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Parenting and poverty in the Amazon

Parentalidade e pobreza na Amazônia

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Abstract

Objective
To identify the parental practices of poor families living in the city of Belém.

Method
An exploratory study was carried out with 448 heads (mother/guardians) of poor families living in the continental portion of the municipality of Belém, in which the Parenting Styles Inventory was applied, Sociodemographic inventory and the Family Poverty Index was calculated. Correspondence analysis of the data was performed.

Results
Most families showed a high level of *Excellent* in categories *Moral Behavior* and *Inconsistent Punishment* and level of *Risk* in *Negligence*. In addition, the poorest families were more likely to have Moral Behavior on the level *Excellent* parenting.

Conclusion
It discusses the coexistence of potentially healthy and harmful elements in the same environment and the need to consider the complexity of human relational phenomena, in particular, parenting practices.

Keywords: Amazon; Parenting; Poverty.

Resumo

Objetivo
Identificar as práticas parentais de famílias pobres residentes na cidade de Belém.

Método
Estudo exploratório com 448 chefes (mães/guardiãs) de famílias pobres residentes na porção continental do município de Belém, no qual foi aplicado o Inventário de Estilos Parentais, Inventário sociodemográfico e calculado o Índice de Pobreza Familiar. Foi realizada análise de correspondência dos dados.

Resultados
A maioria das famílias apresentou alto nível de Excelente nas categorias Comportamento Moral e Punição Inconsistente e nível de Risco em Negligência. Além disso, as famílias mais pobres eram mais propensas a ter Comportamento Moral no nível Excelente parentalidade.

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Conclusão
Ressalta-se a coexistência de elementos potencialmente saudáveis e nocivos em um mesmo ambiente e a necessidade de se considerar a complexidade dos fenômenos relacionais humanos, em particular, as práticas parentais.

Palavras-chave: *Amazônia; Parentalidade; Pobreza.*

Human development is a complex and multidetermined process, consisting of several biological, psychological and environmental elements, which act in a joint and interconnected way. Therefore, evaluating situations from a developmental perspective implies considering their complexity and systemic character (Bronfenbrenner, 1979/1996). Under this perspective, Urie Bronfenbrenner proposed the Bioecological Model of Human Development, in which he considers that this phenomenon is better understood from the connection of four structural elements: People, Process, Context and Time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Bronfenbrenner innovated from his proposition that the *Context* it is an element organized in concentric structures and interconnected by the relationships that individuals establish with their physical and social environment. Thus, in addition to ascertaining the closest and immediate living conditions, it is also necessary to consider the distal conditions that interfere with individual development, such as policies and social organization, for example (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Thus, taking as a starting point the importance of contexts, environmental characteristics can be functional or dysfunctional for the development of individuals. Depending on the outcome they can provide and their harmful or healthy potential, the contextual elements can be considered risk factors or protective factors, which act directly in the construction of individual development processes. Thus, there is a dynamic in the developmental trajectories, in which the personal and environmental elements interact, providing overcoming or maintaining crises (Cyrulnik & Cabral, 2015; Poletto & Koller, 2008; Seibel & Koller, 2015).

Understanding the developmental dynamics from the intersection of factors promoting or harmful to development is one of the innovations also assumed by positive psychology. According to this view, Psychology was historically constructed as a discipline in which there was an emphasis on disruptive aspects, which required interventions. However, given the complexity of human phenomena, positive psychology suggests the urgency to consider not only the negative aspects, but also those potentially healthy ones that mark the process of changing human beings over time (Paludo & Koller, 2007).

Given the contribution of positive psychology, it can be concluded that the adverse situations that give rise to developmental crises, considered *risk* factors to development, they can, in fact, increase the likelihood of the person having physical, emotional or social problems (Seibel & Koller, 2015). However, it is not the simple presence of adverse elements that defines the developmental path. This is because, together with the risk factors, they also act *protection factors*, which are the elements present in the biological, psychological and environmental dimensions that can assist individuals in overcoming the difficulties experienced (Poletto & Koller, 2008; Seibel & Koller, 2015). In this sense, the understanding of the protective factors present in the environments can favor the exploration of the processes of coping with adversities.

The conjugation of risk factors with protection factors occurs in each context in a particular way, being necessary to be careful in the a priori definitions. Thus, investigations about these phenomena must be based on the specific modes of expression of each environment (Poletto & Koller, 2008; Seibel & Koller, 2015). This is because the use of a causal view of certain developmental

phenomena can produce stigmas and make those who live in conditions of greater difficulty even more vulnerable (Cyrulnik & Cabral, 2015).

One of the conditions that is already well recognized in the literature for its harmful potential for individual and group development is poverty (Oliveira et al., 2017; A. F. Silva et al., 2017; Walsh, 2005). Poverty is considered a condition of scarcity or want that affects the well-being of individuals. Traditionally, it is a condition measured in a quantitative way, using monetary measures to identify who would or would not be experiencing such a shortage. However, more recent discussions about the phenomenon elucidate the need to consider relational and experiential aspects of the condition, since a specific amount of money will have a greater or lesser value according to the characteristics of the context in which people are inserted, such as age of individuals, sexual and social roles, the location of their residence, epidemiological conditions and other variations over which the person may have little or no control (Crespo & Gurovitz, 2002).

The phenomenon of poverty tends to be structural in countries like Brazil, that is, it is not something that occurs sporadically and superficially. On the contrary, it is maintained through forms of social functioning that sustain it, affecting the lives of individuals in a broad way (Oliveira et al., 2017). Since the country has continental dimensions, the inequality in the distribution of wealth is also revealed unevenly in the different regions. Historically, the northern region of Brazil has been recognized for the vast natural wealth that exists in the Amazon rainforest and in the region's soil. Despite this, even in the large northern metropolises, the population is economically and socially disadvantaged when compared to people living in the South and Southeast regions, with less average access to basic health, education and social assistance services, in addition to worse sanitation, housing and leisure conditions, also showing lower family incomes compared to other regions of the country (Oliveira et al., 2017; A. F. Silva et al., 2017).

The lack of access to resources that enable healthy individuals to develop also affects intersubjective aspects, such as family relationships and conditions. According to the literature, the family organization of poorer groups has a tendency to "entanglement", with the insertion of other relatives in the family nucleus (Sarti, 2010), usually due to unemployment and the instability of marital relations (Bem & Wagner, 2006). Even so, these families tend to enjoy less formal and informal social support, due to the higher levels of stress in affective bonds and less access to resources of the most varied shades (Attree, 2005; Morris et al., 2017). Other aspects that are also related to the association of poverty with higher levels of parental stress (I. C. P. Silva et al., 2019) and with lower levels of family resilience (Matos et al., 2021).

Despite the instabilities experienced in many families, the literature points out that, in general, family groups provide the construction of firm and lasting relationships that can mitigate the effects of experienced adversities (Morris et al., 2017; Koller et al., 2020; Szymanski, 2004) which justifies the compression of families as an extremely important group for the healthy development of individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1979/1996; Falcke et al., 2012; Morris et al., 2017). These processes occur from the execution of specific functions of its members, such as the parental function (Wagner et al., 2011).

The parental function or parenting is the set of "strategies used by parents with the objective of promoting the socialization of their children" (Salvo et al., 2005, p. 188). When exercised, it tends to guide children's emotional and cognitive development and allow them to explore their world with emotional security (Koller et al., 2020; Morris et al., 2017). In the context of poor families, strongly marked by the stress of caregivers (I. C. P. Silva et al., 2019), high levels of authoritarianism or neglect of parents or caregivers are commonly present, which can be considered, in general, as a risk factor for healthy development (Bem & Wagner, 2006; Gomide et al., 2017; Richaud et al., 2013).

However, other aspects of parenting can function as buffer or protection from the effects of adverse conditions, such as the existence of moral values passed on to the next generation (Gomide et al., 2017). According to the pioneering research in which aspects of family relationships were studied that guided other social relationships in neighborhoods on the outskirts of São Paulo, poor families presented a web of family relationships in which a strong morality was sustained on the mandatory reciprocity, which constituted a link that linked people to the group (Sarti, 2010).

The strongly moralized organization found in poor families was also nuanced in terms of more democratic or more authoritarian values. This is because in families with greater social vulnerability there was a higher incidence of authoritarian values, while more democratic values would be more recurrent in families with less social vulnerability (Macedo et al., 2006). Often, given the contextual conditions of the environment in which they reside, parents consider it more appropriate to use more rigid educational attitudes, in order to protect their children from circumstances that could be harmful to them and obtain quicker reactions to the demands that the groups are facing. exposed (Fram, 2003; Macedo et al., 2006).

Recent research shows how families living in conditions of scarcity can carry out joint activities, seeking their physical survival, but also the strengthening of their values and cultural identity. These strategies tend to develop spaces in which individuals develop feelings such as solidarity, and experience group organization, creativity and flexibility, which are characteristics that promote development (Cyrulnik & Cabral, 2015). Certainly, the condition of financial and monetary impoverishment is not sufficient to explain the difficulties experienced by individuals throughout their development, and it is necessary to assume a systemic perspective that considers the set of factors that make up the lives of poor families.

Thus, given the importance of contexts in the development of individuals and families and the consequences that poverty can have on development, the objective of this article is to identify the parental practices of poor families living in the municipality of Belém (PA).

Method

This is an exploratory and cross-sectional quantitative study.

Participants

448 mothers / guardians of poor families living in the continental portion of the municipality of Belém (PA) participated in this study. The sample was calculated based on information from the Ministry of Social Development's database, which is probabilistic and stratified by neighborhoods in the mainland of Belém. After obtaining this material, the sample calculation of the number of participating families per neighborhood in the municipality of Belém was perfomed, based on the population of 154,779 families registered in *Cadastro Único* (CadÚnico) of the Federal Government.

The study was carried out based on the analysis of a representative sample of the population of poor families residing in the continental area of Belém, using Simple Random Sampling and Stratified Random Sampling procedures. In simple sampling, a distinct number is assigned to each element of the population, then successive drawings are carried out until the sample size is completed. Stratified sampling consists of subdividing the population into homogeneous groups (called strata) according to the variable of interest and using a simple sampling in each stratum (Bolfarine & Bussab, 2005).

The inclusion criteria for families were: (a) Registration in the CadÚnico until August 2015, residing in the continental portion of the municipality of Belém and, depending on the characteristics of the instrument that measures parenting, it was established that (b) Families present at least one child or adolescent, aged between five and 18 years of age.

The sociodemographic characteristics presented by the participants were as follows: most were mothers (90.6%) and were employed (57.8%), with the most frequent structure being that of single-parent families headed by the mother (32.3%), followed by nuclear families (29.4%). Consequently, most participants did not have an affective partner (54.3%). Other family configurations were: headed by grandparents 12 (2.6%), Reconstituted 25 (5,5%), Extended 28 (6,.2%), single male parent 4 (0,8%) Parent grandmother 16 (3.6%) and extended single parent 86 (19.1%). In addition, the highest age concentration of participants was in the range of 30 to 39 years (48.4%), having completed high school (51.1%) and had one to three children (87.1%).

The research was carried out in the municipality of Belém, capital of the state of Pará, which has about 1,499,641 inhabitants, being the second most populous in the northern region of Brazil. Despite about 70.0% of the population being of working age, only 29.5% occupied formal jobs in 2015, with 39.0% of the population surviving on nominal monthly income per capita up to half a minimum wage (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2020). According to this information, in 2016, there were 144 thousand families living in a condition of personal and social vulnerability in the municipality of Belém.

In 2015, the base year for calculating the participants in this research, the agency responsible for social assistance policies served 103,740 families, with the exception of about 40 thousand families with social assistance (Santos et al., 2023) . For the provision of primary care services, the agency was structured in 12 *Centro de Referência de Assistência Social* (CRAS, Reference Centers in Social Assistance), located in peripheral and vulnerable areas of the municipality.

Instruments

Sociodemographic Inventory – It consists of 41 items and is used to demarcate the first contact with participants (S. S. C. Silva et al., 2010), enabling the beginning of the research relationship. It seeks to characterize the participating families in sociodemographic terms, such as family status, marital status, employment status, age, education and number of children of the participants, in addition to information about the family structure.

Family Poverty Index (FPI) – Is a multidimensional alternative to measure poverty, proposed by Barros et al. (2006). It can be calculated in demographic groups and at the family level, consisting of six dimensions, 26 components and 48 indicators. The dimensions are: Vulnerability, Access to knowledge, Access to work, Access to income, Child development and Housing shortages. Its variation ranges from 0 (zero – for those families without any trace of poverty) to 100 (one hundred – for absolutely poor families). In the article in which it was proposed, no Cronbach alpha was presented. Since the instrument does not have standard cutoff points, the results were divided into quartiles (Dancey & Reidy, 2006), with the following divisions being established for the FPI: less poor families (scores from 0 to 25), families in average poverty (scores between 26 to 75) and poorer families (scores from 76 to 100).

Parenting Style Inventory (PSI) – Parental style was measured through the PSI (Gomide, 2011), which seeks to assess the way in which parents educate their children. It consists of seven dimensions, two positive practices and five negative practices. For each dimension, six items are presented, so that the instrument consists of 42 items.

Positive practices are the *Positive Monitoring*, that it is "the appropriate use of attention and distribution of privileges, the proper establishment of rules, the continuous and secure distribution of affection, the monitoring and supervision of school and leisure activities" (Gomide, 2011, p. 8); it's the *Moral Behavior*, which is related to the transmission of values and virtues, such as honesty, generosity, justice, compassion, among others, for the inhibition of antisocial behavior (Gomide, 2011).

The dimensions of negative practices are the *Negative Monitoring*, also known as stressful supervision, which is characterized by oversight and excessive orders directed at children who, for the most part, are not obeyed and generate a relationship based on hostility, insecurity and deception; The *Inconsistent Punishment*, also known as unstable mood, in which punishments are applied according to the emotional state of the mother or guardian and not according to the child's behavior, so that the individual's assessment of the effects of his actions is impaired; The *Relaxed Discipline*, which consists in the non-compliance with the rules established by the parents due to their children's opposing or aggressive behavior; O *Physical Abuse*, which is the potential result of attitudes that hurt the child, in contrast to corporal punishment which is the use of physical force with the intention of making the child modify (correct or control) the behavior when feeling pain, but without being hurt; and the *Neglect*, which consists of the parents' non-responsiveness to children's demands, in addition to their withdrawal in difficult situations (Gomide, 2011).

After the application of the PSI, it is possible to obtain the parenting style index (psi) with the sum of positive practices and subsequent subtraction of negative practices. The total values obtained range from +24 (absence of negative practices and total presence of positive practices) to -60 (absence of positive practices and total presence of negative practices). The instrument's Cronbach alpha ranged from $\alpha = 0.46$ for the construct *Maternal Negative Monitoring* $\alpha = 0.8663$ for the construct *Paternal Moral Behavior* (Sampaio & Gomide, 2007).

In the present study, data were organized in quartiles in each dimension, with the following levels being established: Risk (25% worst results), Medium (Results between 26% and 75%) and Excellent (25% best results).

The macro-project "Poverty and Development Ecology", which served as the basis for the data collection in this article, was submitted to the Ethics Committee in Scientific Research, of the Center for Tropical Medicine at the Federal University of Pará, and was approved under CAAE opinion 21653814.4.0000.5172. The aim of the macro-project was to assess family characteristics, such as parenting, which is the target of this study, parental stress (I. C. P. Silva et al., 2019) and family resilience (Matos et al., 2021) and relate them to family poverty.

Procedures

After the project's approval by the Scientific Research Ethics Committee, theoretical discussions were held with the research group, which also established the eligibility criteria of the participants and the instruments that would be used for the collection. Then, the Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger was asked for the database of families inserted in the CadÚnico of the municipality of Belém, until the month of August 2015.

With the collection of this material, which contained information on 154,779 families, the sample calculation of families to be collected by neighborhood in the municipality was carried out, in order for the sample of this study to be representative. Simple Random Sampling and Stratified Random Sampling procedures were used to define the number of families (Bolfarine & Bussab, 2005), with the sampling error set at 5%.

A pilot study was carried out with family groups with similar profiles to the target families, in order to ascertain the suitability of the application conditions. Subsequently, the municipal agency responsible for social assistance was asked for authorization to conduct interviews in the CRAS environments. Then, the CRAS coordinators were contacted and informed of the research objective and the collection procedures that would be adopted. The coordinators were asked for a schedule with the days of service for people who had demands for CadÚnico / *Bolsa Família* Program. The CRAS that exclusively served the population residing on the islands were excluded, according to the objectives of the study.

The interviews were conducted individually, with a pair of researchers present for each participant. The possible participants were approached and after the consent and verification of the fulfillment of the criteria for participation in the research, they were asked to sign the Free and Informed Consent Form. The average duration of each interview was one hour and the data collection extended throughout 2016.

To perform the data analysis, the information collected with the instruments was inserted into a file of the IBM®SPSS® 20.0 program. After insertion, the total FPI of the sample was calculated, according to the parameters of Barros et al. (2006). Additionally, the total psi was calculated, as well as the total scores of positive and negative parenting practices, according to the parameters established by Gomide (2011).

In order to carry out the association between the dimensions of parenting and the total FPI, Correspondence Analysis was performed, which is an exploratory statistical technique used to verify associations or similarities between qualitative variables or categorized continuous variables (Fávero et al., 2009). Associations between categories are considered to be moderately significant when the value of the confidence coefficient is $50 \leq \gamma \times 100 < 70\%$, and strongly significant, when the value of the confidence coefficient is $(\gamma) \geq 70.00\%$. Correspondence analysis was performed with the aid of the Statistica application, version 6.0. In all tests, $\alpha = 5\%$ ($p \leq 0.05$) to reject the null hypothesis.

Results

From the calculation of the parenting styles index (psi) it was possible to obtain the main characteristics of parenting by poor families living in the continental area of the municipality of Belém (PA). Table 1 presents the information regarding the distribution of families in relation to the dimensions of the *psi*.

Table 1
Distribution of the number of families in the dimensions of the parenting style index

Levels	PM		MB		IP		NEG		RD		NM		PA		Psi Over-view	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Risk	184	41.1	169	37.7	120	26.8	166	37.1	147	32.8	140	31.3	123	27.5	119	26.5
Medium	79	17.6	68	15.2	143	31.9	154	34.4	185	41.3	138	30.8	167	37.3	207	46.2
Excellent	185	41.3	211	47.1	185	41.3	128	28.6	116	25.9	170	37.9	158	35.3	122	27.2

Note: PA: Physical Abuse; MB: Moral Behavior; RD: Relaxed Discipline; NM: Negative Monitoring; PM: Positive Monitoring; NEG: Neglect; IP: Inconsistent Punishment.

According to the information presented in Table 1, there were different concentrations of families in the dimensions of the *psi*. There is a high concentration of families at the *Excellent* in *Moral Behavior* and *Inconsistent Punishment*, as well as at the level of *Risk* in *Negligence*. Regarding

the associations between the multiple dimensions of parenting and family poverty, the information is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Correspondence Analysis between Family Poverty Index and parenting style index dimensions

Dimension of the Parenting Style Inventory	Family Poverty Index		
	Low Poverty	Average Poverty	High Poverty
Positive Monitoring			
Low	-0.68 (0.00)	-2.54 (0.00)	3.80 (99.99)*
Medium	-2.14 (0.00)	4.90 (100.00)*	-3.60 (0.00)
Higher	2.08 (96.21)*	-0.66 (0.00)	-1.44 (0.00)
Moral Behavior			
Low	1.89 (94.09)*	-0.27 (0.00)	-1.71 (0.00)
Medium	0.60 (45.07)	0.79 (56.85)**	-1.59 (0.00)
Higher	-2.03 (0.00)	-0.21 (0.00)	2.44 (98.51)*
Negative Monitoring			
Low	0.00 0.00	-1.39 (0.00)	1.67 (90.55)*
Medium	-2.34 (0.00)	2.48 (98.70)*	-0.47 (0.00)
Excellent	2.11 (96.48)*	-0.98 (0.00)	-1.09 (0.00)
Relaxed Discipline			
Low	-1.16 (0.00)	-1.29 (0.00)	2.81 (99.50)*
Medium	-0.47 (0.00)	0.76 (55.18)**	-0.41 (0.00)
Higher	1.89 (94.14)*	0.50 (38.28)	-2.64 (0.00)
Inconsistent Punishment			
Low	0.56 (42.69)	-2.54 (0.00)	2.46 (98.61)*
Medium	-2.52 (0.00)	1.47 (85.81)*	0.94 (65.38)**
Higher	1.76 (92.13)*	0.76 (55.18)**	-2.81 (0.00)
Physical Abuse			
Low	-2.94 (0.00)	0.90 (63.14)**	2.08 (96.25)*
Medium	0.44 (34.14)	-0.33 (0.00)	-0.08 (0.00)
Higher	2.14 (96.73)*	-0.46 (0.00)	-1.75 (0.00)
Negligence			
Low	-1.46 (0.00)	-0.81 (0.00)	2.55 (98.92)*
Medium	2.61 (99.10)*	-0.90 (0.00)	-1.74 (0.00)
Higher	-1.20 (0.00)	1.90 (94.30)*	-1.00 (0.00)

Note: *High ratio probability; **Moderate relationship probability.

The greatest emphasis on the information contained in Table 2 concerns the associations of *Positive Monitoring, Negative Monitoring*, *Relaxed Discipline, Inconsistent Punishment, Physical Abuse* and *Negligence* with the FPI, in which the poorer the families, the greater the probability of exercising "Risk" parenting in these dimensions. On the other hand, the *Moral Behavior* presented an inverse trend, in which the greater the family's poverty, the greater the probability of exercising an "Optimum" *Moral Behavior*. It is important to reinforce data at the excellent level mean absence of negative practices.

Discussion

It can be seen that most of the families participating in this study are at the "Medium" level of general parenting exercise. According to Sampaio and Gomide (2007), these families have good parenting levels, however, they need to improve their parenting practices, through the use of books and films or group support interventions.

It is important to point out that in the sample studied there is a wide range in the age of the children (5 to 18 years old) and also a variation in the number of children per family, so that there are different demands for parenting practices according to with the demand of each age group and configuration.

The use of positive parenting practices has beneficial consequences for the development of individuals who are under parental care (Cecconello et al., 2003), since they are related to more successful children in adulthood and with better development conditions even in childhood (Gomide et al., 2017; Prust & Gomide, 2007). However, exposure to various and constant sources of stress, mainly related to physical survival, provides a scenario in which parental functions in poor families can be performed in a less healthy way (Falcke et al., 2012; Patias et al., 2013). Poverty is not the cause of the victimization of families, however, it is a risk factor for less healthy family functioning (Garcia et al., 2009; Patias et al., 2013; Yunes et al., 2007).

Among the dimensions of psi, it is worth highlighting the level of *Risk* observed with respect to *Negligence*, which refers to the absence of parental supervision and interest in their children's lives (Gomide, 2004, 2011; Gomide et al., 2017) . Parents characterized by negligent style do not have enough responsiveness or demands to maintain a healthy parenting, so there is no monitoring of the behavior of their children, who are left without a secure basis for their demands (Cecconello et al., 2003; Falcke at al., 2012). As a consequence, family neglect, together with reduced socioeconomic status, is one of the factors associated with the practice of infractions by young people and adolescents. In addition, it is also associated with a higher incidence of behavioral and relationship problems, substance abuse, school failure, externalizing disorders and low self-esteem (Bortolini & Andretta, 2013; Cecconello et al., 2003; Gomide et al., 2017; Patias et al., 2013).

When dealing with the incidence of *Negligence* in poor families, it is important to highlight that neglect has long been considered a consequence of family poverty. However, currently, studies indicate a differentiation between these conditions, despite the fact that poorer families are more likely to be negligent (Bazon et al., 2010). This trend stems from conditions that go beyond material aspects, integrating much more with intersubjective aspects. Among these aspects, the predominance of feelings and thoughts typical of parental suffering are highlighted, related to the belief in the inability to raise/ educate children, feeling, many times, incompetent and depressed. Considering psychosocial aspects, parents who show a pattern of neglect in their actions generally have less affective, emotional, informational and positive social interaction support, despite having material support similar to families that do not show negligent conduct (Bazon et al., 2010).

On the other hand, the dimensions *Inconsistent Punishment* and Moral Behavior have a higher concentration of families with a Excellent level. The *Inconsistent Punishment*, also known as unstable mood, is a negative parenting practice, according to the model of Gomide (2011). In this practice, punishments are applied according to the emotional state of the mother or guardian and not according to the child's behavior, so that the individual's assessment of the effects of his actions is impaired. As a consequence, there is no understanding of moral values and the consequences of their actions, but the distinction of when the mother is nervous (Gomide, 2011). The child's socialization becomes compromised when the parents act inconsistently, in addition to the permanence of unwanted behavior (Bortolini & Andretta, 2013). Since a large number of families showed a high level in this dimension, it appears that they are being consistent in the use of punishments for dysfunctional behaviors of their children.

Among the results presented, the one that deserves greater emphasis focuses on the practice *Moral Behavior*. This is because this practice presented a high concentration of families

with *Excellent level* and a trend of association in which the higher the level of family poverty, the higher the index of *Moral Behavior* of families. In general, poor families have a pattern in which their values are more related to obedience, to the detriment of the construction of autonomy, however, this pattern proved to be the opposite in the participants of this study (Macedo et al., 2006; Tudge et al., 2000).

Traditionally, poor families have a morality that emphasizes reciprocity between members, especially in parental relationships, in addition to the rigidity in the role of each member for the functioning of family dynamics (Sarti, 2010). However, given the adverse conditions, parents sometimes consider that they exercise their protection by leading their children's behavior to important moral values, such as honesty, justice and empathy, which are assessed in psi (Gomide, 2011). Thus, it is possible that the poorest families in this study have high levels of *Moral Behavior*, seeking to protect their children from adverse aspects of their closest environments, such as violence and antisocial behaviors. As a consequence, it is clear that the high frequency of Moral Behavior among the poorest families in this study constitutes a protective factor in the investigated groups.

Final Considerations

In view of the objective of identifying the parental practices of poor families living in the municipality of Belém (PA), it was possible to observe that the main vulnerability is the preponderance of *Negligence* in parental relationships. Despite the Negligence whether it is the dimension of parenting practices that presented the most dysfunctional result in terms of consequences for human development, it is also important to highlight that parenting practices *Inconsistent Punishment* and *Moral Behavior* presented optimum levels, in addition to the greater tendency to Moral Behavior "Great" in poorer families. In this sense, although the data reveal the presence of risk factors, it was possible to identify protective characteristics in the investigated parental relationships.

Regarding the possibilities for future studies, it is suggested that poor populations not included in the Federal Government's Single Registry be investigated, in order to increase the scope for people who are not supported by social policies and who also live in conditions of poverty. In addition, specific aspects of populations should be considered, such as gender, single parenting, ethnicity, place of residence, education, among others.

This study tends to contribute to the construction of a more comprehensive view of parenting practices performed in poor families, as it enabled the identification not only of risk characteristics but also of protection that are revealed in parental relationships. In addition, it offers government officials and other public policy agents more accurate information, which allows the construction of more effective actions that can, in fact, contribute to the development of these families. Futures studies may contribute by controlling variables such as the age of the children and the number of children.

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