

# Percepções de mães pobres acerca das práticas de monitoria positiva e negativa

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## RESUMO

O objetivo do presente estudo foi descrever a percepção de mães em situação de pobreza residentes na região metropolitana de Belém-PA sobre suas práticas de monitoria positiva e monitoria negativa. Participaram deste estudo 13 cuidadoras, que além de responderem à instrumentos para coleta de dados sociodemográficos (ISD), de pobreza familiar (IPF) e de avaliação de práticas parentais (IEP), participaram de grupos focais. As participantes foram divididas de acordo com o nível de pobreza familiar em dois grupos: mais pobres e menos pobres. As etapas de coleta dos dados foram realizadas em Centros de Referência em Assistência Social (CRAS) do município de Belém-PA, localizados em áreas periféricas da cidade e em salas de aula do Núcleo de Teoria e Pesquisa do Comportamento (NTPC). A análise qualitativa dos dados ratificou a relação entre maiores níveis de privação com a maior probabilidade de utilização de monitoria negativa. Os resultados apontam para os desafios e demandas do contexto de vulnerabilidade que enfraquecem a habilidade de exercer uma parentalidade efetiva.

*Palavras-chave:* práticas parentais, famílias de baixa renda, relações familiares.

## ABSTRACT

### Perceptions of impoverished mothers on positive and negative monitoring practices

The objective of this study was to describe the perception of poor mothers living in the metropolitan region of Belém-PA, about their practices of positive and negative monitoring. Participated in this study 13 guardians who, in addition to responding to the following quantitative instruments: ISD (sociodemographic inventory), IPF (family poverty index) and IEP (parenting styles inventory), participated in a focus group. Participants were divided according to the level of family poverty into two groups, namely, more and less poor. The data collection stages were respectively carried out in Social Assistance Reference Centers (Centros de Referência em Assistência Social - CRAS), located in peripheral areas of the city of Belém-PA and in classrooms of the Behavior Theory and Research Nucleus (NTPC). The qualitative data analysis confirmed the relationship between higher levels of deprivation and higher probabilities of negative monitoring. The results point to the challenges and demands of the vulnerability context that weaken the ability to exercise positive parenting.

*Keywords:* parental practices, low-income families, family relationships.

Loving and raising a child have been considered one of the most important and challenging tasks performed by parental figures throughout the family life cycle (Cole & Cole, 2004). Empirical evidence (Reppold et al., 2002; Santos et al., 2018) support this understanding consistently

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with the reveal of the relationship between the bonds established between parents and children and child development. The pattern of interaction built by the family with the child can promote or hinder overall child development. Nothing could be more logical, since the family is considered the primary context of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1996).

When asked about what makes some parents more capable in exercising parenting than others, Belsky (1984) considered that parental figures are directly affected by three factors: individual characteristics of the parents (e.g., personality), individual characteristics of the children (mood) and the broader social context in which the relationship between parents and children is inserted (Schmidt et al., 2018).

Its model is based on a set of empirical evidence that reveals the impact of the characteristics of children, parents and the support network made available in the context. In his analyzes, Belsky (1984) revisits studies that indicate how much the child's perception of difficult temperament, such as persistent irritability or poor sociability, as well as parental attributes such as flexibility, extraversion and openness to experience can influence the interaction pattern established between parents and children (Huh et al., 2006). For this author, the strength of these components does not occur in an isolated way, but in the relationship established between them and with the characteristics of the context in which the parental relationship takes place (e.g. marital relationship, neighborhood, occupation of parents and support network).

The author's proposal consists of a systemic and procedural model that considers parenting as a complex and, therefore, multidetermined phenomenon. However, Belsky (1984) believes that the parents' characteristics (personal and psychological resources) constitute the central determinant in his model, followed by social and contextual sources of support and, finally, the child's characteristics. In this regard, he states that a high parental functioning will continue to occur even if two of the three determinants are at risk, if the personal and psychological parental resources remain intact.

In agreement with Belsky (1984) about the complex and multidetermined nature of parenting, Kotchick and Forehand (2002) highlight the influence of the social context on parental behavior. Thus, they draw attention to factors outside of the family such as the risks and resources of the community, the quality of interactions, poverty, and cultural and ethnic customs. Thus, they highlight the effects that the social context promotes in the process of parenting, in particular the effects of ethnicity and culture, socioeconomic condition and community and neighborhood environment (Arruda & Smeha, 2019; Carlo et al., 2017).

It is a common understanding in literature that the study on parenthood should consider cultural characteristics; it is

impossible to ignore the role played by the impoverishment of families in parental practices, once the negative association that marks this relationship is well established (Araújo, 2019; Shala & Grajevci, 2016). The evidence indicates that poverty is not an isolated threat to development, but rather a systemic burden that weakens people and their development. According to Ward et al. (2016), children living in low- and middle-income countries are more likely to encounter a greater number and variety of risk factors (e.g., family violence) and fewer developmental variables.

According to Herd et al. (2020), a weak social organization in the neighborhood is indirectly related to delinquency through association with parents' behavior and low self-esteem, while a sense of community cohesion helps parents perform parental monitoring more effectively. In this sense, a parenting that emphasizes control, monitoring and supervising the child, as well as high expectations of obedience and respect for authorities, tends to be appropriate when it comes to the development of children living in disadvantaged community environments or those considered at risk.

Positive parenting is a generic term used to refer to dimensions of parenting such as sensitivity, setting boundaries, and contingency-based reinforcement (Waller et al., 2015). Negative parenting, in turn, refers to inconsistent, very reactive, controlling, and especially severe parental behavior (Chang et al., 2003).

Parental practices were also classified as positive and negative by Brazilian researcher Paula Gomide. Positive practices consist of several behaviors, among them, positive monitoring, which is characterized by welcoming behaviors, attention, and expression of positive affection for the children. In this type of interaction, parents praise their children when they do something right in the same proportion that they correct it when they do something wrong, to build a healthy balance (Gomide, 2017).

According to Gomide (2014), negative parental practices consist of five categories, among them negative monitoring involving the excess of parental supervision over their children and high frequency of repetitive instructions, which denotes distrust and produce a climate of stress and hostility in the relationship (Gomide, 2004). On the other hand, the lack of attention and responsiveness to the children's needs and the lack of affectionate guidance characterize neglect practices, which can unfold at different levels, mainly marked by affective distance.

In a study conducted in neighborhoods marked by high levels of poverty, crime, and social problems in Chicago, USA, Miller and Tolan (2018) investigated the effects of economic characteristics, social processes, and parental practices of the family on child aggressiveness. The data revealed associations between impoverishment at the age of six with an increase in aggressive behavior two years later. In addition to the relationship established between neighborhood poverty and

aggressiveness, associations were observed between aggressive behavior and the level of unemployment in the community.

Regarding parental practices, Miller and Tolan (2018) demonstrated that parental supervision/monitoring and social actions in the neighborhood are related to the decrease in the levels of aggressiveness between 6 and 8 years. The results suggest that although parental involvement and positive monitoring prevent aggressive behavior, the presence of these elements was not enough to avoid the relationship between the impoverishment of the neighborhood and the presentation of aggressive behavior. This study confirms the relationship between child behavior, the immediate context (parenting style) and the community context (economic and social characteristics of the neighborhood).

Empirical evidence such as those found by Odgers et al. (2012) reveal that supportive parental practices such as maternal warmth and high levels of parental monitoring mediate the relationship between socioeconomic characteristics and the development of antisocial behaviors. These studies suggest that the concepts of positive and negative monitoring can help to understand the mediation between parental practices and context characteristics, especially in situations of social exclusion and vulnerability.

Families that are developed in conditions of poverty are exposed to risk factors that threaten the exercise of parenting, and among these factors, female single parenting stands out. There is a consensus in the literature about the overload of the maternal figure, due to the accumulation of subsistence, domestic and childcare tasks (Yunes et al., 2007). It can be understood that these mothers, since they have fewer resources (psychological, social, or material support, for example), present overlapping tasks in time and multiplicity of demands and obligations, which generates physical and social stress (Maia et al., 2015; Fonseca, 2018).

In Brazil, Altafim et al. (2018) examined the relationships between socioeconomic conditions, parental practices, and child behavior problems with 204 mothers of children aged from 3 to 8 years old. The result suggests associations between low socioeconomic conditions with internalizing behavior problems and negative parental practices. The authors highlight the relevance of studies investigating parental practices in contexts where children and adolescents are still exposed to risk factors such as poverty as it happens in Brazil. Thus, the objective of this project is to describe, in a qualitative way, the perceptions of poorer and less poor mothers living in the metropolitan region of Belém-PA, about their positive and negative monitoring practices.

## METHOD

### DELIMITATION

This study is part of a research macro-project, which included the application of quantitative instruments and execution of focus groups of a transversal, descriptive and exploratory nature. Considering the complexity of the theme and the processes involved in the lives of families in situations of vulnerability and poverty, quantitative and qualitative measures were combined, which allowed for a greater amount of information about the phenomenon to be gathered.

### SAMPLE

Thirteen mothers/guardians of impoverished families in the city of Belém-PA participated in this study. It was established as a criterion for the selection of families to be enrolled in the Government's CadÚnico program. The criteria to building the focus groups were the analysis of family poverty quantitative instrument. After the application, participants were divided into two groups according to the assessment level of family poverty obtained with the IPF (Family Poverty Index), creating the group of the poorest with 7 participants and the group of the least poor with 6 participants.

### COLLECTION ENVIRONMENT

The collection of quantitative data was carried out in the Reference Centers for Social Assistance (CRAS) in the city, located in peripheral areas of the city. On this first encounter, the interview was about an hour long, and data collection extended throughout one year. The collection of qualitative data took place in classrooms at the Behavior Theory and Research Nucleus (NTPC). The duration of the focus groups did not exceed the limit of two hours and both collections were recorded in audio and video recording equipment.

### INSTRUMENTS

Quantitative data collection was performed using the following instruments: Sociodemographic Inventory (ISD); Family Poverty Index (IPF); and Parenting Styles Inventory (IEP).

The ISD is an instrument that seeks to characterize the families participating in the study in socio-demographic terms and marks their first contact with the researchers (Silva et al., 2010).

The IPF (Índice de Pobreza Familiar (Family Poverty Index)) is a multidimensional proposal for measuring family poverty (Barros et al., 2006). Given a positive response to each indicator, one point is assigned to the family on the poverty scale, which can thus vary between zero 0 and 48. This

data allowed classifying the participants in poverty levels and composing the focus groups.

The IEP (Inventário de Estilos Parentais [Parental Style Inventory]; Gomide, 2014) aims to evaluate parental practices. It is composed of 42 questions about the educational practices that parents use to educate their children. These are divided into two positive parental practices (positive monitoring and moral behavior) and five negative parental practices (negative monitoring, negligence, inconsistent punishment, physical abuse, and relaxed discipline). The data analysis adopted in this study followed the guidelines of Gomide (2014).

In the present study, the data analysis was done only for positive and negative monitoring practices. Considering both positive and negative monitoring, there are 12 questions of the instrument which can be evaluated individually. These dimensions were classified as “average”, “optimal” and “risk” (Gomide, 2014)

For the qualitative data collection, a script was built, and its questions guided the conduction of the focus groups carried out with poorer and less poor guardians. The issues that initially structured this moment were: “How do you describe yourself as a guardian?” and “Are there factors that hinder your relationships with your sons and daughters or with the children and adolescents you take care?”.

## COLLECTION PROCEDURE

This research was approved by the Committee of Ethics and Research with human beings from Tropical Medicine Center (NMT) under the CAAE n. 21653814.4.0000.5172. The participation on the research was conditioned to the signature of the Free and Informed Consent Term (Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido - TCLE). It is important to emphasize the fulfillment of all ethical recommendations announced by the Brazilian National Health Council (Conselho Nacional de Saúde - CNS) resolution 196/96.

The data collection was carried out at the time when the guardians were waiting for assistance at the CRAS. The terms of the study were then presented and, once the TCLE was signed, the guardians were individually interviewed. They were also informed that they could interrupt the data collection if they wanted.

After completing the collection of quantitative data, a telephone contact was established as an invitation to participate in the second phase of the collection. In case of refusal or unavailability, new contacts were made until the minimum number of six participants in each group was reached. The meeting that guided the data collection of the focus groups was structured as follows: (a) dynamics of presentation and socialization of the participants with the research team and request for authorization for audio and video recording; (b) presentation of the research theme: “What is it like for you to be a caretaker?” and “Are there factors that hinder your relationships with the chil-

dren and adolescents you care for?”; (c) closing with a thank you message and a snack.

## ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The quantitative data collected with ISD, IPF and IEP were submitted to descriptive analysis, which counted with the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* - SPSS, version 20.0 was used. First, the descriptive analysis of the IPF was made from the score obtained (0 to 48), using the ratio between quantities. In this way, families could have a degree of poverty ranging from 0% (not poor) to 100% (absolutely poor), making it possible to classify them as poorer and less poor. The criterion for the disaggregation of the poverty categories was the division of the groups from the median (= 14; ≈ 29%), to separate the two portions of the sample (more and less poor).

In order to obtain the classification of the participants in the dimensions of positive and negative monitoring, the IEP score was collected from the two dimensions referring to each participant from the poorer and less poor groups, and then a simple arithmetic mean calculation was performed. The mean score was categorized from the scores obtained by the sample quartile theory (Morettin & Bussab, 2017) for the IEP.

For the qualitative analysis, the participants’ statements were transcribed in the Microsoft Office Word 2016 software. We opted for the use of Content Analysis proposed by Bardin (2009), which consists of a set of techniques that assist in the interpretation of the analyzed data, by developing analysis categories. Such categories were raised from the stages indicated by the author: a) pre-analysis, through a fluctuating reading of the statements in which they cited the use of parental educational practices, explored from the proposal of Gomide (2014). At this point, it was made the methodological choice to take the dimensions of positive and negative monitoring as variables, taking into account the relevance of these categories as indicators of the relationship between parents and children; b) exploration of the material, word count and its frequency in the text, in this case, positive and negative monitoring practices; c) categorization, by units of meaning, grouped into words found in the mothers’ statements related to the two pre-established dimensions; d) inference, treatment and interpretation of results. Fictitious names will be used in the results presentation, in order to preserve the identities of the participants.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### PARTICIPANTS’ CHARACTERISTICS

Table 1 shows information on income, age of the child, age of the mother, schooling, marital union, and average of positive and negative monitoring obtained with the 13 research partici-



**Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of participants (n=13). (2016)**

Characteristic	Poorer	Least Poor
IPF Average	39%	25%
Average Income	R\$ 128,16	R\$ 280,28
Age of children (average)	9 years	11 years
Mother age (average)	34 years	44 years
Schooling		
EPI	1	3
EPC	4	1
EMC	2	2
Marital Union		
Yes	3	3
No	4	3
Positive Monitoring Average (IEP)	9.3 (low)	10.3 (average)
Negative Average Monitoring (IEP)	8.6 (risk)	5.6 (good)

**Notes.** EPI: Incomplete Primary Education; EPC: Complete Primary Education; EMC: Complete High School. IEP: Parental Style Index

participants who made up the group of the most and least poor.

Table 1 shows that there is a discrepancy between the poorer and least poor group in relation to multidimensional poverty measured by the IPF, with an average of 39% in the poorer group, and 25% in the less poor group. Regarding income, it was observed that the poorer group has an average income of R\$ 128,16 and the less poor group R\$ 280,28 which represents a difference of R\$152,12 between the groups. The age of the children was on average 9 years in the poorer group and 11 years in the less poor group. The average age of mothers was 34 years and 44 years in the poorer and less poor groups respectively. The schooling of the guardians from both groups was concentrated in the elementary school (n=8). Participants who did not have a conjugal union represented 50% in both groups. The mothers also presented differences in relation to the IEP classification for the dimensions of positive and negative monitoring.

The lower frequency of positive monitoring and the higher frequency of negative monitoring in the poorer families provide clues as to how the ecological variables influencing development are organized. Leventhal et al. (2015), consider that socioeconomic disadvantaged parents face significant environmental challenges and demands that weaken their ability to exercise effective parenting.

## PERCEPTION OF PARENTHOOD OF POORER MOTHERS

For the participants of the poorer group, the dimensions Positive Monitoring and Negative Monitoring and the categories related to these dimensions are presented.

### POSITIVE MONITORING

The positive monitoring dimension of the poorer group consists of the following categories: Dialogue and Care.

Positive monitoring acts as an important protective factor against the social vulnerability under which families living in poverty are exposed. There is a strong association between the use of this educational strategy and the possibility of creating a family climate favorable to development, in which parents or caregivers use social skills that generate development (Bortolini & Andretta, 2013).

The Dialog occupies a central role for the existence of Positive Monitoring in the parental relationship. Regarding this category, Helena (mother, 44 years old) said:

I always try to listen to all [the children] and I answer what they ask, right? I ask the four about what happened at school, about a schoolmate, about a friend... I've got to teach them what is right, haven't I? And I always ask them how their day was, if everything went well, if it didn't, what they learned... (Helena, mother, 44 years old).

According to the presented speech, the participant named Helena demonstrates through dialogue her interest in accompanying the development of her children. This search for a healthy interaction between dyads, involving attention, support, and affection, constitutes the practices of positive monitoring. This mother's speech also makes it possible to perceive the intention of creating a channel of listening and bonding. According to Gomide (2004), these components developed in the relationship with the child allow for the creation of a fertile environment for the child to feel safe.

Del Prette and Del Prette (2008) also add that aside from the activities involving the child, positive monitoring refers to the development and maintenance of a communication channel through dialogue and observation. This practice is demonstrated by the expression (verbal and nonverbal) of interest from parents in their children's reporting.

The Care exercised by adults who develop parental functions is another important category for the development of positive parental practices. This is because it is within the exercise of care, being attentive to "physical, affective, cognitive, emotional and social needs with a view to their autonomy", that the child's development potential is built (Pereira & Alarcão, 2014, p. 159). Anne (mother, 41 years old) spoke about Care:

I have two children, one has moved out, he is HIV-positive, and the other one is a drug addict, he lives on the street. Then I brought him here, and during this time I got a family, the mother has HIV, syphilis, three children, and her two-month-old baby also has HIV and syphilis... And I take care of them all [...] Then she can't stay, she can't go to the hospital, then it's just me, it's just me [...] Everything they want, they ask me, if they want something, they ask me; [...] I take care of them all (Anne, mother, 41 years old).

When analyzing the speech of this guardian, the frequency of the reports about care draws the attention. These activities described, such as ensuring access to social and health services necessary for the good development of the children, the provision of a suitable shelter for the child, or even, home management and meal planning, are among the components that reflect parental care (Wolfe & McIsaac, 2010).

However, another component that reflects positive parental care mentioned by the authors are the "opportunities and willingness to share the duties of caring for children between both parents" (Wolfe & McIsaac, 2010, p. 9). However, the presence of elements of emotional overload while exercising care is evident. Anne puts herself as the only figure who exercises care; aside from the presence of an interactive dynamic of support, her speech points to a lack of social support.

In short, the reports of the categories "Dialogue" and "Care" reveal the presence of other influential elements in the relationship between caregivers and children, such as the economic and social difficulties that make up the reality of the investigated families. Despite the adversities experienced by these families, which often weaken the possibilities of parental figures to adopt practices that generate development, it was observed in the statements that the caregivers endeavored to provide an appropriate emotional climate for family development (Altafim et al., 2018).

### **NEGATIVE MONITORING**

The negative monitoring dimension of the poorer group was expressed into the categories Monologues, Demand and Screaming. Negative Monitoring is a strategy that is strongly related to stress in the relationship between parents and children. This is because there is a sense of failure on the parents, who are unable to achieve a change in their children's behavior, and feelings of inadequacy by their children, who do not feel comfortable in a relationship they consider marked by the absence of listening to their personal desires (Gomide, 2014; Sampaio & Gomide, 2017; Gomide et al., 2017).

Gomide (2004) highlights the difficulty most guardians have in establishing a legitimate dialogue, with alternating moments of speaking and listening about feelings, thoughts and perceptions. Contrastingly, parents often use *Monologue* as a disci-

pline strategy, which is related to excessive control practices:

Then I talk to him [the child]. I say: "I want the best for you, but I don't think you want me to raise you that way. I believe you think it's better with your father, who's always beating you up. Because I talk, I speak to you, and you don't want to listen". I say: "I don't even know what to do with you anymore [...]. Because I speak, I don't let anything be missing for you, but you don't want to obey me." (Francisca, mother, 27 years old).

Francisca's speech reveals the characteristics and consequences of using Negative Monitoring. Although her perception is that she is "talking" with her children, the participant reports a moment in which only the mother speaks. From this brief excerpt, one can assume that the behavior considered inadequate by the mother has not changed, which maintains a state of dissatisfaction for both (Mondin, 2008).

Another possibility of understanding this story is proposed by Belsky (1984), who proposes the psychological resources of the parents as the most important elements in the development of parenting. In this context, it is inferred that the perceptions and practices demonstrated by Francisca are within the limits set on this mother and have not been investigated in the present study (e.g., life history, emotional maturity).

The category *Demand* can also be configured as Negative Monitoring and was expressed in the speech of Helena (mother, 44 years old):

My children don't get low grades, at home I don't accept six, that's low grade, seven, worse, it has to be eight, nine, ten, you see? So that they have to study, to be someone in life. They know that, right? (Helena, mother, 44 years old).

It is observed that Helena places significant importance on studies as a form of growth, stated in the expression "to be someone in life". She demonstrates this perception through the rigorous demand for good school performance.

Initially, it is noted this speech in the context of negative monitoring, with possible disruptive effects on development, since it is understood that excessive and frequent demand is a stressful educational practice (Nascimento & Fernandes, 2017). According to Pinto and Colossi (2017), parental practices cannot be understood in a defragmented way of social and cultural elements. Thus, Helena's speech allows a relationship to be established between the valuation of studies, through demand, and the socioeconomic condition experienced by this family.

According to Costa (2017) this appreciation of good school performance corresponds to a need for parents to ensure that their children have a good job and a professional career, with the aim of "getting out of the place they are", since these parents were unemployed or had precarious jobs. According to Matos (2018), parents from vulnerable social strata see education as

a path that will provide their children with opportunities that the previous generations of the family have not had access to.

Besides the influence of parental beliefs on the use of educational practices, there is also evidence of economic and social vulnerabilities such as stress, unemployment and hunger as variables that can increase the probability of the use of coercive practices by parents as a way to control the children's behavior (Pinto & Colossi, 2017).

### PERCEPTION ABOUT PARENTHOOD OF LESS POOR MOTHERS

For the participants of the less poor group, the dimensions Positive Monitoring and Negative Monitoring and the categories related to these dimensions are presented.

#### POSITIVE MONITORING

In the positive monitoring dimension of the less poor group, the categories Care, Dialogue and Instruction/Orientation were developed.

The lines inserted in the category Care reveal a set of practices exercised by the guardians through integral monitoring of their children, paying attention to the basic needs of the children, such as safety and well-being. About Care, Jéssica (grandmother, 50 years old) says:

Look, I take care of the house, then I take care of my son's house, then I take care of food. It's time for him to eat, to go to class. You have to do things at home, then you have to pick him up at school. So, I don't have much time (Jéssica, grandmother, 50 years old).

As in the poorer group, mothers of less poor children highlight their availability in routine care, since they also talk about planning their children's meals and managing time and activities to guarantee their children's right to education. Cprek et al. (2015) point out in their study that the routine presence in the home, with defined schedules for daily activities associated with other elements of positive monitoring, such as the opportunity to interact with parents in activities, offer favorable conditions for good development, and progress in school learning.

As in the group of the poorest, these statements also point to the female overload with parental duties, in which the figure of the mother and grandmother appeared exclusively in the care of children and household activities. This data demonstrates that the feminization of care is a common factor among women who live in a situation of vulnerability, and may present itself at different levels, depending on other variables, such as the support network (Maia et al., 2015).

The exercise of the role of guardian on a continuous basis, often without external support, can culminate in high levels of stress for this figure. This happens as a result of the addition

of several stressful elements, from the conditions of poverty to the psychological demands that arise in parental activity. The guardian's experience of overload and stress are mediated by other components, personal and contextual, and can reach the quality of parental relationships, since they facilitate the adoption of negative parental practices (Freitas, 2015).

The *Instruction/Orientation* category points to an educational practice that enables positive accompaniment, as well as the development of social skills.

Next year I want to pay a course for my 14-year-old son, and see if he takes a fancy to studying. He also likes music a lot. He wants me to enroll him at Carlos Gomes, I'll see it next week. (Tereza, mother, 37 years old).

From Tereza's speech it is possible to visualize a mother's understanding of the motivation of her child's studies, which can demonstrate her attention to the interests and the affective dimension of learning. The mother's orientation towards the insertion of an activity related to her child's interest corresponds to a positive parental practice, since it acts in the development of resources such as self-esteem (Gomide, 2017).

Gomide (2017) highlights the difference between showing interest and supervising children. For the author, questioning about the day at school does not show any real interest, since this stressful supervision is present to meet a demand from parents, as opposed to building dialogue.

In this sense, for Gomide (2017) the demonstration of interest is related to the willingness of the parents to listen, support, and recognize the demands of their children. In this way, positive monitoring through instruction/orientation allows the development of a trustworthy relationship between parents and children; since parents communicate their appreciation for the children's ability of recognizing and choosing what is important to them when considering the interests of the child, and the child can develop social skills such as autonomy. Andreadakis et al. (2018), in line with the notion of positive monitoring, propose that parents should encourage their children's autonomy through behaviors such as acceptance of individuality, division in decision-making, openness to dialogue and expressiveness.

#### NEGATIVE MONITORING

In the negative monitoring dimension, the participants of the less poor focal group presented the following categories: Demand, Monologues and Screams. The category Demand can be exemplified through the speech of Ariel (mother, 33 years):

Ah, "I was graded 5 in the test". I say: "Why did you receive this grade?"; "Ah, because the subject was difficult" I say: "No. You didn't study. Because that's what your time is for. At your age I had to work and take care of you" (Ariel, mother, 33).

This mother's speech demonstrates an episode of complaint, in which there is a demand about school performance. This demand indicates a relationship with the mother's belief system, which seems to place in the children the expectation that they will overcome the difficulties imposed, in congruence with their personal experience, in which there was no opportunity to prioritize studies, as shown in the speech.

In an attempt to understand the school performance of students with low socioeconomic level from family practices Costa (2017) reveals that among the elements that constituted the family's belief system, the valorization of work and formal study combined with the desire for social ascension are key factors. They also highlight practices exercised by the parental figures as associated with multiple contexts, such as the life history of the caregivers, the belief systems constructed from these life stories, as well as the social conditions in which the families live (Costa, 2017).

The *Monologue* is configured as a category that also exposes a lack of articulation in communication, since the transmission of orders, based on a hierarchical logic of the relationship between parents and children makes it difficult to build a safe and understandable environment for the children.

My children today: "- Oh, I'm not going to wash the dishes. If I take out the trash, I won't wash the dishes". "- That's your problem," I tell her. "- You're the one who's going to lose. It's not me. Today you have me to do it, tomorrow God may take me. If you don't want to study, that's what will sustain you. Because that's what I supported you with. It was with that I bought you shoes, clothes, your medicine, I fed you. It was washing, passing, and cooking. So, if you think it's not important, you'll see how important it's going to be out front. Don't learn to fry an egg, you'll see" (Ariel, mother, 33 years old).

In Ariel's speech it is possible to observe the guardian's attempt to pass on values and beliefs about independence from her experience. However, her speech does not present a dialogue with her daughter about the importance of autonomy considering, for example, the daughter's perception. According to Barbosa et al. (2017) autonomy is influenced both by parental styles and practices and by how children understand and legitimize parental authority. In this sense, the authors propose that autonomy can result from a relationship between parents and children in which there is a balance between affection and rules.

According to Barbosa et al. (2017), a family communication with openness and affection constitutes a significant element for the development of this ability. The lack of an open dialogue that allows the participation and argumentation of children in decisions, makes it difficult to apprehend the values of self-direction significantly.

In this sense, it is important to understand the negative influence of coercive practices in the psychological development

of the child. Aside from producing the opposite effect expected by parents, negative parenting practices increase the probability of children exhibiting aggressive behavior (Bortolini & Andretta, 2013; Cecconello et al., 2003; Salvador & Weber, 2005).

These findings are in line with a wide range of studies that demonstrate that poverty, low income, and low socioeconomic status are related to difficulties and impairments in child development (Fitzsimons et al., 2017).

In a recent study, Fitzsimons et al. (2017) demonstrated that persistent poverty was associated with peer problems and conduct problems. They also reported that transitions to impaired maternal mental health are associated with decreased child mental health in several domains. This placement demonstrates that this relationship is not direct, but suffers from the load or buffering of other factors, such as social support, caregiver well-being, access to day care centers and other social rights.

## CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to describe the perceptions of poorer and less poor mothers living in the metropolitan region of Belém-PA, about their positive and negative monitoring practices. The monitoring analysis was performed considering the level of multidimensional poverty. The results presented allowed us to observe indications of the relationship between higher levels of deprivation with the greater probability of using negative monitoring. In the same direction, the descriptive results also pointed to the relationship between lower levels of poverty and the greater likelihood of positive monitoring exercise.

In general terms, the groups exhibited more similarities than differences in their practices. An analysis of the statements required to observe that mothers of both groups, more and less poor, were positive and negative monitoring sources. Certainly, these similarities are due to the fact that as a common participant a fundamental characteristic, poverty. It was observed that the two groups shared important beliefs that justified negative parenting practices such as the emission of screams used as a strategy to control the behavior of the offspring.

The qualitative data shown here showed the importance of the support network in poor families. Despite being in a stable relationship, the participants in the more and less poor groups often took care for their offspring alone, which reveals not only the maternal burden, but also what has already been evidenced in other studies such as the feminization of poverty. The solitary exercise of parental care can help to understand adherence to coercive parenting practices such as negative monitoring.

The careful analysis of the statements presented here reveals that although all participants share poverty as a condition that marks their daily lives, the participants in the least poor group differ from the poorest group in that they express concern



about aspects of their children's development that are beyond immediate survival, such as motivation in relation to studies. In fact, the statements express the mother's understanding of the importance of the offspring's expectations and desires. This aspect is absent in the statements of the poorest group.

The limitations of this study may be related to the fact that it adopted a theoretical model as a reference for the categorization of mothers' speech. In this sense, it is suggested that future research which adopt a qualitative analysis, do not limit your categories to already defined theoretical constructs, but organize your data from the information obtained. This methodology can allow a broader and more significant view around the phenomenon. Additionally, it is suggested that in future studies longitudinal designs are adopted, which allow observing the dynamics of these relationships throughout the family life cycle, as well as the relationship with other contexts that influence development (community, school, policies).

Additionally, since parental practices are understood as procedural phenomena, not isolated from social, cultural, and family reality, it is suggested that in future studies longitudinal designs be adopted, which allow the observation of the dynamics of these relationships throughout the family life cycle, as well as the relationship with other contexts that influence development (community, school, politics).

Despite its limitations, this study contributes with literature as it allows, through the listening of the guardians' speeches, to penetrate in the participants universe about the practices adopted by poor mothers. The access to this universe allowed not only to map the practices, positive or negative, adopted by the investigated mothers, but also to understand their justifications, which can explain, in part, their choices regarding the monitoring of their children in the contexts of risk where the poor population in general lives.

#### CONTRIBUTION OF EACH AUTHOR

Certificamos que todos os autores participaram suficientemente do trabalho para tornar pública sua responsabilidade pelo conteúdo. A contribuição de cada autor pode ser atribuída como se segue:

Os autores FARP, TMS, SSCS foram responsáveis pela administração do projeto, conceitualização, metodologia, redação final (revisão e edição), supervisão e edição do artigo. As autoras ICPS e SBC contribuíram com a investigação, metodologia, tabulação dos dados, e foram responsáveis pela redação do rascunho e versão final. O autor EMLSR contribuiu com conceitualização e tabulação dos dados.

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Os autores declaram que não há conflitos de interesse no manuscrito submetido.

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