



## HORTA CONCEPTUAL MODEL: CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MEANING UNDER WALKER AND AVANT'S OPTICS

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### ABSTRACT

Nursing theories represent one of the elements that compose the specific language in order to consolidate the nursing knowledge. The objective of this study is to analyze the concepts meaning of the Basic Human Needs Conceptual Model, proposed by Wanda Horta. Theoretical-reflexive study carried out from June to October 2017, based on the Significance component of the Critical Analysis of Theory model, proposed by Walker and Avant. The conceptual model of Basic Human Needs, present concepts that give meaning to nursing practice. The concepts identified in the model are health, nursing, individual, environment, nursing entities, nursing problems, nursing care, nursing care and nursing care. Concepts such as the Nursing met a paradigm and its entities lack operational definitions that allow the identification and application of these concepts in professional practice. It is concluded that some concepts are very clear within the model, others, however, still do not have clear definitions, like each basic human need, it is obscure for scholars to classify these needs before applying the model in professional practice

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## INTRODUCTION

Using conceptual theories and models to subsidize nursing practice, besides contributing to the consolidation of Nursing as science and art, favors the effectiveness and efficiency of nursing care. The Models of Theories Critical Analysis propose guidance on the several important factors for understanding and using the theory. Among the existing models of analysis, we opted for the theory Critical analysis model elaborated by Walker and Avant.

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In this model, it is understood that a theory intends to describe, explain or predict something, it must provide the reader with a clear idea of the phenomenon, events that affect it and how it affects other phenomena, provides the nursing discipline a rich source of knowledge about the efficiency and effectiveness of nursing care for the patient, allows it to be seen and recognized as science. Therefore, the theory analysis, for the authors, is a systematic analysis of the theory involving: Origin, Meaning, Logical Adequacy, Utility, Generalization Degree, Parsimony, Testability, Clarity, Simplicity, Generality, Accessibility and Importance. It can be used as a whole or in parts, and any of the components can be focused. Allows to examine its strengths and weaknesses points, with the possibility of improving the original theory.

It provides a systematic and objective way of examining a recipe that can lead to insights, allowing a knowledge advance in the science of nursing; the Meaning component was chosen to carry out the present analysis (Walker and Avant, 2011). This component leads the researchers to a reflexive process, considered the most time-consuming process in a theory analysis, but also the most valuable. It is considered essential to clarify the concepts for a better theory structure understanding. A solid concept names what it refers to, and its use must be clearly defined so that it is possible to understand what is being described, explained or predicted. Concepts are considered as mental constructions that contain within themselves attributes or characteristics that make them unique, elaborated about a phenomenon, that to be understood must be inserted within a context. The concepts must be studied and clarified for the following reasons: They aid in the theories development, since theories are constructed from the concepts; Assist in the concepts operationalization in practice; Improve practice by approaching the real world (Walker and Avant, 2011). Among the nursing models' theories that can be applied to develop nursing care we can mention the conceptual model of Basic Human Needs, the theoretical Wanda Aguiar Horta (Horta 1979; Horta 2011), developed in 1970, it has been widely used by Brazilian researchers to guide assistance, research and teaching. The theory of Basic Human Needs has gained prominence in Brazilian nursing, since it guides the practice of several nurses in several health institutions. Wanda Aguiar Horta left an important legacy when she introduced the Theory of Basic Human Needs, and believed that nursing care should be planned and systematized, which can occur through the implementation of the nursing process (do Nascimento et al. 2009; Amante et al., 2009; Selhorst et al., 2014; Coelho et al., 2014; Schmitz et al., 2017). Scholars believe that the applicability of the Nursing Process with support in theories is necessary, but it is necessary to conquer the recognition of the profession by the academic community, the phenomena verified in the practical experience of nurses need to be studied in research, so that their attributes recognized. The present study aims to analyze the concepts meaning of the Conceptual Model of Basic Human Needs, proposed by Wanda Aguiar Horta.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a descriptive and reflexive study, using as reference the Model of Critical Analysis of Theory proposed by (Walker and Avant, 2011) in the analysis of the Conceptual Model of Basic Human Needs of Horta. It was developed from June to October 2017, as an activity of the Discipline of the Critical Analysis Program of Postgraduate Theories in Nursing, Ph.D., from a public university in the state of Paraíba/ Brazil. In order to carry out the study, we first read the book "Nursing Process", which presents its Conceptual Model of the Basic Human Needs of Horta (Horta 1979; Horta 2011), in its reissue, followed by a critical theory analysis with emphasis on the Meaning component. For this, we follow the following steps: concepts identification; definitions analysis and use; declarations identification; and analysis of the relations between concepts (Walker and Avant, 2011). For analysis, the following central question was established: "What is the theory semantics?" In order to answer the central question, in this study the following guiding questions were adopted: Is it possible to identify the concepts? Are the definitions clear? What is its use? Is it possible to identify your statements? What are the relationships between concepts? The answers to

the questions chosen within the component considered should be elaborated based on the conceptual model itself, as a way to better understand the model and its relations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented and discussed according to the steps for evaluation of the meaning component, proposed in Walker and Avant's critical analysis model of theories. It should be noted that the critical analysis of theory proposed by these authors is based on a judgment process, which determines the theory usefulness for the nursing practice (Walker and Avant, 2011).

### Identified concepts and definitions analysis

The first step in analyzing the meaning of Horta's conceptual model is to identify its concepts. Concepts are terms derived from phenomena of reality. In Nursing, concepts were borrowed from other sciences, from practice and from research. For this reason, it is important to understand them through their theoretical and operational definition. The theoretical definition mentions the meaning of the concept, and it is possible to analyze the validity of the definition. The operational definition, in turn, establishes a link between the theoretical and the empirical worlds, making possible the concepts validation, the researches replication and the theories construction. Regardless of the definition type, the definitions allow to describe the actions necessary to evaluate the concepts proposed by the theory (McEwen and Wills, 2015).

In the conceptual model of Basic Human Needs, we sought to initially identify the Nursing metaparadigm, the concepts presented and defined by Horta address Health, Environment, Individual and Nursing. A more abstract and general component of the knowledge structural hierarchy, which makes it possible to identify the primary phenomena of interest in a discipline. Their definitions and relationships structure conceptual theories and models which clearly answer questions about what nurses do or should do and offer countless responses to educators, researchers, administrators, and document nursing practice (Fawcett, 2000). For the theoretical, health is defined as: "[...] a state of dynamic equilibrium in time and space, and it also mentions that the unmet or inadequately attended needs bring discomfort, which, if prolonged, becomes a cause of illness ...", and still mentions "[...] the human being has basic needs that must be met for his complete well-being..." (Horta, 2011).

Disease, therefore, would be a state of imbalance resulting from the failure to meet basic human needs. It is difficult to understand what needs to be met in order to have health / illness. This lack of operation prevents the nurse from identifying in practice the healthy or sick patient, since the health indicators, quantitatively and qualitatively, are not clarified in this concept definition. It is noteworthy that Horta proposed her conceptual model in the 1970s, which explains the obsolete and non-operational health concept. The environment is considered the "dynamic universe [...]" in which the human being is "[...] subject to all the laws that govern it in time and space". This environment can only involve the surroundings surrounding the client at that moment or the whole universe that surrounds him. The individual, considered by the author as a human being (individual, family or community), is understood as "[...] an integral part of the

dynamic universe, which is in constant interaction with it, which is subject to the laws that govern it, states of equilibrium and imbalance in time and space [...]”. Adds that “[...] it is an agent of change, who distinguishes himself from other beings in the universe by his capacity for reflection, imagination and symbolization, and by being able to add present, past and future” (Horta, 2011). Nursing is considered as: “[...] science and the art of assisting the human being in meeting his basic needs, of making him independent of this assistance, when possible, through the teaching of self-care; to recover; maintain and promote health in collaboration with other professionals ” (Horta, 2011). Horta throughout the work has other nursing concepts, but this clearly establishes how the concept to be used in your model. In addition to the concepts of the Nursing Meta- paradigm, Horta still brings in concepts related to the philosophical science aspects. She begins her work on Philosophy, Theory and Science of Nursing, and brings that no science can survive without a philosophy of its own, thus, understands that nursing can not do without a philosophy that gives it a secure basis for its development (Horta, 2011). For this reason, she considered it important to begin her theoretical reflections exposing what she considers common in the concepts of philosophy, Being, Knowing and Language. In nursing he distinguished the three beings: Being-Nurse, Being-Client and Being-Nursing (Horta, 2011). One can perceive the semantic and structural clarity of ideas, which makes understanding easy between concepts, one can also perceive their abstraction:

- Being-Nurse “people who take care of people; is a human being, with all its dimensions, potentialities and restrictions, joys and frustrations; is open to the future, to life, and is engaged in it by the commitment assumed with nursing”(Horta, 2011, p.2);
- Being-Customer or Patient “can be an individual, a family or a community; [...] who need care for other human at any stage of the life cycle and the health-disease cycle”(Horta, 2011, p.2);
- Being-Nursing is “an abstract Being that manifests itself in the interaction and transaction of the Being-nurse with the Being-client or Patient” (Horta, 2011, p.2).

Presents the theories classified by levels (I-factor isolation, II-factor relationship, III-relationship of situations and IV-prescriptive), and classifies his work as a level IV theory, prescriptive theory, and adds that it is advisable that nursing theories be of this level, and fulfill the following characteristics, purpose and / or scope, complexity, utility, implicit values, validity, be generating information, have their own terminology (Horta, 2011). This type of theory has the highest level of development of the theory, since they prescribe activities necessary to achieve goals. Prescriptive theories approach nursing therapeutics and predict the consequences of the interventions (McEwen and Wills 2015; Meleis, 2011). Thus, it becomes more appropriate to classify Wanda Horta’s work as a conceptual model, defined as a set of abstract and general concepts and propositions, closely related (Fawcett, 2000). The conceptual models creation is also a component of the theory development, promoted to explain and define relationships, structure and links (McEwen and Wills, 2015). Since within a theory there are several components such as purpose, concepts and definitions, theoretical statements, structure and assumptions, elements that are not well understood in Horta’s work.

Al though some concepts are left without clear theoretical or operational definitions, others are well defined, and it adds that from their theory concepts, propositions and principles, which base the nursing science. An example of a clear concept is the Nursing Concept, previously defined; and the Assisting in Nursing Concept. The Assisting concept in Nursing is defined as “[...] to do for the human being what he cannot do for himself; help him or assist him when partially unable to self-care; guide or teach, supervise and refer other professionals [...] ” (Horta, 2011, p.31). From these concepts, some propositions are presented, in a concrete and clear way, as the nurse functions in three areas or fields of action: Specific area, Interdependence or collaboration area and Social area. The specific area is to assist the human being in meeting his basic needs and make him independent of this assistance, when possible, through the teaching of self-care. The interdependence or collaboration area refers to its activity in the health team with regard to the maintenance, promotion and health recovery. The social area corresponds to its performance as a professional in the service of society (Horta, 2011). Also emerging is the Nursing Science discussion, understood by the author as the study of basic human needs, the factors that alter their manifestation and care and the assistance to be provided (Horta, 2011). At another point in her work, the theorist states that science can be defined in different ways, one of them is “a set of organized and systematized knowledge” (Horta, 2011), but for it, nursing is not located, since although it has its own knowledge, these are not organized and systematized. It affirms that nursing is a human activity that accumulated empirical knowledge from a historical and growing point of view (Horta, 2011).

For decades, nursing has sought to define its own knowledge, and for nurses to act efficiently, the author considers that nurses need to develop their work methodology based on the scientific method, called the nursing process (Horta, 2011). Horta brought an important contribution to Brazilian nursing, when introduced in the country, the Nursing Process, clearly conceptualized as a work methodology, composed of systematized and interrelated actions, whose focus is the individual, family or community care (Horta, 2011, p.34). This methodology has six phases: Nursing history; Nursing diagnosis; Care Plan, Nursing Plan or Prescription; Evolution and Prognosis. Her work also clarifies that nurses need to use basic instruments to apply the process, which consist in skills, knowledge and essential attitudes to perform a particular activity, such as observation, communication, scientific method application, scientific principles application, manual dexterity, planning, evaluation, creativity, teamwork, use of community resources (Horta, 2011). The process introduced and differentiated terms such as Nursing Assistance and Nursing Care. The Nursing Assistance concept is clearly defined as “the application by the nurse of the nursing process to provide care and measures aimed at meeting the basic needs of the human being” (Horta, 2011, p.35); and Nursing care is understood as “the planned, deliberate or automatic nurse action, resulting from their perception, observation and analysis of the behavior, situation or condition of the human being” (Horta, 2011, p.35). The proposed model is centered on the Basic Human Needs (NHB), considered the Nursing *Ones*. *Ones*, from the Latin *ens*, is a philosophical concept that means what is, exists or can exist; to be; object. Considering the author’s concern to characterize Nursing as a science, the term entity is used in its conceptual model as a concrete entity, the basic human need, which is part of the human being.

Considering the author's concern to characterize Nursing as a science, the term ones is used in its conceptual model as a concrete one, the basic human need, which is part of the human being. Still from this point of view, she adds that the object of nursing is "[...] to assist the human being in meeting his basic needs, these being the nursing ones" (Horta, 2011). As all science must determine its concrete being, describe it, explain it and predict it, Nursing must describe, explain and predict basic human needs. NHBs are presented and defined as "conscious or unconscious states of tension resulting from hemodynamic imbalances of vital phenomena." It considers that the needs are universal, but variable from one individual to another, and it is influenced by factors such as individuality, age, gender, culture, schooling, socioeconomic issues, health-disease cycle, and physical environment. Nursing problems are seen as "situations or conditions arising from the imbalances of the individual, the family and the community basic needs, and require, in turn, nursing care" (Horta, 2011). It is noteworthy that even the theoretical emphasizing that nursing is rendered to the human being and, not, its illness or imbalance, there is a strong influence of the biomedical model on the author when she relates signs and symptoms (nursing problems) with the unmet human needs, going against the laws that underpinned it, the equilibrium Law (homeostasis), the adaptation Law (adjustment) and the holism Law (human as a whole) (Horta, 2011). In addition, there is a list with the NHBs, but it is perceived in the model that there is no theoretical, operational or descriptive definition of each need and its relations, making it difficult for researchers in the area to relate them and / or perceive distance between them, such as own author suggests. There are examples of need manifestation (need for oxygenation and need for love) with its theoretical definition, but the other needs are not mentioned, she adds only that these two examples can illustrate the complexity and challenge of nursing study.

Identifying relational statements, ways that concepts relate to one another, is not always easy, should perform a deep analysis of the main concepts throughout the theory to establish a relationship between them, either explicitly or implicitly. Not provide clear definitions constitutes a weakness, because it becomes difficult to use consistency in practice, vital for those who want to apply the theory (Walker and Avant, 2011). Although his work has been inspired by Maslow's (humanistic psychologist) human motivation theory, which is based on the basic human Needs, hierarchized on five levels: physiological needs and safety, love, esteem and self-realization, so that the individual only seeks to satisfy a higher level when the former is minimally satisfied. But she does not choose to use this classification, for Maslow places self-realization as the highest human need level. She prefers to use the classification proposed by João Mohana, a Brazilian priest, physician and writer, who classifies psychic life into three distinct and inseparable levels: psychobiological, psychosocial and psycho-spiritual levels, the first two levels being common to all human beings, ranging from individual to individual its manifestation and care, and the third level is an exclusive man feature (Tomey and Alligood, 2004). The strong influence of this author may be related to the religiosity of the theoretical itself, the highlight in the theoretical model of Horta is the spiritual. Mohana considers that the psycho-spiritual level would be superior to the other levels, since it is the only one exclusive of man, bringing to it a "zoological superiority" (Horta, 2011, p.34), only he can find meaning in life. A religious mission or social activity for the author is a way of avoiding human

frustration. A frustrated at the psychosocial level can overcome through the psycho-spiritual level, since it is the only superior to him. But a frustrated on the psycho-spiritual level is considered a caged, without a door and without a key, because he has no other higher level to perform his saving sublimation, then his quest will be in vain, for only God can bring meaning, solidity and peace to the life of man. Only faith makes man whole, entire person, a complete person. The nursing theories development is influenced by several aspects such as: world view, social, political and economic context, commitment to the profession, historical moment and professional experience. These are systematic steps as a way of making explicit the stages of development so that other researchers can review the processes and test hypotheses, generating an advance of nursing theory and science (Garcia and Nóbrega, 2009). Definitions exist to clarify the abstraction nature, and suggests how words representing an idea (concept) must be expressed in reality. The same concept can be defined by several authors in different ways, and within a theory can be drawn, clarified or refined in the attempt to achieve the consistency of meanings. The refinement of the concepts is a continuous process, involving theoretical and operational modifications, so that the theory and its concepts approach the empirical world.

The significance of a definition is related to clinical meaning and its value to nursing practice. If a theory has concepts, definitions, goals, and hypotheses that are grounded in practice, it will not only have practical value but will also improve the theory itself, and consequently the care recipient (Walker and Avant, 2011). The concept definition is essential to know how to classify and discern the phenomenon of interest, and their relation is useful to determine the postulates of a theory, more easily visualizing the relational declarations between two or more concepts or variables. It is essential that concepts be defined as clearly as possible in order to reduce ambiguity in the understanding and use of the concept. If theories are to be tested, then the concepts must be measurable. The theoretical and operational definitions establish reference points to locate the concept, as also the development of theoretical links confers would have the testability. Logical ordering confers conceptual order to theory, so the complete development of theory requires the organization of concepts (Garcia and Nóbrega, 2009).

The conceptual model of Horta includes as main concepts the metaparadigm (health, environment, individual and nursing), assisting, nursing care, nursing care, nursing process, being (nurse, nursing, client), basic human needs (nursing ones) and nursing problems (Figure 1) (Alcântara *et al.*, 2011). These concepts definitions, except those that make up the metaparadigm and the nursing entities, are operational enough to clarify their application in nursing practice. However, before applying the model, the nurse must define the concepts of the metaparadigm and basic human needs in his patient. On the other hand, it is evident the significant contribution of Horta to the Brazilian nursing, its conceptual model served as a guide for several studies, the contribution of the work developed by the Graduate Program in Nursing - University Health Sciences Center on Federal University of Paraíba (PPGENF-CCS / UFPB), who for twelve years has been dedicated to the study and implementation of Basic Human Needs Theory in the various Clinics of a school hospital. (Garcia and Nóbrega, 2009) consider the importance of the Nursing Process proposed by Horta collaboration as the main methodological

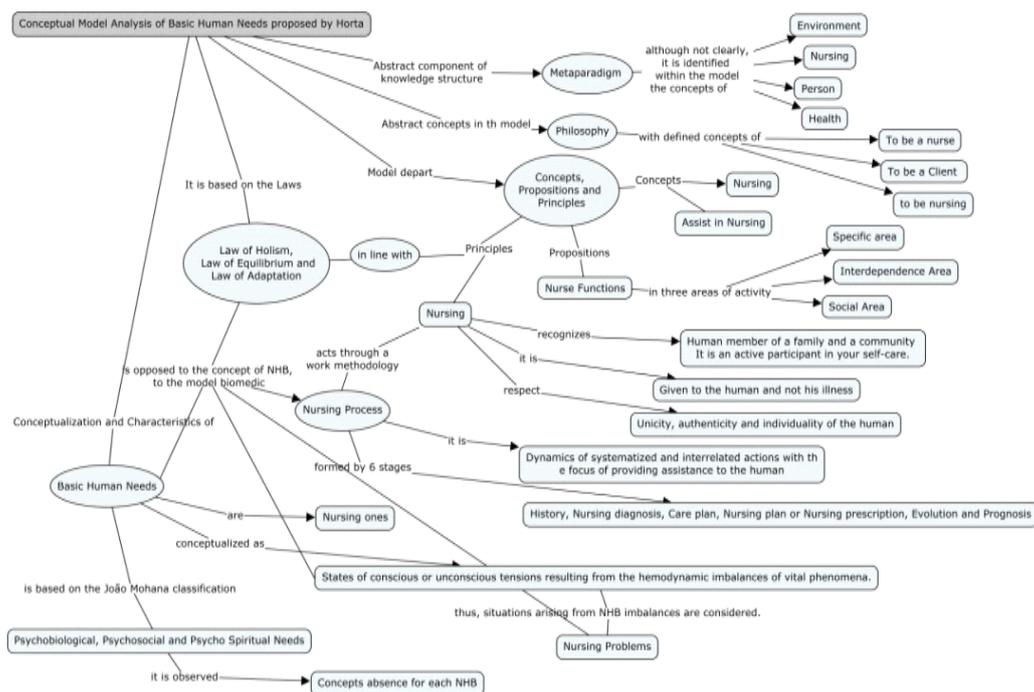


Figure 1. Relation between the Conceptual Model of Horta concepts, João Pessoa, Paraíba, Brazil, 2017

model for the systematic performance of professional practice, or a technological instrument that is used to favor care, to organize the necessary conditions for the care realization and to document professional practice.

### Conclusion

The study provided a critical analysis of the concepts and their interrelations of Horta's conceptual model, in this analysis it was possible to perceive that some concepts are very clear within the model, others, however, still do not have clear definitions, such as each need human beings, and it is unclear to scholars to classify these needs. It was verified that the theoretical model of the Basic Human Needs of Horta presents considerations on philosophy, propositions, some concepts, some definitions and principles.

Theory analysis models are useful in helping researchers validate or refute theories, which can be done in isolation or in all its components. It can be affirmed that studies of critical analysis help not only to clarify the concepts, but also contributes to the search for a body of knowledge specific to nursing and a definite object of study, the human being. This study, therefore, allowed us to deepen the critical analysis models of Walker and Avant that help to improve the theory and, consequently, the nursing as science. This study allowed us to delve deeper into the models of critical analysis of Walker and Avant that helps to improve the model and consequently to nursing as a science.

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