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# The perception of adolescents in front of conflicts experienced in pregnancy

Percepción de los adolescentes sobre los conflictos vividos durante el embarazo

A percepção das adolescentes frente aos conflitos vivenciados na gravidez

## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To describe the conflicts experienced by pregnant adolescents. **Method:** This is an exploratory study, with a qualitative approach conducted with thirteen adolescents who underwent prenatal care at UBS Baixinha in the municipality of Caxias-Ma from January 2018 to August 2019. The production of the data was carried out through semi-structured interviews and analyzed by the Descending Hierarchical Classification, after processing in the IRaMuTeQ software. **Results:** They were presented in two segments: the first segment was subdivided giving rise to classes 5, 4, 3, 2 and 7 linked to conflicts experienced during pregnancy and the second branch originated classes 1 and 6, related to life plans. **Conclusion:** Pregnancy is a period that adolescents need support from their families and society as a whole, as the motherhood process contributes to adolescents abandoning their studies and postponing their life plans.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Pregnancy; Adolescent; Pregnancy in Adolescence.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Describir los conflictos vividos por adolescentes embarazadas. **Método:** Se trata de un estudio exploratorio, con abordaje cualitativo realizado con trece adolescentes que se sometieron a atención prenatal en la UBS Baixinha en el municipio de Caxias-Ma desde enero de 2018 a agosto de 2019. La producción de los datos se realizó mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas y analizadas por la Clasificación Jerárquica Descendente, luego de procesadas en el software IRaMuTeQ. **Resultados:** Se presentaron en dos segmentos: el primer segmento se subdividió dando lugar a las clases 5, 4, 3, 2 y 7 vinculadas a los conflictos vividos durante el embarazo y la segunda rama originó las clases 1 y 6, relacionadas con los planes de vida. **Conclusión:** El embarazo es un período que las adolescentes necesitan del apoyo de sus familias y de la sociedad en su conjunto, ya que el proceso de maternidad contribuye a que las adolescentes abandonen sus estudios y pospongan sus planes de vida.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Embarazo; Adolescente; Embarazo en Adolescencia.

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Descrever os conflitos vivenciados por adolescentes grávidas. **Método:** Trata-se de um estudo exploratório, com abordagem qualitativa realizado com treze adolescentes que realizaram pré-natal na UBS Baixinha no município de Caxias-Ma no período de Janeiro de 2018 a Agosto de 2019. A produção dos dados foi realizada por meio de entrevista semiestruturada e analisada pela Classificação Hierárquica Descendente, após processamento no software IRaMuTeQ. **Resultados:** Foram apresentados em dois segmentos: o primeiro segmento subdividiu-se dando origem as classes 5, 4, 3, 2 e 7 ligadas aos conflitos vivenciados durante a gestação e a segunda ramificação originou as classes 1 e 6, relacionadas aos planos de vida. **Conclusão:** A gravidez é um período que as adolescentes precisam de apoio da família e de toda a sociedade, pois o processo da maternidade contribui para as adolescentes abandonarem os estudos e postergar os planos de vida.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Gravidez; Adolescência; Gravidez na adolescência.

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**INTRODUCTION**

In Brazil, individuals between 10 and 19 years of age are used as a parameter to consider adolescents, according to the classification of the World Health Organization (WHO), it is the stage of human development characterized by the transition to adulthood. During this period, important changes occur in physical, emotional and psychological development, thus, it is considered a period of vulnerability, associated with risky behaviors such as drug abuse and unprotected sexual practices, which brings a risk of sexually transmitted infections and non-planned pregnancies.<sup>(1-2)</sup>

Although the numbers of pregnant teenagers in Brazil have decreased in recent years, they remain a concern. After analyzing a preliminary data report from DATASUS-SINASC (Information System on Live Births) 2015, the number of pregnant teenagers in the country was 18,1% nationwide. In 2019, this rate dropped to 14,7%, and of these, 14,1% were aged between 15 and 19 years old. In Brazil, for every thousand teenagers, 53 get pregnant early, according to the latest report on the situation of the world population, released by the UN Population Fund in 2020. This index showed a slight improvement in relation to the previous year's report, from 2019, when the rate was 62 per thousand. Even so, the Brazilian average is above the world index, of 41 per thousand.<sup>(3,6)</sup>

As for demographic distribution, the Northeast and Southeast regions of Brazil have higher rates of teenage pregnancy than other national regions. The region with the highest number of tee-

nage mothers is the Northeast region, with 180.000 births or 32% of the total, followed by the Southeast region, with 179,2 thousand (32%), the North region with 81,4 thousand (14%), the South region (62.475 – 11%) and the Center West (43.342 – 8%).<sup>(7)</sup>

In the state of Maranhão, the number of live births to teenagers in 2019 was 25.744 thousand, or 17,9% of the regional average, and of these, 16,9% were between 15 and 19 years of age. In the city of Caxias-MA, 31 live births to adolescents aged 10 to 14 years were registered, and between 15 and 19 years there were 565, which represents 2,2% of all pregnancies in this age group in the state of Maranhão.<sup>(5)</sup>

Early teenage pregnancy has serious consequences for the health of teenage mothers and their newborns. Pregnancy and childbirth complications are the leading cause of death among girls aged 15-19 worldwide. Pregnant women aged between 10 and 19 years face greater risks of eclampsia, puerperal endometritis and systemic infections than women aged between 20 and 24 years. In addition, an estimated 3,9 million unsafe abortions among 15- to 19-year-old girls occur each year, contributing to maternal mortality, morbidity and long-lasting health problems.<sup>(1)</sup>

In addition to obstetric and perinatal vulnerabilities and complications, it is important to emphasize that school dropout is much more prevalent among adolescents who become pregnant compared to those who do not. Worldwide, pregnancies at this stage of development are more likely to occur in poorer communities,

commonly driven by poverty and lack of education and employment opportunities. Thus, teenage pregnancy, even when desired, has permanent consequences for society and affects the human development of their communities.<sup>(1-2)</sup>

Adolescent pregnancy can overlap with the crisis of adolescence, as it requires a whole mechanism to restructure its identity by abandoning the child's role and standards. Pregnancy occurring at this stage of life triggers a new search for redefining roles, with new conflicts capable of causing a greater disruption of the personality, articulated with organic and psychic changes.<sup>(8)</sup>

Thus, the study is justified by the importance of pregnancy during adolescence, as it represents a psychosocial issue, as it brings together emotional, psychological, sexual, social and cultural conflicts. Reactions such as fear, insecurity, despair, disorientation and loneliness are very common, especially when the pregnancy is discovered.<sup>(9)</sup>

The study sought to answer the following question: "What is the perception of adolescents regarding the conflicts experienced in pregnancy?" The objective, therefore, was to describe the conflicts experienced by pregnant teenagers.

**METHOD**

This is an exploratory study with a qualitative approach carried out with thirteen adolescents who underwent prenatal care at UBS Baixinha in the city of Caxias -Ma, from January 2018 to August 2019. Pregnant women who had less than three (03) prenatal consultations were excluded from

the study, as it is considered that the adolescent did not create a bond of trust with the team. The main source of data collection was a semi-structured interview according to objectives to be achieved. The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed, one by one.

When at the adolescents' homes, by scheduling the day and time, they were asked to sign the Informed Assent Term, it was accessible and adapted to their level of understanding, with information about the research and its objectives so that they were aware of what they would be participating in, in addition to emphasizing the freedom to stop participating whenever they want, allowing them to choose whether or not to participate in the research and to sign the document confirming their choice. The Informed Consent Form (ICF) was requested by the responsible of the research collaborators to sign authorizing the interview. The Term Informed Assent and the ICF were in two copies, keeping one in the power of the collaborator and responsible respectively and the other with the researcher. Subsequently, a semi-structured interview with questions that answered the research objectives was carried out individually, in an environment of the residence in which the adolescent felt comfortable and kept her privacy. The interviews lasted an average of 15 to 20 minutes.

To analyze the textual contents, the techniques of descending hierarchical classification, similarity analysis and word cloud were used, in which they graphically organize according to their frequency. These analysis techniques easily allowed their identification through a single file, properly configured in text format and called Rapport or corpus and text segments, which correspond to the original texts of the interview. After transcribing and reading the archived material, an analytical model composed of categories was built, which will correspond to the classes of words generated by the IRAMUTEQ software.

The interpretive analysis of the corpus was carried out using Bardin's Content Analysis, which consists of a methodological technique that can be applied to different discourses and to all forms of communication, whatever the nature of its support. In the quantitative approach, a frequency of characteristics (words) that are repeated in the text content is drawn, and in the qualitative approach, the set of characteristics in a given fragment of content is considered, and this was possible with the use of the IRAMUTEQ software.<sup>(10-11)</sup>

The ethical precepts were followed as determined by law, and the research project was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the State University of

Maranhão (UEMA - Universidade Estadual do Maranhão) and approved under opinion number 3.692.374 and CAAE: 22340919.0.0000.5554.

## RESULTS

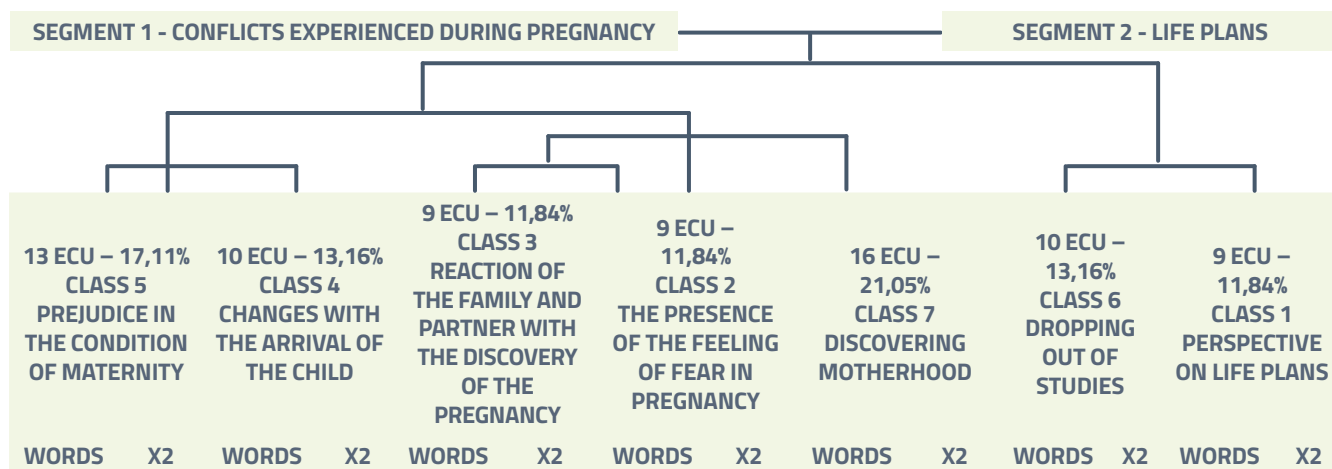
After processing the statements, the software recognized the corpus in eighty-six Elementary Context Units (ECU) from thirteen Initial Context Units (ICU), with the occurrence of 3.028 words and use of 88,37%. The corpus underwent divisions and subdivisions that gave rise to two segments. The first segment was subdivided giving rise to classes 5, 4, 3, 2 and 7 linked to conflicts experienced during pregnancy and the second branch originated classes 1 and 6, related to life plans. Figure 1 shows the Dendrogram with the spatial distribution of classes and the most relevant words.

From the dendrogram, the analysis of the seven classes provided by the IRAMUTEQ software began, in which the ECU grouped in each class were read exhaustively to understand and name each class below.

### Class 5 – Prejudice in the condition of maternity

Based on the adolescents' testimony, it is possible to identify the prejudice suffered by them. They report that the young

Figure 1: Dendrogram of classes obtained from the corpus. Caxias-MA, Brazil, 2020.



Dizer	30.05	Tio	20.93	Planejar	39.84	Pegar	31.43	Porque	15.66	Estudar	22.11	Engravidar	33.05
Família	8.72	Morrer	20.93	Feliz	17.69	Medo	21.71	Já	13.45	Muito	12.44	Aconselhar	31.43
Querer	7.29	Tudo	13.05	Gestação	16.06	Passar	10.39	Descobrir	12.78	Bom	8.75	Hoje	18.69
Deixar	5.41	Morar	10.62	Mãe	6.41	Mandar	8.99	Alegre	11.71	Menina	7.83	Plano	17.69
Mulher	5.41	Aí	10.14	Normal	5.89	Dia	8.99	Mês	9.24	Quando	4.3	Nada	11.89
Triste	5.41	Menos	7.83	Chorar	5.89	Hora	8.99	Gostar	8.15	Escola	3.37	Faculdade	9.09
Homem	5.41	Como	7.83	Pai	5.27	Barriga	8.99	Falar	7.18	Continuar	3.37	Melhor	8.99
Filho	5.11	Pai	7.18	Ficar	4.14	Só	7.41	Mãe	6.49	Vez	3.37	Difícil	8.99
Terminar	4.97	Querer	6.06	Gente	4.06	Depois	4.6	Novo	6.04	Faculdade	2.32	Gravidez	7.31
Ainda	4.97	Nascer	5.02	Bem	4.06	Vida	4.06	Quando	5.71	Mim	10.28	Filho	6.48
Neném	2.69	Casa	3.64	Neném	3.98	Momento	4.06	Ficar	4.2	Sem	3.37	Bem	4.06
Morar	2.62	Depois	3.57	Medo	3.93	Gestação	4.06	Ficar	3.91	Pessoa	2.86	Continuar	4.06
Coisa	2.62	Nada	3.37	Só	3.93	Começar	3.64	Logo	3.91	Fazer	2.49	Estudar	3.64
A	4.59	Sozinho	2.32	Início	2.88	Pensar	2.88	Reação	3.91			Não	3.44
		Outro	7.26	Pensar	2.36	Aceitar	2.36	Menstruação	3.91			Mais	2.88
		Meu	3.84	Família	2.07	Em	2.07	Saber	3.36			Sentir	2.88
		Todo	3.64	Novo	2.07	Nenhum	14.04	Também	3.36			Trabalhar	9.09
		Por	2.48	O	4.02	Ir	7.1	Depois	2.22			Este	8.99
		Minha	2.37	Minha	3.79	Com	5.31	Vir	2.13			Ter	5.31
				Por	3.51	Primeiro	4.06	Sair	2.13				
						Eu	2.72	Três	7.39				
						Ter	2.42	Estar	7.21				
						Tempo	2.07	Tempo	6.04				
								Um	4.61				
								Ninguém	3.91				
								Comigo	2.21				

age reflects an immaturity in caring for the child, in addition to being advised to abandon the child or give it to a third person to take care of it.

*[...] people argued with me, they used to say that I was too young to*

*have a child and when I had the baby I was supposed to leave it at the door of a house. (A5)  
She (mother) was sad and wanted to give my daughter when she was born. I was scared. (A6)*

#### Class 4 – Changes with the arrival of the child

The baby's birth was presented as a moment of change with positive impacts for both the teenager and her family members, among them, the teenagers mentioned: joy at home, welcoming from schoolmates and family.

*My father now, after the baby was born, is in love with her. (A12)*  
*[...] after I had the baby everything was different, everyone at school started talking to me. It was a treat back and forth. (A8).*

### Class 3 – Reaction of the family and partner with the discovery of the pregnancy

As reported by the teenagers, the partners, faced with the news of the pregnancy, revealed the desire to be a father whether the pregnancy was planned or not.

*My pregnancy was not planned, but the baby's father was happy. (A2)*  
*[...] the baby's father was happy. (A7)*

However, it was difficult for the family to accept at first, the mother being the member of the family who most disapproved of their daughters' pregnancy, followed by the father.

*My mother was very angry because I got pregnant again. But now everything is normal. (A1)*  
*My mother at first freaked out, but then she was fine. (A4)*

However, one teenager mentioned that her parents were happy with the news of the pregnancy.

*My mother was delighted, because she would be a grandmother, and the grandfather got worse, he just keeps sending presents and money (A3)*

### Class 2 – The presence of the feeling of fear in pregnancy

Adolescents report the feeling of fear at some point during pregnancy, whether during labor, due to marital problems, discovery and experience of motherhood. In addition to the fear of dying due to a pregnancy with complications.

*I was afraid only at the time of delivery, I was very nervous. (A13)*  
*[...] at first I was scared, a first-time mother, right? (A11)*  
*[...] he (partner) made my life hell. I was afraid, angry, I suffered too much. (A5)*

### Class 7 – Discovering motherhood

Adolescents report feelings of panic, disappointment, surprise, fear and joy when they discover the pregnancy even though they had planned it.

*[...] when I found out I was too happy, I never imagined it. (A1)*  
*My reaction was panic. I was afraid my mom would find out and hit her, argue with me. (A3)*  
*I was disappointed for disappointing her (the teenager's guardian). (A5)*  
*I cried a lot and kept thinking that I would have to drop out of school. (A12)*

### Class 6 – Dropping out of studies

Some teenagers dropped out of school due to pregnancy and childbirth and reported feeling sad about this, but expressing the desire to go back to complete high school and/or enter higher education.

*When I see the people who studied with me have finished their studies, sometimes I feel sad, but I have faith, it's never too late to finish our studies. (A8)*  
*[...] but in the future I intend to study. (A10)*

### Class 1 – Perspective on life plans

The teenagers confess that the plans they had for their lives were postponed, but that they remain the same, but with different priorities, to offer a better future for their children.

*The plans I had before getting pregnant remain the same. Plans to finish school, go to college and now I*

*have one more reason, pregnancy, it's a lot of responsibility. (A10)*

Unlike most, a teenager claims that her life plans changed after pregnancy, but she has not defined them.

*Today my plans have changed, but I still can't say what they are. I do not advise getting pregnant, having children in adolescence (A9).*

## DISCUSSION

The discovery of teenage pregnancy brings up several feelings, such as the fear of telling the family, the fear of the parents' disappointment, despair, doubt, uncertainty regarding the situation of motherhood and prejudice. The existence of prejudice occurs both on the part of the family and society. Adolescents feel intimidated to address issues involving sexuality due to feelings of reprimand imposed and when they become pregnant these feelings tend to surface, intensifying judgments and prejudices.<sup>(12)</sup>

Family involvement occurs positively after the baby is born. A closer relationship with the family and partner of these teenagers is perceived, also starting to show greater care and protection. The teenagers' mothers describe feelings such as happiness, joy and support in the relationship with their daughters through dialogue and accompanying the teenagers during the new phase. The maternal figure emerges as an axis for the continuation of life projects, as well as the strengthening of family bonds. Although they accepted the pregnancy, they demonstrated that they did not like the news upon receiving it, as did the father, making it difficult to deal with such a situation.<sup>(13, 15)</sup>

As for the spouses' reaction, despite being shocked by the news of fatherhood during adolescence, they manage to start the process of being a father, exercising roles, skills and knowledge not previously developed by them. The partners' reactions to the teenage pregnancy range from immediate acceptance to negative reac-

tions, including from doubts and questions about the child's real paternity to the suggestion of abortion.<sup>(13-14)</sup>

Upon discovering the pregnancy, the adolescents present feelings of insecurity, fear and rejection, as they do not feel prepared to exercise the role of mother. The first reaction is described as a fright, both for them and for the family, caused by not planning the pregnancy and possible denial of the condition of having a child. In view of these feelings experienced, the family and partner support network has as its main function to raise self-esteem and prevent further psychological trauma resulting from the transformations arising from a teenage pregnancy.<sup>(12, 14)</sup>

Maternity reduces women's attendance at school. Previous experiences, such as having witnessed trials of other pregnant teenagers, make them absent from school to avoid embarrassment. In addition to un-

derstanding that dedication to the child is a priority and that studies can be resumed in the future. In this sense, early pregnancy can bring disadvantages to the educational trajectory of the adolescent, contributing to school dropout and making it difficult to return to school. Thus, teenage pregnancy is associated with high school dropout rates. However, they plan to return to school to increase the possibility of offering opportunities for their children's future.<sup>(9,12)</sup>

The lack of perspective for the future in some young women indicates that the adolescent is not prepared to deal with the reality of having to assume responsibilities that imply having a child, such as the support and care a child needs. Thus, the plans to pursue a profession are uncertain, as now the baby needs to be taken care of. The fact of having a child brings with it the meaning of a change in the routine and also in the adolescents' life planning.<sup>(12)</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Adolescents suffer prejudice during pregnancy, they are seen by family members and society as incapable of caring for a child. Faced with the news of the discovery of pregnancy, they reveal the difficult acceptance by family members and report feelings of disappointment, surprise, fear and joy. With regard to studies and life plans, they were in the background.

Therefore, pregnancy is a period in which teenagers need support from the family and society as a whole, as the process of getting pregnant contributes to dropping out of school and postponing life plans, contributing to a low future quality of life and loss of professional opportunities for these young women. Therefore, teenage pregnancy can be linked to negative feelings, being understood as something that threatens the future and generates conflicts. ■

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