

MOTHER AND SON IN THE CARCERE: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

MÃE E FILHO NO CÁRCERE: UMA REVISÃO SISTEMÁTICA

MADRE E HIJO EN LA CÁRCEL: UNA REVISIÓN SISTEMÁTICA

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Objective: analyze the scientific production about the mother and child relationship in the context of deprivation of liberty. **Methodology:** this is a systematic review of the literature, guided by the descriptors “mother-child relationship”, “prisons”, “newborn” and “child”. Six databases were accessed from the Virtual Health Library and 13 articles that adhered to the theme and the inclusion criteria were selected. **Results:** after the analysis, three categories were outlined: experiencing motherhood in the hostile environment of the prison, mother-child relationship and bond formation in jail and psychic suffering of the separation of the binomial. **Conclusion:** the scientific production on the relationship between mother and child in the context of deprivation of liberty shows that greater attention is needed to the woman who experiences maternity in situations of deprivation of liberty, given that the prison environment has strong implications for the establishment of the mother-child relationship and for the formation of the bond in this binomial.

Descriptors: *Mother-child relationship; Prisons; Newborn; Child.*

Objetivo: analisar a produção científica acerca da relação mãe e filho no contexto de privação de liberdade. Metodologia: trata-se de uma revisão sistemática da literatura, orientada pelos descritores “relação mãe-filho”, “prisões”, “recém-nascido” e “criança”. Foram acessadas seis bases de dados da Biblioteca Virtual de Saúde e selecionados 13 artigos que aderiam à temática e aos critérios de inclusão. Os dados foram analisados e apresentados em categorias. Resultados: após a análise foram delineadas três categorias: vivenciando a maternidade no ambiente hostil da prisão, relação mãe-filho e formação do vínculo no cárcere e sofrimento psíquico da separação do binômio. Conclusão: a produção científica acerca da relação mãe e filho no contexto de privação de liberdade mostra que é necessária maior atenção à mulher que vivencia a maternidade em situação de privação de liberdade, tendo em vista que o ambiente da prisão tem fortes implicações para o estabelecimento da relação mãe-filho e para a formação do vínculo nesse binômio.

Descritores: *Relação mãe-filho. Prisões. Recém-nascido. Criança.*

Objetivo: analizar la producción científica acerca de la relación madre e hijo en el contexto de privación de la libertad. Metodología: se trata de una revisión sistemática de la literatura, orientada por los descriptores “relación madre-hijo”, “prisiones”, “recién nacido” y “niño”. Se accedieron seis bases de datos de la Biblioteca Virtual de Salud y se seleccionaron 13 artículos relacionados a la temática y a los criterios de inclusión. Los datos fueron analizados

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y presentados por categorías. Resultados: después del análisis se delinearon tres categorías: experimentando la maternidad en el ambiente hostil de la cárcel, relación madre-hijo y la formación del vínculo en la cárcel y el sufrimiento psíquico de la separación del binomio. Conclusión: la producción científica acerca de la relación madre e hijo en el contexto de privación de la libertad muestra la necesidad de darle mayor atención a la mujer que experimenta la maternidad en situación de privación de libertad, considerando que el ambiente carcelario tiene fuertes implicaciones en el establecimiento de la relación madre-hijo y en la formación del vínculo de ese binomio.

Descriptores: *Relación madre-hijo. Prisiones. Recién nacido. Niños.*

Introduction

The formation of affective bonds is important for the healthy development of children, as they will influence the formation of their personality and the establishment of the trust that is the basis for the human relationship. When this formation of bonds is established in the prison context, the mother-child relationship may suffer from several influences of the prison system itself.

Studies carried out in Brazil and in other countries show an increase in the number of younger women of childbearing age who experience motherhood behind bars and establish a relationship with their child in this environment⁽¹⁻⁶⁾.

Research carried out in New York state prison has shown that, over the past 30 years, the female prison population in the United States has increased, thus becoming a major public health problem, as over 60% of these female inmates have more than 2 children and 6-10% get pregnant in this context^(5,7).

Data from the *Sistema Integrado de Informações Penitenciárias* (INFOPEN - Integrated Penitentiary Information System) of 2014, conducted by the *Departamento Penitenciário Nacional* (National Penitentiary Department), reported that the number of prisoners increased from 5,601 to 37,380 between 2000 and 2014, a growth of this population of 567% in 15 years⁽⁸⁾. Thus, the female prison population becomes the fifth largest in the world, which brings to light the situation of the mother-child binomial in prison.

In Brazil, one of the first prisons for women appeared in Rio de Janeiro in 1942 and was called the "Special Reformatory", far from male

prisons and under the administration of nuns⁽⁹⁾. In the Brazilian legal system, there is the legal precept of inclusion of nursery and the possibility of day care/section for pregnant and parturient women within the prison units, as recommended by Law no. 11,942/09, which amended the Law on Criminal Executions of 1984⁽¹⁰⁻¹¹⁾. Therefore, women who experience maternity in prison are sent to the Maternal-Infant Unit (nursery), which is another pavilion inside the original penitentiary, staying there until the sixth month of life of their baby. After this period, she is separated from her son and returns to her pavilion^(1,10). The period of stay of mothers with their children is not a consensus in Brazilian penitentiaries. The minimum term is six months, focusing on breastfeeding, and the maximum is one year and 6 months according to Resolution no. 4 of July 15, 2009, of the *Conselho Nacional de Política Criminal e Penitenciária* (CNPCCP - National Council of Criminal and Penitentiary Policy)⁽¹²⁾.

Data from the Maternal and Child Health Survey in prisons in Brazil carried out by the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation in 2012 report that 2% of the total number of women incarcerated was pregnant and in one year 272 women prisoners had their delivery in the public health system. In the country, about 400 children lived with their mothers in prison⁽³⁾.

The unhealthy conditions of the prisons in Brazil, evidenced by their overcrowding, sanitary conditions and precarious hygiene, inadequate food and difficulties in terms of medical, legal and educational assistance⁽¹³⁾ bring to the fore the environment to which these children and

their mothers are exposed and the implications for the health of both.

A study conducted with Palestinian children showed that parental detention greatly affects the psychological well-being of the children involved, with a wide variety of behavioral problems such as posttraumatic stress disorder, enuresis, nightmares and anxiety⁽¹⁴⁾.

Therefore, these women and their children experience risks related to their physical integrity, exposure to infectious diseases and lack of physical infrastructure that leave this dyad in a situation of total vulnerability. It is understood, therefore, that the woman and her baby in prison lose their right to liberty, but the other rights conferred in the 1988 Constitution must be guaranteed to them.

In view of the above, the motivation of this research came after the completion of a university extension project in the female prison in the city of Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. During this period, a large number of women who experienced motherhood in prison and also the complexity of the mother-child relationship in this context were observed.

Thus, this article brings as contributions to nursing the discussion about children and mothers who are deprived of freedom and are attended by the SUS (Unified Health System), whether in the penitentiary complex itself, by the nurse who composes the health team of the prison, or in the area of the Family Health Program. This professional should plan health actions for this binomial, taking into account the SUS principles and the specificities of the prison.

Despite the relevance of the subject, there is little study on this subject. Thus, the gap in the literature identified in this area directed this study to the problem of motherhood in prison, which is particularly complex due to the effects of incarceration on the mother-child dyad and on the formation of affective bonds.

Given this context, the guiding question of this article is: What are the scientific productions about the mother-child relationship in the context of deprivation of liberty?

In order to contribute to the reflection on this problem, the objective of this article is to analyze the scientific production about the mother and child relationship in the context of deprivation of liberty.

Method

This is an exploratory and descriptive study of systematic literature review. The review research can provide an appreciation of the theme under a new approach, arriving at new conclusions, not being the repetition of what has already been said or written⁽¹⁵⁾. This process allows the deepening of the knowledge on the subject, besides pointing out gaps that need to be filled by new studies.

The search for articles was carried out in six electronic databases accessed in the Virtual Health Library (VHL): Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System on-line (MEDLINE), Latin American and Caribbean Literature in Health Sciences (LILACS), Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), National Library of Medicine, USA (PubMed), Nursing Database (BDENF) and Index Psi Technical-Scientific Periodicals.

The descriptors "mother-child relationship", "prisons", "newborn" and "child" were used in the Portuguese language, according to the *Descritores em Ciências da Saúde* (DeCS - Descriptors in Health Sciences) and in English according to the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) "mother-child relations", "prisons", "infant, newborn" and "child", adapted according to the database used.

Three steps were followed in the development of the study: initially the search for the descriptors "mother-child relationship" and "prisons" was performed, using the Boolean operator AND; after with the descriptions "newborn" and "prisons" connected by the Boolean operator AND; and finally, "child" and "prisons." The search was performed in February 2017.

In order to select the sample, the following inclusion criteria were used: to be an original article, indexed in the selected databases, in the Portuguese, English, French and Spanish languages; published between the years 2012

and 2016. The choice of this period met the criterion of temporality, in which the five-year cut was considered, since these are more current publications.

Exclusion criteria were publications of theses, dissertations, monographs and articles that had no adherence to the theme.

The thematic content analysis technique was applied, consisting of two stages: pre-analysis and analysis⁽¹⁶⁾. In the first stage, a floating reading of the texts was carried out, which made possible the constitution of the corpus; followed by an exhaustive reading of those that, grouped by similarity, constituted the categories of analysis, according to the comprehension and transversalization of the discourse by the authors.

Results

The search strategy of this review made it possible to obtain 195 studies; however, some were repeated in the databases and crossings of the descriptors.

In the first crossing with the descriptors “mother-child relationship” AND “prisons” in the LILACS database 21 articles were found. After using the inclusion criteria, only 3 articles remained. After reading the title, abstract and text in full, only 2 met the research objective. In the SciELO and PUBMED databases, no articles were found for these descriptors.

At the intersection with the descriptors “mother-child relationship” AND “prisons”, 32 articles were found in the MEDLINE database. After using the inclusion criteria, only 4 remained. After reading the title, abstract and text in full, there were 2 articles that met the research objective.

When crossing the descriptors “mother-child relationship” AND “prisons” in the BDENF database, 12 articles were found. After inclusion of the title, abstract and text in full, only one met the research objective.

In the crossing with the descriptors “mother-child relationship” AND “prisons” in the database

Index Psychology Scientific-technical journals 6 articles were found. After using the inclusion criteria, only 2 remained. After reading the title, abstract and text in full, only one article met the research objective.

In the second crossing with the descriptors “newborn” AND “prisons” in the LILACS database, 18 articles were found, but only 2 remained after using the inclusion criteria. After reading the title, abstract and text in full, there remained one that met the purpose of the research. In the databases SciELO, BDENF, PUBMED and Index Psychology Periodicals Scientific-technical no articles were found for these descriptors.

At the crossing with the descriptors “newborn” AND “prisons” in the MEDLINE database 34 publications were found, remaining 5 after using the inclusion criteria. After reading the title, abstract and text in full, there were 4 articles that met the research objective.

In the third crossing with the descriptors “child” AND “prison” in the LILACS database, 19 publications were found, leaving only 1 article after the use of the inclusion and reading criteria of titles and abstracts. In the databases SciELO, BDENF, PUBMED and Index Psychology Periodicals Scientific-technical no articles were found for these descriptors.

At crossing the descriptors “child” AND “prisons” in the MEDLINE database, 53 publications were found, leaving only 1 article after using the criteria of inclusion and reading of title, abstract and text in full.

Therefore, of the 195 articles found that contemplated the theme under the understanding of several disciplines of the health area, after the use of the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 22 articles were selected. These were saved in doc and pdf files and stored in their own folders, being identified according to the research focus. This material was then read in its entirety and analyzed carefully. This deepening of the readings allowed the selection of 13 articles, which were compatible with the research objective (Table 1).

Table 1 – Total articles found in databases and selected after reading according to search strategy. Salvador, Bahia, Brazil – 2017

Search strategy	Database	Total articles found	Total articles selected after inclusion and exclusion criteria	Total of articles selected after reading		
				Title	Abstract	In full
Mother-child relationship AND prisons	LILACS	21	3	2	2	2
	SciELO	-	-	-	-	-
	MEDLINE	32	4	2	2	2
	BDENF	12	2	1	1	1
	PUBMED	-	-	-	-	-
	Index Psi Technical-Scientific Periodicals	6	2	1	1	1
Newborn AND prisons	LILACS	18	2	1	1	1
	SciELO	-	-	-	-	-
	MEDLINE	34	5	4	4	4
	BDENF	-	-	-	-	-
	PUBMED	-	-	-	-	-
	Index Psi Technical-Scientific Periodicals	-	-	-	-	-
Child AND prisons	LILACS	19	2	1	1	1
	SciELO	-	-	-	-	-
	MEDLINE	53	2	1	1	1
	BDENF	-	-	-	-	-
	PUBMED	-	-	-	-	-
	Index Psi Technical-Scientific Periodicals	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL		195	22	13	13	13

Source: Created by the authors.

Note: Conventional signal used:

- Numeric data equal to zero not resulting from rounding.

After reading, a chart was created with the classification of articles in relation to author, title, journal, country and year of publication (Chart 1).

Chart 1 – Total articles sorted by author, title, journal, and year and country of publication. Salvador, Bahia, Brazil – 2017

(to be continued)

No.	Author	Title	Journal	Country and year of publication
1	Matão MEL, Miranda DB, Malaquias A, Souza EL ⁽¹⁶⁾	Maternidade atrás das grades: particularidades do binômio mãe e filho	Rev enferm Centro-Oeste Min	Brazil 2016
2	França AMB, Silva JMO ⁽¹⁷⁾	A mulher em situação de prisão e a vivência da maternidade	Rev enferm UFPE on line	Brazil 2016

Chart 1 – Total articles sorted by author, title, journal, and year and country of publication. Salvador, Bahia, Brazil – 2017

(conclusion)

No.	Author	Title	Journal	Country and year of publication
3	Soares IR, Cenci CMB, Oliveira LRF ⁽⁹⁾	Mães no cárcere: percepção de vínculos com os filhos	Estud Pesqui Psicol	Brazil 2016
4	Leal MC, Ayres BVS, Pereira APE, Sánchez AR, Larouze B ⁽³⁾	Nascer na prisão: gestação e parto atrás das grades no Brasil	Ciênc Saúde Coletiva	Brazil 2016
5	Ventura M, Simas L, Larouze B ⁽⁴⁾	Maternidade atrás das grades: em busca da cidadania e saúde. Um estudo sobre a legislação brasileira	Cad Saúde Pública	Brazil 2015
6	França AMB, Silva JMO ⁽¹⁸⁾	Maternidade em situação de prisão	Rev baiana enferm	Brazil 2015
7	Mares S, Zwi K ⁽¹⁹⁾	Sadness and fear: The experiences of children and families in remote Australian immigration detention	J Paediatr Child Health	Australia 2015
8	Turney K ⁽²⁰⁾	Stress proliferation across generations? Examining the relationship between parental incarceration and childhood health	J Health Soc Behav	USA 2014
9	Goshin LS, Byrne MW, Henninger, AM ⁽⁵⁾	Recidivism after release from a prison nursery program	Public Health Nurs	USA 2013
10	Sutherland MA ⁽²¹⁾	Incarceration during pregnancy: implications for women, newborns and health care providers	Nurs Womens Health	USA 2013
11	Haroche F ⁽⁶⁾	Ameliorer la situation des mères et des enfants en prison	Soins PEDIATR Pueric	France 2013
12	Goshin LS, Byrne MW, Henninger AM ⁽⁷⁾	Predictors of post-release research retention and subsequent reenrollment for women recruited while incarcerated	Res Nurs Health	USA 2012
13	Huang K, Atlas R, Parvez F ⁽²²⁾	The significance of breastfeeding to incarcerated pregnant women: an exploratory study	Birth	USA 2012

Source: Created by the authors.

Discussion

Three categories emerged to provide a better understanding of the analyzed material, so called: experiencing gestation in jail, formation of affective attachment mother and son in jail and psychic suffering of the binomial separation.

Experiencing gestation in the carcere

Women's penitentiaries' construction in Brazil was based on the male prisoner and does not contemplate the specificities of women, especially the pregnant ones⁽²³⁾. Female incarceration brings with it the possibility of

experiencing the puerperal pregnancy cycle in prison, the woman being pregnant at the time of her arrest or becoming pregnant during her incarceration time.

Historically, imprisonment is seen as a dangerous environment, of helplessness, deprivation of liberty, marked by precariousness, overcrowding, poor hygiene, small cells and by disrespect for the individual rights of prisoners^(3,9).

Findings from the research carried out in a prison in Alagoas revealed that the prison environment, due to its heterogeneity, poses risks of physical and psychic nature, plus, especially, transmission of infectious diseases, thus increasing the vulnerability of mothers and their children^(17,18).

Scientific evidence indicates that the impact of adversity during pregnancy, including exposure to violence, trauma and loneliness, may interfere with the child's normal development and affect the health and well-being of the child throughout his or her life⁽¹⁹⁾.

A longitudinal study conducted in the USA, using data from the National Child Health Survey between 2011 and 2012, estimated the relationship between parental incarceration and child health in general. The study demonstrated a variety of physical and mental health conditions, activity limitations, and school absenteeism, as well as demonstrating that children of incarcerated parents constitute a vulnerable population and are impacted by the stress of incarceration in their lives⁽²⁰⁾.

Another study carried out by US nurses working in delivery and postpartum facilities at correctional institutions on incarceration during pregnancy and the implications for women and newborns has shown that pregnant women incarcerated were particularly vulnerable due to the prison environment itself and the reduction of their access to health services, evidenced by the low coverage of prenatal care, the difficulty to perform the exams during pregnancy and the little care provided during delivery and postpartum⁽²¹⁾.

Gestation and birth are social events that mark important moments in the life of the woman

and the child. It is a unique and permeated experience of specificities. From the beginning of pregnancy, the emotion that the mother experiences in the pregnancy state is transmitted to the fetus. Therefore, gestation experienced in an adverse context, such as jail, has significant repercussions for both women's life and their children.

Formation of affective bond between mother and child in prison

The bond built by the pregnant woman with the baby during the gestation process has been considered an important indicator of the quality of the relationship that the binomial will establish in the first months of life. Some factors may interfere with this mother-child relationship and will have direct implications for the establishment of these links, among them the situation of maternal incarceration.

A study of the particularities of the binomial behind the bars revealed that the mother-child bond within prison is intriguing due to the nonconformities of the prison space. It interferes in the biopsychosocial development of children, due to the closed cell's own environment, the rules of the prison system, the poor hygiene conditions, the conglomeration of people, the spread of infectious diseases and the fragility of support networks⁽¹⁶⁾.

The onset of affective attachment is closely related to the experience of childbirth and the first mother-child encounters. Thus, to provide the immediate contact of this binomial, soon after birth, is fundamental for the creation of the bond. Research carried out on the perception of women in situations of deprivation of liberty highlights that prisoners show that incarceration weakens the bond between mothers and children and compromises the care relationship⁽⁹⁾.

Children need to feel cared for to establish the so-called security base between them and the attachment figures, which will provide them with a structure that will influence their whole life. Therefore, it is fundamental that, even in a

prison context, there is an environment for the mother to experience the bonding with her child.

An exploratory study on the significance of breastfeeding for pregnant women incarcerated revealed that breastfeeding was the main factor in establishing a close relationship with their baby. Almost all the women interviewed believed that breastfeeding was an important and natural way of relating to their children, and they said that "breastfeeding is connecting". Breastfeeding thus contributed to strengthening the maternal identity and for these women to develop their maternal role of protection, provision and bonding with their babies⁽²²⁾.

The permanence of newborns/infants with their mothers becomes, in fact, important not only for the children but for both, because this presence softens the shock and the sentence, causing the mothers themselves not to feel the loneliness, which may make the experience of the prison less cumbersome⁽¹⁶⁾.

Therefore, the particularities of the bond between mothers and children, regardless of where they are, are striking. Even in a prison setting, the presence of mothers with their warmth and bond is relevant for children to establish a healthy relationship with themselves and others, as these mothers in deprivation of liberty unconditionally demonstrate love and care for their children.

Finally, it is in the first months of coexistence between mother and child that the perception about motherhood develops and the need for bonding arises. When the child begins to self-regulate, the mother represents safety and limit in the development process, having a fundamental role in the child's life⁽⁹⁾.

Psychic suffering in the separation of the binomial

The process of separation between mother and child characterizes motherhood as painful and generates feelings of loss and impotence. For the mothers who participated in the research in a female prison in the north of Rio Grande do Sul, the separation due to incarceration

weakened the bond between mother and child and compromised the care relationship⁽⁹⁾.

The prison itself promotes emotional damage and generates anxiety that brings suffering inherent to the deprivation of liberty⁽¹⁸⁾. When motherhood is experienced in this context, another factor arises, which is the separation that will occur between mother and child.

In the USA there are several programs for eligible incarcerated women to take care of their children during breastfeeding up to approximately 18 months. However, the most prevalent policy in the country is to separate the child from her mother within the first 48 hours after childbirth⁽⁷⁾.

In Brazil, according to the Criminal Enforcement Law and Law no. 11,942/2009, women have the right to remain with their children up to 6 months. After that time, the baby is separated from the mother⁽¹⁰⁾. After separation from the mother, this child may be referred to a family member (first the father, if he is at liberty, the grandparents or the uncles), according to court order. In case of impossibility of the family and in the penitentiary units that have nursery, these children are referred to day care centers (staying there until the age of 7). The third possibility is the referral of the child to institutions called shelters.

Psychiatric studies emphasize that separating mother and child can lead to problems in the full development of children's mental health in the first years of life. This discontinuity of attachment and affection in the first years of life may lead to future problems of character disorder, neurosis and psychopathy. Therefore, the early separation between mother and child exerts a strong influence on the development of the child's personality⁽¹⁶⁾.

Longitudinal surveys in the oldest American prison point out that children who had the nursery experience with their mothers and were breastfed and enjoyed more time together with their mothers had better results regarding problems related to child development compared to children who were separated of their mothers. Therefore, children separated from their mothers

presented greater behavioral disorders, anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress with strong repercussions on mental health⁽⁵⁾.

The role of nurses in caring for these children and their mothers in deprivation of liberty is essential, given that the National Policy for Integral Attention to the Health of Persons Deprived of Liberty in the Prison System (PNAISP) ensures the inclusion of the prison population in the *Sistema Único de Saúde* (SUS - Unified Health System).

Among the limitations of this study, we highlight the small number of articles found that assessed the follow-up of children after their release from prison and the physical and psychic repercussions on child development.

Conclusion

The study showed the impact of the prison environment for the formation of the mother-child relationship and the construction of the bond between them, an essential factor for children's physical and mental health, with a strong impact on their development.

There were a small number of scientific articles that addressed this theme, evidencing the need to expand research in this area, focusing on studies to follow up children who leave Brazilian prisons. The publications focused on the years 2015 and 2016, highlighting the urgency of studies on the unfolding of the prison in the physical and psychological development of these children, since the great part of them, when leaving the prison context, continues to live in situations of extreme social vulnerability.

It is concluded that greater attention is needed to the woman who experiences maternity in a situation of deprivation of liberty, since the prison environment has strong implications for the establishment of the mother-child relationship and their bond formation.

These reflections point to the need to grant those mothers and children who experience social, legal and administrative invisibility the rights already guaranteed by the Constitution, since the mother-child dyad is exposed to a

situation of vulnerability with repercussions on the whole biopsychological process of the child and mother, who will be harmed in this prison context and should be assisted in order to minimize complications.

Collaborations:

1. conception, project, analysis and interpretation of data: Denise Santana Silva dos Santos;
2. article writing and relevant critical review of the intellectual content: Denise Santana Silva dos Santos;
3. final approval of the version to be published: Tânia Christiane Ferreira Bispo.

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