

# Adolescent fathers and mothers in the parenting exercise

## Padres y madres adolescentes en el ejercicio de la crianza

### Pais adolescentes no exercício da parentalidade

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#### Abstract

**Introduction:** In general, parenting has been considered as the actions of socialization led by adults, which consider teenagers as unable people to achieve trajectories of the expected ideal development for girls and boys; on the other side the State despite of making progress about equity of these people, often turns their rights and necessities invisible. **Materials and Methods:** Through a systematic review of documents and databases such as ScienceDirect, Scopus, Dialnet, Pubmed, Proquest, Adolec; information in Spanish, English and Portuguese of the last ten years was gathered with keywords: parenting practices and teenagers, teenage mothers-fathers, public policies in adolescence; this review returned 84 publications with the pointed aspects. **Results:** Perceptions of the adolescent mothers and fathers are identified, their social interactions in the parenting exercise, guidelines and practices of parenting and the contributions that regarding their recognition as adolescent parents, the State establishes. **Conclusions:** It is necessary to identify the perceptions in both adolescent fathers and mothers, and build jointly Public Politics that lead to the increase of support networks to assume the new tasks of care and continue with the activities that the models and social systems impose.

**Keywords:** Adolescent, parenting, reproductive rights, parent-child relationship (Source: DecsBireme)

#### Resumen

**Introducción:** En general, se ha considerado la crianza como acciones de socialización dirigidas por adultos, estimando a los adolescentes como personas no aptas para lograr las trayectorias de desarrollo ideal esperado en los niños y niñas; de otra parte, el Estado, a pesar de avanzar por la equidad para estas personas, en ocasiones invisibiliza sus derechos y necesidades. **Materiales y Métodos:** A través de la revisión sistemática de documentos y bases de datos como ScienceDirect, Scopus, Dialnet, Pubmed, Proquest, adolec; se indagó información en español, inglés y portugués de los últimos diez años con las palabras clave: prácticas de crianza y adolescentes, padres-madres adolescentes y políticas públicas en adolescencia; esta revisión retomó 84 publicaciones con los aspectos señalados. **Resultados:** Se identifican percepciones de los y las adolescentes como padres y madres, sus interacciones sociales en el ejercicio de la crianza, pautas y prácticas de crianza y los aportes que frente a su reconocimiento como adolescentes padres establece el Estado. **Conclusiones:** Es necesario identificar las percepciones en adolescentes padres y madres y construir conjuntamente con éstos Políticas Públicas que conlleven al aumento de redes de apoyo para asumir las nuevas tareas del cuidado y continuar con las actividades que le imponen los modelos y sistemas sociales.

**Palabras clave:** Adolescente, crianza del niño, derechos reproductivos, relaciones padres-hijo (Fuente: DecsBireme)

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## Resumo

**Introdução:** De maneira geral tem-se considerado a parentalidade como ações de socialização dirigidas por adultos, estimando aos adolescentes como pessoas não aptas para conseguir as trajetórias de desenvolvimento ideal que esperamos nas crianças; de outra parte o Estado apesar de avançar pela equidade para estas pessoas, em ocasiões faz invisível seus direitos e necessidades. **Materiais e Métodos:** Através de revisão sistemática de documentos e bases de dados como ScienceDirect, Scopus, Dialnet, Pubmed, Proquest e Adolec; indagou-se informação em espanhol, inglês e português dos últimos dez anos com as palavras chave: práticas parentais e adolescentes, pais adolescentes, políticas públicas em adolescência; esta revisão retomou 84 publicações com os aspectos identificados. **Resultados:** Identificaram-se percepções dos adolescentes como pais, suas interações sociais no exercício da parentalidade, pautas e práticas parentais e as contribuições que estabelece o Estado para seu reconhecimento como pais adolescentes. **Conclusões:** É necessário identificar as percepções dos pais adolescentes, e construir conjuntamente com estas Políticas Públicas, para que levem ao aumento de redes de apoio para assumir as novas tarefas do cuidado e continuar com as atividades que lhe impõem os modelos e sistemas sociais.

**Palavras-chave:** Adolescente, direitos reprodutivos, parentalidade, relações pai-filho (Fonte: DecsBireme)

## Introduction

Initially, to accomplish the current analysis regarding adolescence parenting, and the alternatives that the national and international regulations offer, the definition of adolescence must be taken into account, that according to the report “The State of the World’s Children 2011” (1), is difficult to enunciate for various reasons.

One of these reasons is because for some authors and disciplines this is a transition in the life course, that must be seen from a more constructive perspective<sup>1</sup>, between them Duarte (3), Varela y Lara (4), Climent (5), Higueta et al. (6), who identify it as the construction of a warp generated according to the social, political, historical and cultural context and not as a fixed period whereby childhood ends and adolescence begins.

Additionally and from more positive<sup>2</sup> views, definitions about this matter originated in the legal and health framework have been made, and even though these do not exactly coincide in their delimitation, it is understood as an homogenous and prefixed age stage that is related to the scope of the alleged age of majority and with physical and biopsychosocial

transitions that must occur to accomplish youth or adulthood.

In Colombia for example, the third article of the law 1098 of 2006 (8), Childhood and Adolescence Code, demarcates adolescence between 12 years and 18 years of age, however there are definitions of other policies that cross each other, as an example the Statutory Law of Youth (Law 1622 of 2013) (9), refers to the definition of young as a person between 14 and 28 years, which covers an age group in the range classified as adolescence. In the health area, the World Health Organization (WHO), defined adolescence in 1995, as an era between 10 and 19 years of age, also classified in categories such as early adolescence (10-13 years), middle adolescence (14-16 years) and late adolescence (17-19 years) (1-10).

In this sense it is difficult to define it in a hegemonic manner, therefore it is necessary to recognize that the human being during its life transition possesses particular characteristics such as age, sex, race, among other characteristics, but also interacts in a general context that permeates its particularities and results in a diverse way of being, engaging and knowledge; which expressed by Berger and Luckman (11) are legitimized within the symbolic universe and make possible the organization of the different biography stages: childhood, adolescence, adulthood, etc

Consequently human communities or groups define

1 The constructivist perspectives emphasizes in the premises of a non-radical conception, in which reality appears as a human construction that informs about the relations between individuals and their context. The individual appears as a social product –*Homo Socius*– (2).

2 The positivist vision: is characterized for being rational, factual, based on the observable, in the manipulable and verifiable (7)

practices, behaviors or a way of being according to the parameters established in each place, history and cultural context. This allows us to understand in regard with parenting, how practices can be built in a diverse manner according to specific contexts and the transitions in the course of life of the people who practice it.

Also, considering the current regulations and the scope that the State and international organizations have had as population regulators, a reference to some legal bases that approve marriages and having children in this life stage must be made, as well as the opportunities and possibilities for these people.

Internationally for instance, the Ibero-american Convention for Youth Rights (aged between 15 and 24 by this standard), adopted in Colombia since March 1st of 2008, makes reference in its 20th article, that these people have the right to: *“make a family, free choice of their partner, live together and the right to get married within a framework of equality of its members, as well as responsible parenthood...”* (12).

Also, in Colombia, the second paragraph of the article 140 of the Civil Code (13), (updated according to Sentence C-507-04 from the 25th of May 2004), validates the marriage of people from the age of 14, age classified within the adolescent range, as long as the parents allow it.

In this way it is legally legitimized for adolescents to get married, united, and have children. However some considerations exist in the context that comes from the stigma towards adolescents, if they get married, are pregnant or exercise parenting, since in some cases adolescents are considered irresponsible for not having reached adulthood, they are not apt or efficient to assume this role (14-18).

In terms of age and gender, a tendency to hold women responsible in processes such as birth, contraception and parenting is observed, also emphasizing the risk that comes with being a pregnant adolescent or with children (19).

In Colombia, in regard to contraception, this one comes strongly as a consequence of various events: one of these is the creation of *Profamilia*, in the 1960s, which offers services, where women participate more actively compared to men in the use of these types of controls to decrease natality (20).

In addition, the census of 1964 was performed in the same decade in Colombia, where it was evidenced that colombian women had an average of seven children (21), being the population between 10 and 19 years of almost 4 million (23% of the total population), which increased, being for the year 2000 of 7.8 million, meaning one of every 5 colombians was an adolescent (21).

In this regard it was necessary to find strategies to control their appearance and reproduction, since in this life stage it was scientifically defined the appearance of sexual characteristics, which made adolescence be perceived as “susceptible of deviant behavior, and other pathologies related to sexuality” as Ariza (22) refers to.

Additionally, historically and in regard to the responsibilities that have been assigned to women, a patriarchal vision has been established for the division of jobs, where women is identified as a wife and mother, housewife, and guardian of decency (23), designations that definitely inculcate in women the labor of childcare, and also decouple the father from these actions.

The definition of mother childminder is conceived as a paradigm that establishes women for the household and childcare responsibilities, in some cases making men invisible in the labors of parenting and in the interactions that are required in this context, more emphasized in adolescent fathers, since it is considered that women are responsible of these duties, while men are responsible of working or continuing their studies to increase their income, since it is an obligation for them.

Consequently according to Zicavo and Fuentelba (24), it could have consequences “beyond the social conception that understands the father as essential and secondary in the parenting exercise, with the risk of causing fathers to be absent and disregard their parenting duties”, and ends with legitimizing the paternal absence; on the other hand, according to Vega (25), their voices become invisible, preventing to recognize present perceptions or necessities that aim on a real manner to the development of program or public policies that contribute to this population (25).

Another aspect to highlight is the insistent indication of risk indicators that demonstrate teenage

pregnancies as a public health problem, as the Social Conpes (National Council for Economic and Social Policy) 147 of 2012 (26) refers to, that expresses “*the occurrence of pregnancies at an early age has been considered since the decade of the 70s, a social and public health problem that needs to be intervened*”.

However, it should be noted, that when analyzing differences between adult and adolescent women in the pregnancy process, it has been demonstrated that there are no significant differences in maternal deaths in this age ranges (27-29).

Althabe et al. (27), for example, identified that adolescent pregnancy is not related to a higher maternity risk but to a bad neonatal prognosis, most of it in younger adolescents (<15 years), having to take into account the geographical context of where they live.

Thus further studies showed up that demonstrate the importance of performing evaluations of both obstetric risk factors and critical psychosocial risk factors (severe anxiety and absence of social family support), since the probability of identifying pregnant women with a higher risk of presenting maternity and perinatal complications increase significantly, as Herrera et al (30) established, and age is not the only variable that indicates patterns of risk.

All this allow us to open a space to analyze, if the whole group of adolescents has been pointed as a risk, when in reality their particular conditions and their social interactions are the reasons that can trigger these adverse results. Therefore, each situation must be contextually examined, preventing homogenizing determinations, as Miller and Arvisu (31) refer, the normative lifetime as a current model for all contexts and temporality must be a subject of discussion.

Regarding parenting, it is considered that mothers, fathers, and other caretakers such as older siblings learn to interact with the child according to each cultural field and in that sense as Giddens refers to (32), the caretakers respond to the sociocultural determinations, which are taken into account as a reference framework to organize actions related to the context in demand, as well as to guarantee the survival of the children and facilitate their well-being (33-34).

Consequently, the current review of documents will allow the construction of the state of art of the parenting

exercised by adolescent parents and their relation to the opportunities that the State provides to them to exercise it. The self-perceptions made by adolescent parents are identified; as well as their interactions in the education, economic, health, family and recreational context in which they exercise this labor.

This document advance serves as a basis for the analysis in the construction of public policies, standards and offered programs for people in this life process and for the design of strategies of recognition for adolescent parents. That means interpreting, understanding and recognizing each other's differences, to the generations with their different aspects, will allow to design permanent and inclusive policies according to the particular necessities of the subject and the context.

## Methodology

For the present descriptive review document, in 2016 we performed a search of information published in national and international indexed journals of the past 10 years (2006-2016), as well as documents and policies that would support the main subject. Google scholar, and databases such as Scielo, ScienceDirect, Scopus, Dialnet, Pubmed, Proquest, adolec were used to find this information with keywords: parenting practices and adolescents, adolescent parents, adolescent public policies, parenting, parenthood country adolescent. This search enabled the acquisition of 105 publications with the pointed aspects in Spanish, English and Portuguese.

Subsequently, a matrix in Excel was designed to classify the information, also taking into account the country, year of publication, methodology of research used, approach categories, and main findings. Similarly, classic authors were addressed in the topic. This categorization made possible to filter the information, selecting those documents relevant to the subject, verifying the validity of their results and by the update of their content were found published within the last ten years.

The articles and publications of the last 10 years were finally consolidated obtaining a total of 84, which were written in Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico, Cuba, Spain and The United States.

## Self-perception as adolescent parents

The construction of self-perception as adolescent parents in the parenting exercise, is made according to the historical, cultural and social contexts with own marks and meanings for each generation. Even from pregnancy, when parenting begins, these people perceive changes in their life plans and this way are configured as parents from their knowledge in masculinity and femininity as Ortega refers to (35).

Besides, in some rural populations, even though it cannot be determined in a homogenous manner, the social construction of feminine and masculine identities as mothers and fathers are projected and marked from childhood by traditional and stereotyped sexist patterns (36). Additionally, according to Miguelez (37), while fathers invest more time in recreative of educational activities, mothers take charge of the basic care, such as hygiene and nutrition during the first months of their child, which demarcates a pattern from their self-perception as a man or woman.

In this sense, women start building different perspectives of themselves as parenting mothers as Coronado y Ortiz (38), González y Estupiñan (39), Rozo et al (40), Andrade et al. (41), refer to, whom emphasize how in some cases women retake their mother conceptions and ways to assume parenting, however these redefine and modify the bonds with their children perceiving themselves as self-sufficient to perform these labors and take decisions related to childcare, they seem happy and affable although in certain cases require the support of their mothers or family to be able to do the duties concerning this care.

For other women, being a mother does not influence directly in their self-perception or how they feel about themselves when compared to adolescents with no children, as established by Reyes et al. (42), therefore women will continue to do the same actions they did before having kids in the context that surrounds them.

In this way parenting during adolescence, becomes a practice conceived as normal that makes them feel accomplished and with a new social status that according to Serrano and Sanchez (43) on one hand implies a greater responsibility and instills the desire of progressing, since the “maternal responsibilities makes them more mothers...” (43) Even ending in

detachment with friends and leaving aside social activities to assume their parenting responsibilities, as Gomez et al. (44) and Akiko (45) also refer to.

Additionally, this practice facilitates having a new position in their group and is a mean to have something of their own, since having and raising a child elevates the self-esteem of women, it demonstrates overcoming childhood and grants the possibility of the legal exercise of sexuality (35, 41, 44). Akiko (45), even identifies that the feeling of emptiness that existed in relation to their life disappears, alluding that now they have a reason to live.

However, Reyes et al. (42) regarding pregnant adolescent women and in the parenting exercise, refer to the classification that determines different attitudes assumed by them from their pregnancy according to their age group; for example, in the “early adolescence (10 to 13 years) perceives this process as a fantasy, do not project future plans with their partner and can even show emotional disorders: depression and isolation” (42).

“While in middle adolescence pregnancies (14 to 16 years old), the attitude can be ambivalent, of pride or guilt; it can also be perceived as a threat or an opportunity that will bring maturity” (42), and can “see the father as an expectation for the future”. If the pregnancy occurs during late adolescence (17 to 19 years old), maternity is appreciated as a form of consolidating the intimacy with their partner and commit the father as a future partner; also, young women develop a great concern in their role as mothers” (42).

In this sense, “the patterns of behavior of adolescent mothers toward their children can be modified over time and their interactions with other adults involved in the childcare” (42).

For adolescent men, parenting is a new experience that is learned and socialized (46). As a perspective, parenting makes visible and redefines the world of the adolescent including their self-perspective, their social relationships, and gives a set of father practices (47).

Arzola and Lombardo (48), refer that a current emergency exists in the appropriation as parents “... *Now adolescent men are becoming fathers, thing that*

*did not happen in old times, adolescent men did not have children, women did”.*

This assertion is referred to the patriarchal and sexist paradigm that could appear in some places, where women are the only ones in charge of taking care and raising the children, since the possibility of the father doing the parenting duties does not exist (48), however new family forms and perceptions as parents have emerged. Within the information currently found, different perceptions of adolescent parents in the parenting exercise are identified. Inside this information, it is found that it is hard for them to assume parenting, since it can imply feelings of ambivalence and since it makes reference to the idea of “responsibility and rupture” (46).

Responsibility as a social construction, has to do with the performance of activities of a good father, that in a visionary manner relate to the economic protection, care and child and partner attention; which in turn makes the man feel the possession of “masculinity” (20, 35, 45, 46, 47).

Rupture makes reference to a split of their adolescence and is opposed to the adolescent ideal of freedom, achievement and competence, where paternity allows men to transit and symbolically recognize themselves as an adult but impedes them to continue their as-considered adolescent activities (35, 42, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50).

Being an adolescent parent and exercising the parenting responsibilities can also be perceived as having accomplished the completeness of their lives, the maturity reached, and is the fundamental event of a new subjectivity according to Serrano et al. (43). Being an adolescent parent is closely related to the emotion and positive feelings, understanding that in this phase they also grow and mature (35).

Not only is an event that for some reassures them as men, but also gives them recognition in a community that recognizes them as such. There is an adolescent father group in which having a child is motivating and must be associated to the labor market, becoming the economic provider which will lead them to move forward and *progress* (35, 43, 51).

The perception of these parents in the parenting exercise can be a source of masculine identity, but it

is fundamental in their construction the participation of the individual an income generating activity that is publicly shown, *space where he identifies himself as successful and lastly as dominating*. This is based on two aspects: authority and ability to provide (52). For this reason some adolescents report being afraid of not being able to assume their role as parents and incur the consequences for their masculine self-image

Accordingly, men can get to an identity crisis, abandon their partner or become violent presenting feelings of anguish, since not having real experience and facing the responsibilities of having a baby and not being able to provide, the man confronts a phase that could affect his masculinity toward others and himself (50).

Notwithstanding, not all fathers have the same perception, since a group of fathers exist that while the adolescent mother is set as the caretaker of the child and partner, assuming the parenting exercise in a mandatory manner; for the man this is only an option that he can assume or reject (35, 44). In occasions the acceptance of himself as the father is a slow and difficult process that is accomplished with communication and support given by his family (53).

Furthermore, there is also a group of men that are turned invisible during the parenting exercise and even though the adolescent father assumes new responsibilities in this life transition, he will perceive to be in shadows and stigmatized as referred by Arzola and Lombardo (48), as a father shrunk by the grandparents, and parents in law; for generations of greater hierarchies in the family considered more capable than him.

In this way, fathers are not integrated in this process also for perceiving this practice as exclusive for women, therefore, they do not perceive themselves as parents that exercise parenting, as Meincke and Carraro (54) refer to, since this perception is a process in constant construction that is given by interactions, which are not allowed for them.

These perceptions give account of the singularities that exist in each of the adolescent parents since for some, the parenting exercise during this life course makes them feel gratified and happy, having feelings of accomplishment by the recognition of the public and for the status they get within their peer group and their

community, adolescents feel mature, responsible or symbolically adults that have achieved the fulfillment of their lives; for others, these are experiences that instill feelings of fear and perceptions of disability and anguish for the lack of knowledge and the social vulnerability that surrounds them.

A situation to highlight in the performed review, is that the perception of the adolescent parent that exercises parenting has changed over time. Cruzat and Aracena (55), in Chile, refer that these parents are experiencing a transition from the traditional and hegemonic role of provider, to a father with a more affective approach to the child, and although one of the main activities demarcated is being the economic provider and represent authority, in the majority of cases the fathers need to share and interact with their children.

According to Celedon and Garri (56) the adolescent parent can face the social vulnerability where studies are interrupted and the insertion to the labor market must be precipitated, affecting “the unfold subjectivities in each individual facing the early irruption of a function associated with the adult world”. Being an adolescent family begins with the inequality compared to adults under the socio-political perception, where the feeling of being a parent, and where building and feeling like a family just for providing an affective bond is insufficient at the eye of the public (56). This can affect the self-perspective of each adolescent parent in the parenting exercise.

### **Interactions of adolescent fathers and mothers in the parenting exercise**

As Blumer (57) refers to, “a human society is composed of compromised people in the act of living. This way, life is a process of continuous activity in which participants develop lines of action dealing with the innumerable situations that must be faced”. In this sense, “human beings orientate their actions toward things in function of what these mean to themselves and significance of these things comes as a consequence of the social interaction each one has with the neighbor” (57).

In the case of adolescent parents in the parenting exercise, it should be noted that the exercise of this labor allows them to learn and become parents, and

as they interact with their children and in the general context, they respond according to the significance that each person or object has from them.

Notwithstanding, it is important to take into account that the activities performed in the parenting exercise, especially in adolescent parents, can be influenced by close relatives that advise on how to interact towards the claims of the other or that simply have been present as a model that transits from generation to generation. Given this, Blumer (57), mentions that the activities of others intervene as positive factors in the construction of their own behavior, however, faced with alien acts, a person may abandon, reconsider, verify, cancel, intensify or substitute an intention,

In that sense, human action is formed through an interaction process of the human being with itself and to be able to interact, the individual must determine what he or she wants, focus on a goal or objective, plan beforehand a line of behavior, observe and interpret alien situations, assume their own situation, verify oneself with respect to this or that, conceive what must be done in other cases, and frequently, stimulate oneself when facing conditions that generate obstacles or daunting situations (57). This can be reflected in parents, whom in some cases, although retaking conceptions from their mothers and forms to assume parenting, at the same time, redefine and modify the relationship and the type of interactions with their children (38). Some interactions that are emphasized in the findings of the reviewed studies are the following:

### **With their children**

Gonzalez and Estupiñan(39), Rozo et al. (40), have identified in their studies, that some adolescent mothers are promoters for the care of their child and interact with them according to their demands; especially, the mothers stimulate, nurse, demonstrate sensitivity and attachment toward their newborn babies, try to spend quality time with their children and also performs other duties such as continuing their studies and house chores, since they feel the responsibilities of being a housewife, without sparing the efforts for their children, which makes them competent human mothers.

These adolescent mothers referred in the previous studies are linked to their child to establish a positive

relation through verbal and physical manifestations such as kisses, hugs, caresses, etc. These studies also express that educating, talking, giving good treatment, going outdoors, giving them what they need and giving a candy are demonstrations of affection toward their children, which are required in this stage (38).

At the same time a positive and significant correlation exists between maternal sensibility and attachment. This means that the mother responses toward the baby necessities, effectively influence the way of how the child interacts with the mother, and at the same time these influence in the style of responsiveness of the mother. However it is identified that from the expectative of the parents related to the gender of the baby their interactions with the baby also change (35, 38).

However, other findings are identified, which evidence interactions of the mothers with their children, as sistant, and seem to have more difficulty to regulate their emotional states during the interaction with their children. Among others, factors such as depression and difficult personal experiences interfere in the quality of interaction between the mother and her children (59).

Regarding the fathers, it is important to emphasize that there is not an extensive literature that investigates the interactions of adolescent fathers with their children, since the majority of studies in this regard have been focused on women.

It is recognized that the relation of men with their children is more occasional or based on the economic support and women come as the most important in the life of the child, considering women a source of affection and sacrifice (23). Adolescent fathers are seen within the interactions made, more involved in activities related to games and recreation (59).

The father is who protects, provides, shapes, educates and represents to the authority. "On the other hand, paternity is a place where masculinity is built and shaped, and where structurally, men are placed in a situation of power and control over their children and women" (55).

### **With their family**

Family support for mothers is qualified as a facilitating element that makes them strong and helps them take

responsibility for the demands of their children (41), as well as decreasing their levels of stress in this labor (39). Cited as a requirement that is also necessary to continue their studies. In the same way for fathers, this support encourages positive attitudes and the achievement of personal and family goals (49, 51).

Some chores such as hygiene of the children, especially in the newborn stage, are assigned to the mother of the adolescent, and is almost regulatory that the parenting practices are generated in a traditional form from generation to generation to perform these actions (38, 39, 60).

From these delegations to the maternal grandmother, another phenomena is built, grand parenting, which puts into consideration a "social and affective model" associated with care, protection, education, dedication and demonstrations of affection and love, in a bidirectional way between grandparents and grandchildren (16). Also, it places in the family everyday life the reference of advice from the grandparents toward aspects related to parenting according to Marin and Palacio (61).

The grandmother support identified by Álvarez-Álvarez et al. (62) is such, that the grandmothers are the ones that in many occasions take decisions based on their grandchildren, taking the opinion of the daughter in second place. In this sense, there are mothers conscious of their responsibilities, but they do what is expected from them and trust in the decisions of their environment. The support of the mother of the adolescents in all directions is built as an essential element for an adequate adaptation of their new role as a mother and to optimize the opportunities that could be granted in determined contexts of life, although it results in the detriment of the health of the grandmother (62).

For women, the role played by the origin of the family and the extensive parenting assumption is relevant, since these factors are built from psychosocial references that women retake and redefine as mothers. While there are elements that could negatively influence or limit the relationship mother-to-child regarding parenting and the construction of bonds in the case of adolescent mothers, it is not the age which determines the structural form of these difficulties, but the absence or breakage of the family support networks for adolescents (38).



In general, the family is identified within the reviewed studies as part of the microsystem that plays a key role for the adolescent parents in the parenting exercise, but especially for the father, which in some cases represents the support ties to develop their capacities for this labor (51,54); this process occurs from the empirical knowledge of the families, where parents try to live and exercise parenting adapting themselves to the new situation with family support, which allows them to face the challenges of being a father and continue with their planned projects (49).

### **Interactions with the labor, health, education and recreation context**

In different countries of the world is estimated that adolescent parents have a high social risk, since they do not have the economic resources necessary to cater a family group and make interactions in an appropriate manner with the environment (58, 63). One of the causes of this problem is referenced under the education level they have, which makes them work in underpayment labors to cover their expenses (58, 64).

In Colombia for example, it was found that in addition to having less labor opportunities, the adolescent parents suffer the impact of a reduction of income per hour compared to the general population, in a greater magnitude for women (12,7%), compared to men (5,3%) (65), data that represents a reality that these parents face when they try to take care of their children and economically maintain the expenses of a new family.

According to Cabello y Reyes (46), “In this way, they are incorporated as adults in a society where the State, on one side makes the sexual activity invisible and condemns adolescent pregnancy, and on the other, paradoxically, restricts the sexual and reproductive rights while it coerces the grant of alternatives and opportunities that will allow adolescents to create a life project beyond pregnancy and marriage”.

In numbers from the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) presented in an executive summary from the Youth Labor Market in the June-August period of 2016, it can be identified that the young population (14-28 years), had an occupational rate of 48,6%, and a general unemployment rate of 15,9%, being 20,5% in women

and 12,5% in men (66). In this sense, there are few opportunities that these people have regarding employment, and overall, a quality job.

In these data, it can be evidenced how the influence of the models of provider husband and woman guardian of the morale outlined in the nineteenth century still persists (67), since a greater unemployment rate for women and more opportunities for men is evidenced, who are recognized as those who must financially provide for their children, even abandoning their school projects and getting a low-paid employment (65).

However, it is found that some women work, study and exercise parenting, especially when the father is absent (38,40). These women work to guarantee their own subsistence and their child subsistence without depending on another person (41). Regarding this last statement, Cruzat and Aracena (55) claim that “with the incorporation of women to the labor world, mother functions and chores have been reformulated, and therefore, the father has the same functions as the mother. That is why the question arises, whether the need of incorporation to the different parenting processes of the father, responds to a personal necessity, or, the petition of women to be able to adapt to changes has been adjusted”.

It is also found that fathers, despite of fulfilling all the provider functions, continue to study and work part-time (47), they also consider formal education as a source to improve their life and promote a more adequate support for the development of their family as set by Bordignon et al. (68). Akiko (45), claims that urban adolescents also require of more family support than rural adolescent for the care of their children.

Marin and Palacio (61) emphasize the role of the grandmothers toward the necessities of the single mothers, because thanks to their offered support, the mothers can continue in the education system or realizing their role as financial providers. Ultimately, the complexity of the present time is expressed in multiple conflicts, precarious achievements, emergent models and contextual paradoxes.

In relation to the recreation spaces used before becoming adolescent parents, the majority of women claim that they distanced themselves from their friends and left behind the street life to bring

more attention to their children, changes evaluated in a positive way by the adolescents (45). For some men, the experience of being a father is associated with a personal and social change (47). Adolescents confront certain conditions that imply changes in the activities made during free time (for the necessity of working and having an income), and the necessity of asking for financial help to their parents or parents-in-law; leading oneself to a possible deterioration in the relationship and impeding their goals (69).

Within the interactions with the health system of adolescent parents in the parenting exercise, it is observed that it alludes to women as customers or as the caretakers that take their children to health checks, and take care of their newborn in the Intensive Care Units, but there is not enough information of fathers doing these labors (44, 70).

It is also evidenced that the father is invisible in the parenting exercise since the studies are focused on the adolescent mother and her child, but do not concern of the feelings and experiences of the father (40, 69). These families, for Celedon and Garri (56), are like “a non-existent in the public agenda, which leads to another group of vulnerabilities in terms of not having and not having access”. Barreto (69), claims that it is necessary to take into account the opinions of the male adolescents about adolescent paternity, since this contributes in the construction of public policies focused on showing the State their difficulties and necessities and, on the other hand, shows the deficiency of some existing public policies

### **Development of public policies regarding adolescent parents**

The irruption as an adolescent parent generates a breakage from the social mobility perspective, and not taking into account this situation and varied contexts, can result in the vulnerability that is observed in some spaces. In this sense, the challenge is, “to recognize and influence the different family representations, which is characterized today for their instability and their capability of changing” (56); which implies, therefore, “new openings to the social emergent, being careful of not excluding the principal role of the adolescent parents related to the care of their children and their own trajectories” (56).

Regarding the actions taken by the Colombian State

around this subject, some strategies and policies created are identified. According to the report given by the National System of Youth, Young Colombia and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (71), a total of \$21,9 billion COP have been invested in young people and adolescents that represent 2,9% of the gross domestic product of the country.

Similarly 93,5% of the resources of specific expenses are invested exclusively in education (72). Furthermore, Colombia allocates \$9,45 billion COP in expenditure for adolescence and youth. While in other territories 71,1% of the resources go to health affiliation, nationally 78,5% is invested in attention to the population victims of the armed conflict (73).

Besides, there are policies that support the adolescent population and that are the basis for programs and policies approved in this country, as the Law 1098 of 2006 (Infancy and Adolescent Code) that establishes people between 12 and 18 years old as adolescent (8).

Also the Statutory Law of Youth, Law 1622 of 2013 (9), which recognizes in article 5, a young person as “*in process of consolidation of their intellectual, physical, moral, economic, social and cultural autonomy, that is part of a political community and in that sense enforces their citizenship*” but also estimates in the item 3 of this article that “*the youth realities and experiences are plural, diverse and heterogeneous*” therefore adolescents must be understood “*as a construction whose subjectivity is being transformed by the social, economic and political dynamics, and whose societies also contribute*”.

This last policy, Law 1622 of 2013 (9), uses language that reveals changes given at a normative level taking into account the subjectivities and diversities that appear in the contexts, understanding that it must contribute to the population from the same dynamics generated in the social and cultural level. However, the contributions made for adolescent parents in the country by the State must be noticed.

Currently, policies exist that make reference to the improvement of economic opportunities for the youth population, which includes the age group considered adolescent. Within these the Conpes policy 173 of 2014 (73) which proposes general guidelines to promote an adequate job placement; the Law 1014 of 2006 (74) that establishes the enterprise network, the Law 1429

of 2010 (75), law of formalization and generation of the first job, Law 1780 of 2016 (76) which promotes employment and youth entrepreneurship.

In regard to health, different policies and strategies have been established, that consider giving coverage to this population group. Also there has been an important focus in two main issues which are particular: sexuality and pregnancy prevention in adolescents, which are developed with emphasis on women.

Policies, programs and guidelines were elaborated for these issues. For example the policy in sexual and reproductive health (77), guidelines such as the Social Conpes 147 of 2012 (26) that established strategies to decrease adolescent pregnancies; as well as programs such as Friendly Health Services for Adolescents and Young People (78) that outlines the route of attention in counseling and care of sexual and reproductive health, and the Youth Control Program for people between 10 and 29 years old (79).

It can be noticed that the orientation of these programs and policies are toward the necessities that have been present for many decades and in some occasions have only been noticed from the State perspective, considering pregnancy in adolescents, for example, a public health problem that must be prevented, without any exclusions of race, ethnicity, age, cultures, etc.

Notwithstanding, it is necessary to recognize that despite of all the efforts, the figures demonstrate that the average annual number of children from women between 15 and 19 years old during the 2003-2013 period has been of 154.707, and the number of children from women between 10 and 14 years old is increasing, 6292 (80); The previous data demonstrates the necessity of looking for strategies to support these new families that perform the parenting exercise (81).

27% of the Colombian population is between 14 and 28 years (57) and from these approximately 5.179.937 are between 12 and 17 years old (82); however, these inequality situations and precariousness more hefty in this population group.

These young people do not count with enough opportunities yet. This is corroborated by the Conpes 173 of 2014 (73), which refers: *“the proportion of youth (proportion which includes adolescents) that only studies decreases drastically as the age*

*increases. From 65.4% (2.3 million people) in the age group of 14-17 years old, it decreases to 19.3% in the group of 18-21 years old (...) (73) another aspect to notice is the unsuccessful integration to the labor market as it results in the territorial system of Youth in Colombia (83).*

This document also considers *“the situation is especially critical for the group of 18-21 years old (...) In 2011, only 32% of the young people in poverty conditions were assisting to a higher education program. In contrast, 87,1% of the upper class young people attended higher education programs”.* (73)

## Conclusions

This review sets the history that adolescent parents have experienced, demonstrating that their perspectives vary according to the context particularly. It is not the age that classifies them as vulnerable, but the conditions and opportunities that are found around them.

Their interactions with the context are equally the result of their perspective as adolescent parents; the family influences in a special manner both for the recognition of their role in this new labor and for the achievement of their tasks and to continue the performed activities before exercising parenting.

It is not that adolescents with children do not wish to continue their studies or that becoming parents in this life stage is a motive to increase the circles of poverty; but that the conditions and support networks are limited to assume the new tasks of parenting and continue with the activities that are imposed by the social models and systems, meaning that parents exist in an environment that stigmatizes them and makes them invisible.

For the parenting exercise it is relevant that the adolescents find support in specific public policies and programs, created based on the perspective of this population, their interactions, necessities, doubts and expectations.

This can be accomplished by including them in the design, execution and evaluation of political actions and programs developed or projected to address the situations they face in this life stage.

In this sense, it can be referred that age is not the only

responsible in the health, social or political problems of a country, but that the opportunities and support networks that people count in, help people to continue with their life course in decent and quality conditions. In the case of parenting adolescents it is necessary to create support strategies that allows them to progress in the achievement of their goals and the goals of their children.

The homogenizing acceptance of parenting incapability in this population must be analyzed

recognizing personal and contextual singularities, examining also the possibilities held in their surroundings.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare not having any conflict of interest.

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