitration by an additional person.

Also in the methodological section of the text, it is necessary to present the quantitative or qualitative methods used to synthesize and interpret the evidence from the multiple studies selected. It is essential that the choice of analysis methods be able to emphasize how they contribute to the validity and robustness of the IR conclusions, in addition to enabling the replication of the study by other researchers (Whittemore; Knafl, 2005).

The presentation of the **results** will occur according to the proposals for extracting data from the sources that are definitively included. It is necessary that this writing begins by presenting the data from the publication searches (according to the previously defined locations), presenting the impacts (number of exclusions) of each selection criterion for permanence (reading of title, abstract, full paper, among other aspects), until reaching the final quantity of sources definitively included in the IR.

Given the final quantity of productions that will be reviewed, the description of the data extraction will be presented (as text, chart or table) in a synthetic manner, which will provide a solid basis for the interpretation and discussion of the findings. According to Pereira (2012, p. 352), this section should answer the following questions: “What was found? What facts were revealed by the investigation?” It is important to note that, when presenting the results of a publishable IR, it is advisable to carry out an approach to assessing the quality of the reviewed productions, if any technique was used.

Since the objective of IR is also to identify scientific evidence, the inclusion of levels of evidence or analysis of the methodological consistency of accepted productions becomes essential, as they will indicate the best evidence or most reliable findings. Furthermore, the significant presence of publications with low levels of evidence or weak consistency in IR suggests the need for new, more methodologically rigorous studies, given that, in these cases, the IR finding will not be emphasized as a synthesis of the scientifically reliable literature.

The **discussion** section should be comprehensive and critical, addressing the most relevant and recurring findings and their theoretical and practical implications, with special attention to the objective and research question of IR. In this section, the following questions should be answered (Pereira, 2012, p.352): “What do the findings presented mean? Are the findings in agreement with the results of other authors or are they divergent? What does this study add to what is already known about the subject?”

In the discussion and authorial interpretation, it is essential to cite/dialogue with the references included in the review itself and those mentioned in the basis. However, it should not be limited to these productions. Sometimes it is important to use classic publications, or authorships of reference in the researched area or other relevant publications that contribute to a better understanding of the findings, selected at the discretion of the people responsible for the IR.

In this item, the results should not be repeated as in the results topic, only mentioned when necessary. A comparison should be established between the results of the studies included in the IR, highlighting consistent patterns and notable discrepancies. The focus of the writing is on the interpretation and comparison of the findings with the different sources included in the IR and, whenever possible, with the literature presented in the introduction (basis) and classic and recent references (even if they were not cited in the introduction/basis).

It is important to note that IR, based on scientific evidence, will serve as a basis for future decision-making in different professions, and as Mendes, Silveira and Galvão (2008) point out, this practice seeks the best and most recent evidence. The purpose of the discussion in the manuscript is to elucidate how the findings contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the researched area.

Furthermore, in a critical manner, the writing of this topic also faces/considers the limitations of the reviewed studies, the methodological limitations of IR itself, and possible biases in the selection of studies or in the analysis of data (Whittemore; Knafl, 2005). Presenting and discussing the limitations of a study does not disqualify it; in fact, it demonstrates seriousness and respect for the people who will read the publication.

Generally, after the limitations, the advantages of the study are presented, at which point the methodological strengths are highlighted, for example, the assertive choice of databases, the satisfactory quantity of publications identified in the search, or even innovative results that contribute to scientific advancement or improvements in professional practice.

A qualified analysis of these elements (limitations and advantages) is essential for better identification of the advancement and the element that still requires knowledge or improvements to enhance professional practice.

When writing the **final considerations** of a publishable text, the topic first addresses, without repetitions, the objective and the research question in a direct and quick manner.

The implications of the findings for professional practice in the respective area will then be addressed, indicating how the results may influence more specific policies, practices or interventions. This topic should include suggestions for future research directions, pointing out new gaps and issues identified.

When writing the conclusion or final considerations, references should not be included, since they represent the authors' final impression after the entire development of their research.

Even in the case of a concise and consistent essay related to the theme/object presented exclusively in the findings of the reviewed literature, the final considerations of the IR encompass the characteristic applicability of the IR. This application will be reflected in a piece of writing that demonstrates how the synthesis found in the literature can be applied in professional practice, or whether this synthesis indicates effectiveness in a given subject for its application in professional practice.

Finally, the essay must include a list containing all the **references** mentioned in all the elements of the writing (introduction/justification, methods, results - definitely complete works included in the IR - and discussion). It is essential to check whether the specific references are complete, in accordance with the standards of the journal, book or other place where the publication is intended, and that all those cited in the body of the text are included.

## Conclusion

The feasibility of using IR to identify scientific evidence and present technical-professional applications of the findings is clear. In addition, roadmaps were created, as the analyses allowed the identification of steps/phases that should be applied in the planning and development process of an IR, as well as the presentation of actions/procedures of the editorial structure for publication, which will generate greater academic-scientific robustness and confidence in the findings.

The main contribution of the Guide for conducting an IR refers to the breadth of information that encompasses the aspects before, during and after the review, to facilitate the understanding of the student or professional, providing more theoretical and methodological foundations for the construction of scientific studies of this type. The Guide for structuring a publishable manuscript of an IR points out elements belonging to each section of the writing, which helps authors access specific information about what is required for the organization of qualified writing for the dissemination of updated knowledge.

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