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## RESEARCH

## Breastfeeding during adolescence: life history of first-time mothers\*

Amamentação na adolescência: histórias de vida de mães primíparas

Lactancia en la adolescencia: la historia de vida de madres primíparas

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To identify the factors that influence on primiparous adolescent mothers' breastfeeding and to comprehend the meaning of it to this woman. **Method:** This is a descriptive, of qualitative nature research. The subjects were 14 primiparous adolescent mothers, invited to participate in the research during the puericulture consulting in a Basic Health Care Unit, in Rio de Janeiro. The data were collected using a recorder with application of Life History technique and analyzed with thematic-categorical content. The study was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee of HUPE/UERJ under the N°1116/2005. **Results:** The youngsters revealed the existence of several factors those influence the meaning they attach to breastfeeding as the biological, psychological, social, economic and family aspects, contributing to the construction of a multiplicity of meanings. **Conclusion:** The adolescent mother, when conceive her first baby experiences the emotion and felling associated with maternity and breastfeeding act. **Descriptors:** Breastfeeding, Adolescent, Adolescent health.

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Identificar os fatores que influenciam no aleitamento materno da mãe primípara adolescente e compreender o significado do aleitamento para esta mulher. **Método:** Estudo descritivo de natureza qualitativa. Os sujeitos foram 14 mães adolescentes primíparas, convidadas a participar da investigação durante consulta de puericultura em uma Unidade Básica de Saúde do município do Rio de Janeiro. Os dados foram coletados através de um gravador com emprego da técnica de História de Vida e analisado através de conteúdo temático-categorial. A pesquisa foi apreciada e aprovada pelo Comitê de Ética e Pesquisa do HUPE/UERJ N°1116/2005. **Resultados:** As jovens revelaram a existência de diversos fatores que influenciam no significado que atribuem à amamentação, como os aspectos biológicos, psicológicos, sociais, econômicos e familiares contribuindo à construção de uma multiplicidade de significados. **Conclusão:** A mãe adolescente, ao conceber seu primeiro filho, vivencia a emoção e o sentimento associado à maternidade e o ato de amamentar. **Descritores:** Aleitamento materno, Adolescente, Saúde do adolescente.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Identificar los factores que influyen en la lactancia materna de madres primíparas adolescentes y comprender el significado de la lactancia materna por esta mujer. **Método:** Estudio descriptivo de naturaleza cualitativa. Los sujetos fueron 14 madres primíparas adolescentes, invitadas a participar de la investigación durante la consulta de puericultura en una Unidad Básica de Salud del municipio de Río de Janeiro. Los datos fueron recolectados por una grabadora con el uso de la técnica de historia de vida y analizados mediante el contenido temático-categorial. La investigación fue aprobada por el Comité de Ética e Investigación HUPE/UERJ N°1116/2005. **Resultados:** Las jóvenes revelaron la existencia de varios factores que influyen en el significado que atribuyen a la lactancia materna, como los aspectos biológicos, psicológicos, sociales, económicos y familiares, contribuyendo a la construcción de una multiplicidad de significados. **Conclusión:** La madre adolescente, a concebir su primer hijo, experimenta la emoción y la sensación asociada con la maternidad y el acto de la lactancia. **Descriptor:** Lactancia materna, Adolescente, Salud del adolescente.

\*Research coming from the monograph of completion of course at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, entitled "Breastfeeding in Adolescence: a mandatory practice or maternal instinct", presented in December 2005.

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## INTRODUCTION

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he object of this study is the practice of breastfeeding (BF).

During the twentieth century historical events contributed negatively to the practice of breastfeeding. The process of industrialization, World War II, women's participation in the labor market, aggressive advertising industries producing milk substitutes and incipient knowledge of health professionals to clarify doubts and to promote breastfeeding, decried the adherence of women care for this instinctive, natural and physiological.<sup>1</sup>

Increased complications of decreased supply of breast milk and formulas promoted incorporation of social mobilization, with the participation of international organizations, government agencies, professional societies, companies, non-governmental organizations and the media, who were instrumental in implementing policies public.<sup>2</sup> The benefits of BF to the health and development of children are proven scientifically. One advantage is protection against respiratory and diarrheal diseases due to factors of immune protection that offers. For these factors, the BF was instituted as a simplified strategy in primary care to reduce morbidity and mortality. In addition to lowering the risk of infection and even death in children, breast milk increases the mother-child bond, which allows a better quality of life future.<sup>3-5</sup>

Despite the efforts to elucidate the population about the need and benefits of exclusive breastfeeding until six months of age, data from the Second Survey on Prevalence of Breastfeeding in Brazilian capitals and the Federal District, found that only 41% of infants maintain exclusive breastfeeding until six months, and the median duration of exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) of 54,1 days and 341,6 days for BF.<sup>6</sup> In a study conducted in Rio de Janeiro, it was observed that each month of life the prevalence of EBF 17% decrease.<sup>7</sup>

The factors associated with the practice of BF was the subject of several studies in which showed that women who work, youth / teens with low education, primiparous, who have not breastfed before, with previous negative experiences of breastfeeding, use of supplements in the hospital, no encouragement and support of family, lack of guidelines for BF in prenatal care, poor access to health facilities and who introduced pacifiers or artificial nipples, have adverse consequences for the maintenance of BF and EBF.<sup>5,7-11</sup>

Among the factors presented to delimit this study further investigations regarding primiparous adolescents, because it is an audience with weaknesses and specific, also considering that in Brazil about a quarter of all births occur among teens 10-19 years old.<sup>12</sup>

Adolescence is the period of life in which the individual begins his interaction with the outside world in a more autonomous without, however, having to take on the responsibilities of adulthood, so it is a situation of great ambiguity, since even without being required to the height of an adult, cannot behave like a child. Thus, the adolescent is considered to be a vulnerable social group which is undergoing major transformations biological and mental, hinged to a resizing of identities and social roles.<sup>13</sup>

Adolescent pregnancy is generally faced with difficulty because pregnancy in these conditions means a quick walkthrough of the situation of daughter to mother, wanting lap to give lap. This abrupt transition of the role of women, still in training, for the woman's mother, the teenager lives a conflict situation and in many cases painful. The vast majority are unprepared physically, psychologically, socially and economically to exercise the new maternal role.<sup>14</sup>

The vulnerability of adolescents in relation to pregnancy involves several aspects, among which stands out the fact that the teen mother, in most cases, not be prepared to take care of your child due to lack of experience and immaturity. The fear in taking pregnancy to family slows demand for prenatal service, delaying actions early intervention.<sup>15</sup>

The participation of the social network, culture, society, history and lifestyle, personality, economic status, education level and maturity, together with the existing knowledge about the advantages and disadvantages of breastfeeding, account for subjective questions related to breastfeeding. Health professionals should be aware of nursing, to resolve doubts and prejudices that favor not breastfeeding. Promoting a conversation that respects their beliefs and values, seeking to know them, understand them and question them, even with families, exerting an environment able to influence them on maternal behavior and decisions.<sup>16</sup>

In the context of the experience of breastfeeding by adolescent mothers was delimited as guiding questions for this study: What factors influenced adherence to breastfeeding primiparous adolescent mothers? What is the significance of breastfeeding for teen mom?

To answer these questions were prepared following objectives: To identify factors that influence adherence to breastfeeding by the mother primiparous adolescents, and understand the importance of breastfeeding for the mother teenager.

## METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive study with a qualitative approach. Qualitative research focuses on intuition, exploration and subjectivism, and delves into the world of meanings, actions, and human relations.<sup>17</sup>

The study was conducted at a primary of the Municipality of Rio de Janeiro, with the spatial area the childcare service where children 0-1 year of age are met. Participants were 14 primiparous adolescent mothers randomly selected and as attending routine appointments. The data were collected in the second half of 2005.

The study was previously assessed by the Ethics and Research of the University Hospital Pedro Ernesto/HUPE/UERJ being authorized under number 1116/2005. In this sense, we respected the guidelines and rules for research involving human subjects, established by Resolution 196/96 of the National Health.<sup>18</sup>



To obtain the reports we head to mothers, explaining the objectives of the investigation and to those interested in participating in the study presented the Statement of Consent, asking the young and responsible to sign. To obtain interviews utilized the technique of story life.<sup>19</sup> open, individual interviews conducted with the following question: "Tell me about your life as a teen mother and her experience with breastfeeding." We use the recording feature on tape (cassette) with the prior consent of the interviewees in order to ensure anonymity and reliability of what was said during the interviews.

To preserve the identity of the youth assigned to each an alias with the name of flowers. The number of reports has been conditioned to the saturation of information obtained. Thus, the statements were not closed as they reached the saturation point, ie, began to be repetitive, not adding new facts to the previous reports.<sup>19</sup> Analysis of the reports started from the transcripts of the tapes, procedure initiated immediately after the first interviews, which facilitated the assessment of methodological procedure, creating possibilities for adjustments in interview technique, thus guiding the study.

The analysis procedure was through reading and rereading of testimony, which sought to capture the thematic units converging interviews that culminated in the categorization of findings.<sup>20</sup> In this case we find two broad categories with subcategories, namely: Breastfeeding and its meaning: Feelings and sensations experienced breastfeeding, the importance of prenatal care - guidelines and impact on breastfeeding, Breastfeeding and baby health; Breastfeeding - dilemmas and contrasts in daily life. Adolescence x Motherhood: Family / Partner / Society - support before and after the baby's birth, the influence of example for mother teen, the design of teenage motherhood.

In this article we will be presenting the category related to breastfeeding and its significance for the teenage mothers

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To understand how the young mothers-construct the meaning of breastfeeding initially, we should look at them as teenagers with their life trajectories and later as mothers. It is also necessary to identify the factors that influence the nursing process in adolescence. We realize that there are numerous reports on the factors that influence adherence to BF, which include biological, psychological, social, institutional, economic and family.

Every pregnant woman has a history and a family context in which it operates. In prenatal care is possible to establish the link between the mother and health professional for health care of the woman and her son, knowing their stories and their social context. In many situations, however, the shortcomings of the service may affect the significance of breastfeeding for primiparous teenage mother, as the speech of Bromeliad clarifies:

*I began prenatal care with her (same doctor), but it was horrible, she never put that gadget to listen to the baby's heart, only heard when I was admitted to be, she did not measure my belly, ultra ask? For what? Talking about breastfeeding then! I think she does not even know what it is (laughs), it was horrible, [...] nursed soon as born, I was afraid, I think in the beginning he did not want not, did not know how it was, was afraid to leave my baby fall to the ground. (Bromélia)*

The report Bromeliad denotes that the posture of the healthcare professional, your host may influence the meaning that this woman gives the BF and care of your child. Corroborating this idea, the study highlights the role of health professionals in encouraging the practice of BF emphasizing their responsibility, is contributing to its decline with passive attitudes of indifference and at critical times or success encouraging mothers with active attitudes in times difficult breastfeeding.<sup>21</sup> The guidance provided during the prenatal mothers prepare to deal with potential problems related to the practice of breastfeeding and contribute to the reduction of early weaning.<sup>16</sup>

When the woman is assisted with respect, following the assumptions of humanization in the effects are striking, and significant influence on the meaning of breastfeeding for the teenage mother, as the report clarifies:

*My prenatal breastfeeding really helped me, in the second place I did, right? For the first, where I started doing was awful, the woman did not even look at my face, I was very sad, but then a friend [...]. spoke of a place there Realengo, the Birth Center, [...] but it was the opposite [...] People are lovely the place, the people are one loves, the doctor nurse who did my prenatal was an angel looked like she was reading my thoughts, helped me a lot, so it was there that I learned what had to say .. as she spoke, I could because I was not forced to do anything against my will, I could do with my chest to strengthen finally care, right? [...] So after he was born, I had no difficulties with breastfeeding, [...] love breastfeeding. (Orquídea)*

The report Orchid denotes that the link established between the mother and the health professional was essential for adherence to recommendations for health education of the woman and her child, respecting their lifestyle and cultural aspects.

In this scenario, the family has an important role in understanding and appreciation of the process of breastfeeding for the mothers; the meaning that breastfeeding plays in the household influences the behavior of the adolescent mother. It is in the family context, with significant, that the teenage mother has contact with the beliefs, attitudes, values and customs prevalent in the environment in which it operates.

Assessing the intergenerational effect of breastfeeding duration in a cohort of adolescent mothers, it was observed that the duration of breastfeeding is slightly higher among children whose mothers were breastfed.<sup>22</sup> It was found also that the proportion of adolescents who stopped breastfeeding in the first six months of a child's life, was higher among those who were breastfed for less than one month.

Family support is therefore crucial for the construction of meanings involving maternity and breastfeeding. One interviewee reported:

*Even without experience, I'm getting a lot of help from mother to breastfeed my son, and this causes me to be quieter, and even gives me pleasure. (Acácia)*

The companion also has a significant role in the quality of husband and father. In some situations, your attitude may hinder the process, as noted:

*I offer the breast to my son on the street, in the presence of my husband because he is jealous, and gives the greatest confusion, even fight. (Girassol)*

Analysis of the meanings attributed by adolescent mothers to baby care and self-care, found that young mothers consider the family as a source of support for the time they experience, and its main reference support. The experience and knowledge of other women of the family, who has experienced the postpartum period, are important references for the construction of teenage motherhood. However, in some cases, teens become simple viewers for care to their child losing their autonomy in the family, the underestimate and assume their responsibilities to prevent maternal.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the companion / partner included as a source of social support, economic and emotional for the maintenance of breastfeeding, the study shows that among teenagers these relationships are more unstable and with little support from the partner;<sup>7-8</sup> being necessary appreciation of the father figure in the antenatal and postpartum.

Despite the BF replace the need to purchase food for the infant, other expenses of pregnancy ensues, with a period of financial difficulties, which may lead to the need to start work early or make cuts in the household budget. This situation is aggravated even more in individuals who carry the work autonomously and in the case of adolescents, the return to school contributes to the abandonment of this practice.<sup>5,10</sup>

Another aspect that emerged in the speeches was the anatomical and physiological changes in the body of a woman during pregnancy, manifesting from the first week of gestation and lasting until the postpartum period. We noticed that some of these changes are related to breastfeeding, as the excessive increase in breast pain and cracked nipples. Discussing the topic, the authors highlight the difficulties inherent in the practice of breastfeeding, such as pain, cracking, engorgement, difficulty with the handle acting as inhibitors of the AM process, being important the role of health professionals in the wake of women and family providing technical and scientific support and affective.<sup>10,15,23</sup>

Initial difficulties in the process of BF can modify and influence the meaning of breastfeeding as the experience of the adolescent mother and developing baby.

*I gave, since the beginning, a little cracked right breast [breast], but even so I was, to get hurt, but then relieved, was up hottie, today is really hot now no longer feel pain, and I love breastfeeding. (Orquídea)*

Motherhood in adolescence is often fraught with prejudice and damage. In many situations, it displays the teenage mother as a person without liability, uncompromising, unable to wish beforehand that son. However, in some interviews, we realized the desire prior maternity and breastfeeding influencing the meaning of breastfeeding.

*Then, we decided we wanted to have a child, [...] Until we get [...] People thought I was going crazy, crazy like 18 to have a child, [...] Ah! I really wanted it, give suck,*



*because it was the only thing he could do with the son of the other, is not it? [...] Good thing is to nurse, [...] I was crazy to give the chest, [...], so I gave in maternity and breastfeeding that had already appeared before [...] I'm rather new, but being a mother is the best thing in the world. (Rosa)*

In the story of Rosa can realize the desire of the young mother to conceive a child and nurse him. Thus, while teenage pregnancy is indicated as a negative event and destructuring the lives of young people, in some situations, gestate in adolescence constitutes a possibility of seeking autonomy and responsibility, the conscious desire to be a mother, and even in a source of satisfaction.<sup>24</sup>

It should be noted that professionals should guide the young, while respecting externalize a contrary view:

*Do not want to breastfeed this time not, [...] 2 years is a long time, [...] but have seen my chest goes to the foot (pause for laughs). I'm only 13, I and 15, with the chest at the foot ever thought? (laughs). (Acácia)*

The report Acacia denotes his opinion as to the time you want to breastfeed your child. Health professionals know that the duration of breastfeeding is individualized, ie, a decision of each woman. However, they must be prepared to enlighten them about the myths, popular beliefs, this practice benefits for mother and child, and even seek to propose agreements, with a view to maintaining breastfeeding, yet respecting their choices.

The mother while breastfeeding establishes a relationship of affection and closeness with your child, your eyes meet, emerging emotion and sense of gratification. This connotation may be seized in the following report:

*With breastfeeding [...] I get closer to her, empty out my chest, [...]. She is very gripped me and I'm sure breastfeeding help because by the time I'm breastfeeding and we chat beats bigger, alright I only speak, but we will not talk because she listens to me. [...] Breastfeeding is very good, at least I love. (Flor de Liz)*

Flor de Liz externalizes in his account that the timing of breastfeeding is permeated by feelings of affection, love and closeness. In this sense, it is clear that this particular moment involves the feeling of emotional attachment between mother and child.

Adolescents experience changes in different ways in their daily lives with the arrival of the baby and breastfeed her child. The contexts in which they operate make elect priorities and therefore have different perceptions of the meaning of breastfeeding as the lines denote the following:

*Despite the girls get talking I could not do it, but I got to work, go to forró... Still continued today breastfeed and give much love, I feel the same pleasure. (Palmas)*

*I was breastfeeding at 2 months, then stopped to go to prom, [...] but just stopped because it started out again, go to the dances, too, am a child of God! But like breastfeeding, see? Cool! (Lírio)*



Several factors are associated with the construction of the meaning of BF for the teenage mother. The interviewees' reports denote feelings, sensations and meanings of breastfeeding, perceived not only as an act of providing food for the child, but experienced by young so full, allowing the rapprochement between the mother and her child. To perceive as a source of food for the child, the mother feels empowered and recognizes the importance of their role to ensure the survival of his son.

The empowerment provided by pregnancy and breastfeeding, ie, the fact that women feel the owner of your body makes you decide to be the protagonist of his story. *Azaléia* in his report stated:

Where I live all tell me I have to suckle only one year, because if the child gets stuck in the chest all the time [...] but I decided I'm going to breastfeed when she wants, I'll do what my heart is telling you. (*Azaléia*)

The act of offering her breast to her son takes different meanings for mothers, in some interviews perceive the relationship that adolescents make motherhood with breastfeeding, assuming key role in the construction of motherhood, and the moment you perceive to be responsible for the care and child development, such as *speech elucidates*:

*Well, that actually breastfeeding was very important to me, when I breastfeed for the 1st time it seems like the time I made the realization that I was his mother and that child up to me [...] Like, the breastfeeding was very special to me, showed me the responsibility and work that would from that moment.* (*Flor de Liz*)

In analyzing the interviews we realized that the bond between mother and child has different connotations, now presented as a factor that influences the meaning of breastfeeding, either as a reflection of it, ie, breastfeeding becomes a way of making the link. As the report clarifies:

*That simple thing to give the breast was so important, [...] so it is very good and is very child clinging to you. And you know that the mother is well?! When I came out, I know there was something she felt no greater lack of breastfeeding. Thus, breastfeeding is very good, [...] So I think it is, I love my daughter and me breastfeeding is fundamental in our relationship. So, wondering if she had not caught chest if we would be so well together.* (*Girassol*)

The youth is associated with shorter duration of breastfeeding, perhaps related to the low level of education and financial insecurity, inexperience, lack of family support and companion, the egocentrism typical age or the implications of self-image. However, reports of young mothers are full of meanings related to motherhood at this special time of their lives.<sup>10</sup> Admittedly, with the arrival of the child's life teens takes another dimension. However, being a mother transforms the lives of youth and the experience of breastfeeding helps to bring them closer to their children, strengthening the ties of love and affection between them. The responsibility of the adolescent mother, his involvement with the child, the changes in your life arising from the experience of pregnancy and lactation, changed the lives of young people who took care of their lives and their children.

## CONCLUSION

Breastfeeding is perceived by the adolescents who participated in this study as a natural and instinctive practice that promotes bonding between mother and son.

Analysis of the reports has allowed us to understand that the design of youth, there are factors that interfere with the process of breastfeeding as family support, guidelines for health professionals, the physiological and psychological aspects, among others that will influence and be a mother nurse in adolescence.

When breastfeeding, the mother establishes a relationship of affection and closeness with her son and recognizes the importance of providing the child with food and love. The teenage mother feels empowered with BF, and believes that breastfeeding helps in the construction of motherhood, when it perceives responsible for the care and development of the child conceived.

We believe that the results of this study are well today, despite the interval elapsed since the capture of the interviews, whereas the reports of young mothers could learn that breastfeeding is socially conditioned, and embedded in ideologies related to the family context of each woman. Healthcare professionals it is encouraging the practice of breastfeeding, not restricted exclusively to the mechanical management of breastfeeding, offering emotional support to women overcome fears, insecurities and anxieties, and especially respecting his decision in the practice of breastfeeding.

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