



# Combine parentally and university studies, a highly significant challenge

## Combinar parentalidad y estudios universitarios, un reto altamente significativo

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### ABSTRACT

With the aim of interpreting the meaning of parenthood among nursing students who are also parents, a study was carried out with the qualitative paradigm, phenomenological approach, using the Spiegelberg method for the analysis of the information and the deep interview as a technique for gathering information. Five students were interviewed with whom the field got saturated. The participating external agents were three teachers of the nursing program and a mother of family, the information was validated through the triangulation of the data obtained from the subjects. Questions were registered and transcribed, and from the information emerged two categories: being parents and feelings. Subcategories were responsibility, beautiful experience, experience of experiences, inspiration, motivation, love, frustration, jealousy, transcendence and guilt. The meaning of being parents in nursing students is associated with the responsibility, the feelings and what they consider a life experience.

**Keywords:** Meaningful; Nursing Student; Parenting.

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## RESUMEN

Con el objetivo de interpretar el significado de la paternidad entre los estudiantes de enfermería que también son padres, se realizó un estudio con el paradigma cualitativo, enfoque fenomenológico, utilizando el método de Spiegelberg para el análisis de la información y la entrevista profunda como una técnica para recopilar información. Se entrevistaron cinco estudiantes con quienes se saturó el campo. Los agentes externos participantes fueron tres profesores del programa de enfermería y una madre de familia, la información se validó a través de la triangulación de los datos obtenidos de los sujetos. Las preguntas fueron registradas y transcritas, y de la información surgieron dos categorías: ser padres y sentimientos. Las subcategorías fueron responsabilidad, hermosa experiencia, experiencia de experiencias, inspiración, motivación, amor, frustración, celos, trascendencia y culpa. El significado de ser padres en estudiantes de enfermería está asociado con la responsabilidad, los sentimientos y lo que consideran una experiencia de vida.

**Palabras clave:** significativo; estudiante de enfermería; parentalidad.

## INTRODUCTION

Family is the cell of society, it is the first and the most significant educational space that a human being will have throughout his/her life, which greatly marks what each person will be in the privacy of his/her actions and reactions, as well as in its socialization. By forming the family, father, mother and child have a defined role, together they build the family assembly, and in that environment, they learn, teach and execute their parental abilities and skills.

Undoubtedly, each father, mother and son need time to adjust to their role and respond satisfactorily to the family needs, which will be demarcated by the stage of the life cycle in which that family is, although experiences, expectations of personal and child development, the stage of development in which the father finds himself, and finally a multiplicity of circumstances that bring changes also have their influence.

The family construction is nourished by the interaction among its members, and when one of them doesn't have the time to pay tribute to the relationship, as occurs with a father/mother who is a university undergraduate student, a deficit vicious circle

is created, where the family member must constantly choose who to dedicate the time to: the academic work, or the child and the family? The simple choice involves emotions that go through many negative aspects that create conflicts in the relationship of father, mother and child.

This is the scenario that a university teacher experiences daily when his/her student is a father or mother. The role of the university teacher involves forming a professional, who must be an excellent human being, with well-established values, which should lead him/her to exercise a role as a father or mother; and in the same way, the student must respond with his/her commitment to the academic training.

From this triangulation, many emotions arise that must disturb a teacher interested in the welfare of his/her students; In order to empathize with the situation experienced by these students, a qualitative, phenomenological study was planned, using the in-depth interview as a technique to create meanings through the methodology proposed by Spiegelber.

## Theoretical reference

Parenthood is one of the most significant experiences for human beings. It is a vital exercise because the life of the child depends on the parental performance. It is also significant because it has personal and social recognition, in the emotional, psychological, spiritual and even cognitive environments, and in the personal, family and social contexts<sup>1</sup>.

Parenthood is defined by the genetically codified paternal capacity of the individual and the social contributions, built by the interaction with society, which leads to the construction of skills that allow parenting with empathy and care, responding to the parenting models internalized by parents and facilitating the socialization process of children<sup>2</sup>.

The meaning is created from two types of qualities<sup>3</sup>. Phenomenal qualities that stimulate the conscious experiences as experiential understanding, and motivational qualities that are erected as the motor for the action, being the second ones, subordinated to the first ones, for which the meaning is the product of the interaction between the object and the experiences of the subject, framed in a particular moment and context, and socialized through language<sup>4</sup>.

Each subject experiences a situation and makes a complementary and parallel process of understanding and interpretation; when the subject understands, interprets, and consequently the interpretation is the explicit form of understanding<sup>5</sup>. This process starts from the sensitive signs, that impact our senses and our systems and that we know with interiority, and because they are known they have the quality of being understood.

In this process of understanding, the social position that each person occupies is of vital importance, because it determines the structures and the form of the thoughts, based

on the precept that the habits generated in that social locus acquire a solidity that makes them "lasting but not immutable", but difficult to change<sup>6-7</sup>. In this sense, habit would become a structuring assembly, acting as a guiding principle of practices and representations, and being directly responsible for adapting and rationalizing the social practices of individuals.

The parental role is built in society to be contextual and accepted in the community. This is significant because it's the niche of the perpetuity of the species and must transcend in the life of each child<sup>7</sup>. The construction of meanings is a social interaction aspect communicated through language.

In this research, the qualitative paradigm is used, because in this way, an interpretive epistemic matrix is created with the aim of understanding a phenomenon and subsequently constructing the meanings<sup>8</sup>. It's a research with all the sensitivity that can be generated by the humanistic vision, therefore it's holistic in terms of the perception that each research member has the phenomenon of study, incorporating the intentionality that underlies each human act in the relationships that are established and in the social relationships that are forged, according to Sahuquillo's words<sup>9</sup> "human constructions in their origin and in their transformation".

Phenomenology is a philosophical method, which aims to describe the structure of experiences, as presented in consciousness, therefore constitutes a descriptive analysis of experience<sup>5,6</sup>.

Nursing, is a science that supports social construction, and that tends towards a humanized care at all levels, has the responsibility of appropriate the construction of a positive parental role.

Nursing practice is purely social, is made to optimize the functioning and development of the human being and evolves according to social events. Currently with all the technological and scientific development, nursing faces the challenge of providing each parent with humanized parental competences, contextualized so that relationships flourish.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Parenthood is a unique phenomenon; this uniqueness is given by the plasticity of the relationships established as a unique link between each parent and each child. To understand this subjectivity and arrive at the construction of meanings, a methodology was sought that allowed recreating the phenomenon from the vision and feeling of those involved who are considered key informants, using the qualitative paradigm, with a phenomenological approach.

### **Type of study**

This phenomenology studies the meaning of consciousness experiences, the way in which the essence of each phenomenon and its inherent characteristics are captured, from which the subject constructs his/her life experiences. It's pertinent because it allows the understanding of the phenomenon based on one's own experiences<sup>10</sup>, from where, by cultivating the epoché, the feelings of each informant can be interpreted to construct meanings.

### **Key informants and external agents**

The sample consisted of five nursing students from Magdalena University, who, in addition to being university students, are parents. The external agents were three teachers from the Nursing program of the Magdalena University who have been teachers of these

students involved in the research, and the mother of one of these key informants.

### **Approach and technique**

The indispensable requirement to be part of the sample was that besides studying nursing at Magdalena University, the subjects were parents. To reach these students, some preliminary steps were followed: initial awareness where the research project was sufficiently explained, then the interested parties signed a consent to participate. At the time of the interviews, the objective of the study was again explained until its comprehension, which guarantees autonomy and allows voluntary participation together with a truly informed consent. Each interview was transcribed and analyzed immediately, which allowed to know the saturation of the research field.

Throughout the investigation, methodological rigor was guaranteed, through the criteria of credibility, auditability and transferability.

The data collection technique was the in-depth interview, which, as its name indicates, allows us to delve into all the buried details, decode and understand attitudes, verify competencies and find out significant and relevant motivations and feelings in each one of the students, until being able to interpret the experience of being a parent and a nursing student individually for each of the subjects.

The interviews were recorded, immediately transcribed and accompanied by a diary where all the aspects surrounding the verbalization were registered, such as gestural language, paralinguistic sounds and the reactions to each question and answer. The immediate transcription step is considered relevant because it guarantees authenticity; the key expressions were immediately extracted and transformed into

units of analysis for categorization, then, they were encoded with one or more letters to reflect their significant textual content<sup>4</sup>.

From the key expressions, considered as subcategories, the categories were derived through a grouping process, and at the end of this step the triangulation of the information was started, looking for similarities through the appreciations of the different actors, which describe the parentality phenomenon from different angles.

A unit of discriminative analysis was constructed, where from the texts the categories emerged, similarities and divergences were found, the interpretive matrix was constructed from which the meaning was derived<sup>5</sup>.

Interpret the information: the Spiegelberg method was chosen, which has six phases:

Phase 1: Description of the phenomenon: In this phase the key informants expressed their experiences in in-depth interviews, answering the question. What does it mean for you to be a parent? At this point, the phenomenon of parenthood being a nursing student is described.

Phase 2: Search for multiple perspectives: Describe the phenomenon from different points of view and from different sources; At this point, different visions of the phenomenon of parenthood were obtained, from the perspective of key informants and external agents, the mother of one of the key informants was also interviewed, looking for all the possible information.

Phase 3: Search for the essence and structure: After obtaining the information, a reflexive analysis process is made, ethical endorsement of the Council of the Faculty of Health Sciences.

coincidences are identified, interactions are established, the categories arise, and they are organized in an information matrix.

Phase 4: Constitution of significance: To construct the meanings it was necessary to deepen in the analysis of the information in order to identify similarities and differences that the study subjects have with respect to the parenthood, until obtaining the meaning given by the nursing students to the parenthood.

Phase 5: Suspension of judgment: At this point, the researcher must ensure that he/she has acquired the suspension of his/her own judgment, to achieve the analysis of meanings from the viewpoint of those involved, leaving aside any personal opinion.

Phase 6: Interpretation of the phenomenon: The ultimate goal of the phenomenological studies is to interpret the information collected, based on the existing theory to understand the reality of the phenomenon of study, and from the theoretical background, interpreting the experience, feeling and knowledge of the authors themselves.

### **Declaration ethical aspects**

For the development of the investigative process was taken in account the Declaration of Helsinki and Resolution 8430 of 1993 of the Colombian Ministry of Health. Those involved signed the informed consent and were guaranteed confidentiality in the handling of the information, autonomy to withdraw from the process when they considered it appropriate and use of the information exclusively for the purposes of this investigation. It has the institutional

## RESULTS

From the information collected, the categories of being parents and feelings of being parents were built, the first being the guiding thread and the imprint of the parental role (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Categories and Subcategories Creation.

Category	Subcategory	Textual Evidence
Being a parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is a huge responsibility.</li> <li>- It's the most beautiful, a great joy.</li> <li>- It scares me, I can't sleep,</li> <li>- It's my inspiration to get ahead</li> <li>- It's a motivation</li> <li>- It is the best of the experiences</li> </ul>	<p><i>That is a great responsibility, it is the most beautiful thing that has happened to me, it is an illusion, it is joy, but it also scares me, it is a sense of commitment, a change in my lifestyle</i></p> <p><i>It is the greatest experience, it makes you know capacities that you didn't know you had and fears that you didn't know existed</i></p>
Feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Love</li> <li>- Frustration</li> <li>- Jealousy</li> <li>- Joy</li> <li>- Transcendence</li> <li>- Anguish</li> <li>- Guilt</li> <li>- Fear</li> </ul>	<p><i>It's the greatest love, one love his child more than anything</i></p> <p><i>I get frustrated, and I even feel jealous when someone shares with my child moments that I can't share.</i></p> <p><i>When I have to choose between being with my child or studying and choose studying, I feel guilty.</i></p> <p><i>Fear is your faithful companion, fear when you find out about pregnancy, fear for parenting and fear for the future</i></p>

We studied five nursing students, parents with the responsibility to exercise the parental role and combine academic commitments with the exercise of parenthood; these students are not currently teenagers, but four of them were teenagers at the time of having their child and faced the difficulties of being a teenager parent.

During the interviews, discourses emerged that were interpreted by the researchers, in whose interpretation the categories of being a father and the feelings emerged. It's typical of every parent, in any area that has to do with his/her parental role, that the word love arise, and around it, other more interim feelings that permeate the performance of parenthood with love.

## DISCUSSION

In cases where a young person must exercise the parental role, it invariably requires the support and accompaniment of his/her social and family networks; the role of the parents, sisters and grandparents of the mother, in the care and upbringing of the child are the differentiating pillar so that the mother, to a greater extent, or that father, in a lesser proportion, can continue with her/his life project. As explained by Sahuquillo<sup>9</sup>, the parent's house, becomes the preponderant environmental context for the motherhood experience<sup>10,11</sup>. This finding is consistent with what was found in this study where the natural environment for the upbringing has been the mother's home.

Studies carried out by Estupiñan and Vela<sup>12</sup>, confirm that most mothers feel the imperative desire to continue their studies and realize their aspiration to "be someone in life".

Within the feelings, some of the subcategories are anger, sadness and frustration, and this finding coincides with what was found by Álvarez and Gómez<sup>13</sup>, who narrates that the overload of the role in the work as well as in the family, affects women as a precedent of an expected work-family conflict, which is explained by the conditions of work overload and performance of a double role which affects health and causes mood changes. Equating the work of a father/mother, with the study of a young father/mother, the conflicts are the same.

In the category of being a parent, it was found that they qualify this role as something sublime, of transcendence, which leads to frustration feelings when they don't feel that they are playing the role according to the mental structure they have of the parental role, and they associate it with the lack of time due to the great demand of their academic obligations. Research shows that this occurs because parenthood is conceived as part of the person itself, which implies a process of learning and adaptation, associated with the acquisition of a parental sense.

It is mandatory that parents must be "good", understood this concept in reference to the competence and reciprocal affection. It was found that these student-parents don't consider themselves good, because they don't meet the mental standard for that qualifier.

This is a fact established by all researches in parenthood, however, affectivity, as part of motherhood and fatherhood, has evolved from the beginning where the father was almost hieratic<sup>14,15</sup>, being associated with authoritarianism law and order, while the

mother figure was associated with tenderness and the ability to show her feelings. Today, the father and mother figure have gradually faded, creating combinations more in tune the personality of each individual and not based on what is socially established. That is why it's not surprising that in this research, both men and women, consider that affection is essential in the exercise of parenthood.

Another aspect that emerged was fear, initially fear of pregnancy, fear of not being competent as parents, fear of the reaction of parents who are called to provide support, fear of leaving all future plans for lack of foresight. Authors like Barreto and Smith<sup>16,17</sup> mentions that early pregnancy includes a series of responses, like fear of parental disappointment, fear of social and family isolation and fear of not being able to achieve their life projects. However, in many cases those fears have a happy ending because resignification and acceptance of the baby.

Culturally, gender identity leads women to dedicate themselves to the home and if they do not, negative feelings are created towards their maternal role as anguish and frustration, manifested in this research by key informants. These same findings were documented by Miller and Ordorika<sup>19,21</sup> in their investigations.

Planas-Coll<sup>20</sup> states in his study that working parents acquire early job skills, while parents who combine study and child-rearing work, even though they are not living a professional experience, have a great motivation to take risks and acquire competences in their children. This same characteristic was found in this study, and it was called transcendence, where the parents draw a road energy that serves for personal motivation and example for their children.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

-Among the students of the research, the meaning of being parents is related to the parental role mainly in terms of responsibility, motivation to achieve their goals in life and the awareness that their self-directed behavior will be an example for the future behavior of the child.

-In the feelings category, parenthood is irremediably associated with love, from which the fear of failure as a parent is derived, the person's sense of transcendence is reflected in another that will live beyond one's own times and frustration along with the feeling of guilt is derived from that sense of not fulfilling the duty.

- The student/parent duality is permanent, but the way to validate it in the parental role fluctuates according to the circumstances and needs, falling into the feelings category with occasional negative experiences.

## DECLARATION ON CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that does not exist an interest conflict

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