

**DETERMINING FACTORS  
IN THE ESTABLISHMENT  
OF THE MOTHER-  
CHILD BONDING AND  
ITS REPERCUSSIONS  
DURING DEVELOPMENT  
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD**

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**Abstract:** There are numerous factors responsible for establishing the mother-child binomial, among which some directly influence the development of the baby and child in their first years of life. Despite this, there are few accessible experimental studies that correlate attachment to the mother with the infant's motor and psychological difficulties. New discoveries would be important to take care of the mother-child bond from the hospital environment, thus preventing delays in child development. The objective of the study is to characterize the main challenges that influence the formation of the maternal bond and how these interfere in the individual's development during early childhood under a psycho-pediatric bias. To this end, an integrative literature review was carried out in order to compile the most recent studies on this topic and organize them in a didactic way for further consultation. Through, mainly, the analysis of qualitative research with mothers of babies up to 2 years old. The articles showed that the physical aspects remained intrinsic to the emotional ones, since most newborns who had a fragile bond with their mother showed delay in physical development. The surveys showed that most babies interacted differently with the maternal stimulus, and the observed mothers showed convergent behavior such as looking at, touching and holding the baby when they thought it was necessary. In addition, prolonged skin-to-skin physical contact has demonstrated positive effects for infants, including sleep organization, behavioral response, socio-emotional and speech development. Still, observing the mothers, traces of anxiety and insecurity were found in the postpartum period, and they considered having a support group in this period essential for maintaining mental health. As measures to take care of the dyad, the new maternity

units were designed to favor the sharing of the room between the mother and the baby, and use scales or scores in clinical medicine such as PBQ and new techniques that are being tested such as RIT (Integration Task Recorded) that serve as instruments for health professionals to investigate the quality of mother-child interactions still within the maternity ward and advise follow-up with a child psychologist or pediatrician, preventing future impacts on the child's development. Finally, the studies gathered presented natural childbirth, breastfeeding, physical contact as positive influencing factors of the mother-child bond. As negative factors, postpartum depression, sexual abuse and teenage pregnancy represent challenges for the establishment of this affective bond.

**Keywords:** Child development, mother-child bond, attachment.

## INTRODUCTION

Many people assume that babies do not have a good perception of the world around them, but this is not true, so much so that the first years of the individual are decisive for their physical and psychosocial development. According to Freud, There is then an intimate correlation between the experiences and perceptions of the newborn in their first days of life and recognition of a person who fulfills the maternal function of satisfying their impulses, their basic physiological needs such as breastfeeding.

However, Bowlby (1990) when developing his ideas about attachment, explains that the creation and maintenance of this link is much more subjective than we can imagine and when the child does not find this type of relationship, a situation is established that he names as "deprivation of mother". The child suffers deprivation when, living at home, the mother (or primary caregiver) does not provide the loving care that a small child

needs, and that the harmful effects of this deprivation, such as: need for exaggerated attention and cognitive difficulties, will vary depending on the degree of deprivation. Therefore, it is essential for the development, as soon as possible, the creation and strengthening of the bond with the mother, through which the emotional base of being is built. So the question is: to what extent are babies negatively affected by the absence of a mother figure? What makes it difficult to strengthen these ties?

The fragility of family ties can result in impairments in solving language, memory and social skills problems. Factors such as sexual abuse, drug use, rape, teenage pregnancy, mechanization of medical care during birth and postpartum depression set obstacles to the creation of the maternal dyad.

Therefore, the relevance of this bibliographical study proves to be essential to better understand man and the physical and psychological effects that negative situations cause during the development of the child. Research in this area can bring new knowledge to psychology, psychiatry, obstetrics and child and neonatal pediatrics, improving the care of pregnant women and children in hospitals and health centers, in addition to facilitating counseling for the mother, all with the aim of full child development and the reduction of adverse effects to the child in the long term.

## **OBJECTIVES**

### **GENERAL OBJECTIVE**

Qualify reasons that weaken the relationship between mother and child and how these interfere directly or indirectly in the development of the child.

## **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- Discover the impact of early childhood experience in both the physical and mental areas.
- Evaluate the results of surveys carried out with mothers on this issue.
- Determine plan to help mothers to strengthen maternal bonds.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this study, a bibliographical research was carried out using the main online search tools for indexed scientific and/or clinical articles, such as: Public Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (PubMed) and the Virtual Health Library of Brazil (BVS). The following descriptors were used to select the articles: affective bond, mother-child relationship, deviations in child development, emotional bonds, psychoanalytic theory. In addition, words were also used in the English language: Object Attachment, Mother-Child Relations, Developmental Disabilities, Psychoanalytic Theory, to obtain studies published in international journals.

Articles published between 2016 and 2022 were considered. Not excluding articles published in previous years with great importance. Incomplete studies that did not have the necessary information to approach the theme proposed in the review were discarded. Therefore, a selective reading of the abstracts of the bibliographic materials found was carried out, based on the proposed question and combinations of descriptors. After accessing the full text, the content was analyzed through an eliminatory critical reading. Thus, after this procedure, the scientific productions were selected to compose the present work.

To evaluate the results, information was collected using an organization sheet with the following information: title, year of publication, authors and article considerations. Then the content was properly examined and used for the development of this study.

## RESULTS

### DISCOVER THE IMPACT OF EXPERIENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD IN BOTH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL AREA

There are two opposing theories, that of Freud against that of Winnicott and Bowlby. Through the theory of support, Freud stated that the primary connection between the mother and the child would be through the baby's impulses due to its need for food satisfaction in the foreground, using this as support for establishing affective relationships. On the other hand, Winnicott and Bowlby, through the relational paradigm, subverted the Freudian theory, focused on subjective, interpersonal aspects of the mother-child relationship, the search for the relationship as well as its maintenance goes beyond the physiological needs of nutrition.

According to Brum and Schermann (2003), in a work at the orphanage, groups of babies were observed who were only satiated in their basic needs, but did not receive affection. These babies began to have difficulties in developing physically, they had no appetite, did not gain weight and, over time, had no interest in relationships, which led most to death. (SALUSVITA, p. 277 – 295, 2020)

The mother's presence and her attitudes, however simple they may be, reach the baby as a stimulus. According to Sptiz (2004), from 3 months onwards, most babies recognize their mother and respond to her in a unique and peculiar way, different from other people they know or from the family circle. They

smile, vocalize to the mother's visual stimulus and follow her with their eyes. This is a form of language that guarantees a certain warmth and closeness. (FERNANDES; JUNIOR, 2021; EDWARDS et al., 2021)

This relationship begins with the baby still inside the belly, and soon after birth, the importance of initial contact with the child in the delivery room is highlighted. Oxytocin, considered a hormone of love, is concentrated in women throughout the period of uterine contraction and expulsion of the baby through the vaginal canal, so it is the best time for a mother to "fall in love" with her child. The immediate touch develops this relationship naturally in the first minutes of life, making it memorable. (AYRES et al., 2021)

In the affective perspective, breastfeeding with its bodily proximity, the looks and speech directed at the baby is even more important than the sucking action of the mother's breast. From a physical perspective, breast milk promotes the proper development of phonoarticulatory organs, in terms of mobility, strength, posture, development of swallowing, chewing and breathing functions, in addition to the articulation of speech sounds. This way, it reduces the presence of bad oral habits and various speech pathologies. (SHREFFLER et al., 2021)

Regarding motor development, a long-term survey of 130 mothers with children aged 3 to 12 months in a maternity hospital in Fortaleza showed interesting results, as shown in **figure 1**. It can be noticed that of the 52 mother-child dyads that presented a fragile bond, 39 of the babies presented atypical motor development, corresponding to a percentage of 69%. Therefore, the mother-child relationship does interfere with motor development, but it is not yet known how to explain exactly what happens. (CHAVES KYS et al.2021)

	DM Typical			Atypical DM			Total
	≥29s IGN	30-35s IGN	≥36s IGN	≥29s IGN	30-35s IGN	≥36s IGN	
<b>Strong Bond</b>	16 76,2%	32 86,5%	17 73,9%	7 43,8%	3 13%	3 30%	78
<b>Weak Link</b>	5 23,8%	5 13,5%	6 26,1%	9 56,3%	20 87%	7 70%	52
	21	37	23	16	23	10	130

Figure 1: Motor development.

Source: article mother-child bond, environment and motor development of babies monitored in risk follow-up.

### EVALUATE THE RESULTS OF RESEARCH CARRIED OUT WITH MOTHERS AND BABIES UP TO 2 YEARS OLD ABOUT MATERNITY

The research in which the sample was composed of six mothers in the puerperal stage (attended by the SUS network) of babies from zero to three months old, born in the maternity ward of a hospital located in the region of the city of Poços de Caldas/MG, it was verified that the mothers' predominant activities in the observed periods were: looking at, touching and holding the baby. At first, some babies were in the stroller or crib, however, the mothers picked them up at some point during the encounter. Analyzing the speeches, in general, it is noted that the mothers perceive the baby's conditions and that, therefore, there is care regarding their needs, evidencing the maternal protective instinct. (DE et al.)

In addition, when compared to the type of delivery where there is ventral-ventral maternal-infant skin-to-skin contact (SSC) during which the baby is dressed only in a diaper and placed between the mother's breasts with the cesarean section, the practice of contact Immediate maternal care results in better contemporary physiological outcomes and stability. SSC has been shown to improve

infant arousal, infant perceptual-cognitive and motor development, as well as sustained shared attention and toy exploration at 6 months. There is a more rapid improvement in the state of organization, in terms of longer periods of peaceful sleep, alert wakefulness and shorter periods of active sleep, and accelerated maturation of the autonomic nervous system. The SSC also seems to positively influence mothers, producing better breastfeeding and mother-infant bonding outcomes (NORHOLT, 2020)

Finally, first-time mothers in particular showed insecurities, such as: will I be able to breastfeed? Will I be able to have a normal delivery? Will I be able to take care of the baby properly? In addition, they showed anxiety about the birth, in relation to pain and postpartum recovery. Still later, they ensured that having a support network with the baby, especially in the postpartum period, is important for maintaining personal mental health, ensuring time for the mother to rest or to do some pleasant activity.

### DETERMINE A PLAN TO HELP MOTHERS TO STRENGTHEN MATERNAL BONDS

Due to the need to establish mother-child bonds quickly, there is a need for action



plans. Gradually, in the 1980s, mothers were encouraged to stay with their children for extended periods. In the 1990s, new obstetric units were built and the mother and baby shared the same room, this was one of the measures that helped to improve these emotional bonds. (Klaus & Kennell, 2000)

In addition, health professionals must encourage parents to openly express their sadness, joy and affection; this way there is a greater possibility of adapting better to some bad experience in their first days of life. Brazelton (1988), cites that the expression of feelings leads to the connection with the newborn. (BROCKINGTON et al., 2001)

In this sense, research by (Wendland-Carro et al.1999), demonstrates that promoting information to mothers about the capabilities of newborns for interaction is an action capable of fostering maternal sensitivity and responsiveness, which can help in synchronizing the dyad and consequently in the formation of a secure attachment. (ALMEIDA et al., 2022; FUKUI et al., 2021; JULIAN et al., 2022)

Bee (1997) also argues that parental support is positive for the baby's development. Mothers who feel they have adequate support from health professionals, psychologists and the family after some traumatic situation such as rape, premature births, teenage pregnancy, among other adversities, are more likely to have children with secure attachment, and with time, achieve establish maternal bonds. (KEYS; CAMPOS; NOBRE, 2021)

Currently, based on Emotional Availability Scales (EA and PBQ Scales), health professionals can investigate the quality of mother-child interactions even within the maternity ward and advise follow-up with a child psychologist or pediatrician, preventing future impacts on the child's development.

The postpartum bonding questionnaire (PBQ) is considered valid, it is a means

used in maternity hospitals through scores and questionnaires prepared by child psychologists to assess the mother-child bond. However, nowadays, it is not being used as much because it starts from the mother's perspectives and self-report, so there is a high tendency for errors from socially accepted and desirable answers, incomplete or missing data.

Therefore, there is a new form of evaluation that has been studied since 2021 to be applied in clinical medicine, the RIT (recorded integration task) as shown in **Figure 2**, which uses observational methods of common interaction between mother and child in the exchange of diapers for example in babies from 2 to 5 months. The interaction was recorded and then evaluated by health professionals according to criteria also proposed by specialists. The questionnaire sheets have a score from 1 to 5 and space for notes about adverse behavior of the mother or baby. Mother and baby scores are scored separately, then merged into the final score. Validation of this technique is promising, as the observation method is the gold standard for identifying human interactions.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on what has already been presented, analyzing the most relevant publications on the subject, the positive and negative constraints of the maternal bond were discussed and how they influence psychomotor development, so we were able to confirm that the present review contributes by highlighting the main results of research confronting motherhood with child development. However, as a way to improve assistance and guidance to mothers, it is still necessary to carry out new studies to continue improving this theme.

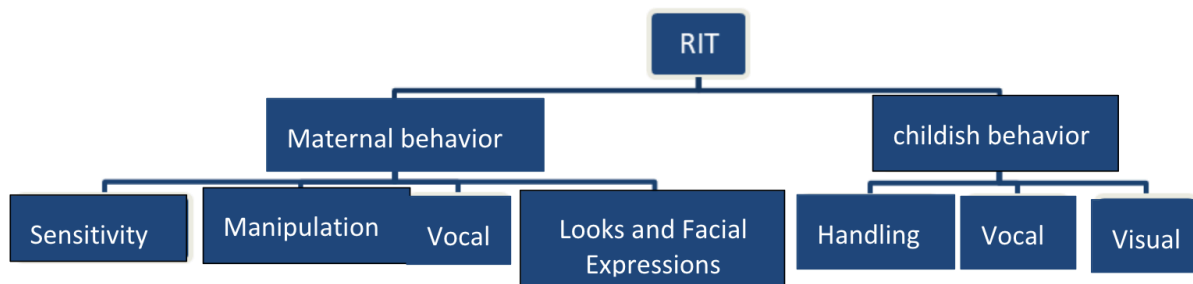


Figure 2: Divisions of the RIT criteria.

Source: adapted from recorded interaction task.

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