



# Influence of parenting, parenting styles, and practices on child development: an integrative review

*Influência da parentalidade, estilos e práticas parentais no desenvolvimento infantil: revisão integrativa*

*Influencia de la parentalidad, los estilos y las prácticas parentales en el desarrollo infantil: una revisión integrativa*

## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To describe the evidence of the relationship between parental styles and practices in the development of children in early childhood. **Method:** Integrative literature review. The survey comprised articles published in Portuguese, English and Spanish, from 2018 to 2023 and which had their full version available free of charge, indexed in the Virtual Health Library (VHL) databases, including LILACS, Medline and BDNF, PubMed, Scopus, PsycINFO and Embase. **Results:** 30 studies were selected to compose this review. Most studies were carried out in the USA and European countries. Regarding the methodological nature, 25 are quantitative (83.3%) and 5 are qualitative (16.7%). **Final remarks:** Parenting styles and practices have a strong influence on child development, especially in early childhood, affecting cognitive, emotional, and social aspects. Positive parenting practices are associated with better outcomes for children, reinforcing the importance of interventions, public policies, and multiprofessional actions — such as those carried out by nurses — to promote healthy bonds and family environments that support development.

**Descriptors:** Family power; Child; Infant; Preschool; Newborn.

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Descrever as evidências científicas sobre a influência da parentalidade, dos estilos e das práticas parentais no desenvolvimento de crianças na primeira infância. **Método:** Revisão integrativa da literatura. A busca bibliográfica incluiu artigos publicados em português, inglês e espanhol, no período de 2018 a 2023, cujas versões completas estavam disponíveis gratuitamente, indexadas nas bases de dados Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde (BVS), PubMed, Scopus, PsycINFO e Embase. **Resultados:** Foram incluídos 30 estudos, a maioria conduzida nos Estados Unidos e em países europeus, com predominância de abordagem quantitativa (83,3%). Os achados indicam que a parentalidade, assim como os estilos e práticas parentais, influenciam significativamente o desenvolvimento infantil na primeira infância. Práticas parentais positivas estão associadas a melhores resultados para as crianças, incluindo maior autorregulação, competência social e desempenho acadêmico. Além disso, características de personalidade de pais e mães demonstram impacto em diferentes domínios do neurodesenvolvimento, como cognição e motricidade. **Considerações finais:** Os estilos e práticas parentais exercem forte influência no desenvolvimento infantil, especialmente na primeira infância, afetando aspectos cognitivos, emocionais e sociais. Práticas parentais positivas estão associadas a melhores resultados para as crianças, reforçando a importância de intervenções, políticas públicas e atuação multiprofissional, como a do enfermeiro, para promover vínculos saudáveis e ambientes familiares favoráveis ao desenvolvimento.

**Descritores:** Poder familiar; Criança; Lactente; Pré-escolar; Recém-nascido.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** describir la evidencia de la relación entre estilos y prácticas parentales en el desarrollo de los niños en la primera infancia. **Método:** Revisión integrativa de la literatura. La encuesta comprendió artículos publicados en portugués, inglés y español, de 2018 a 2023 y que tenían disponible gratuitamente su versión completa, indexados en las bases de datos de la Biblioteca Virtual en Salud (BVS), entre ellas LILACS, Medline y BDNF, PubMed, Scopus, PsycINFO y Embase. **Resultados:** Se seleccionaron 30 estudios para componer esta revisión. La mayoría de los estudios se llevaron a cabo en Estados Unidos y países europeos. En cuanto al carácter metodológico, 25 son cuantitativos (83,3%) y 5 cualitativos (16,7%). **Consideraciones finales:** Los estilos y prácticas parentales ejercen una fuerte influencia en el desarrollo infantil, especialmente en la primera infancia, afectando aspectos cognitivos, emocionales y sociales. Las prácticas parentales positivas están asociadas con mejores resultados para los niños, lo que refuerza la importancia de las intervenciones, las políticas públicas y la actuación multiprofesional —como la del enfermero— para promover vínculos saludables y entornos familiares favorables al desarrollo.

**Descriptor:** Poder familiar; Niño; bebés; Preescolar; Recién nacido.

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## INTRODUCTION

The family is the central setting in children's lives, as it is a privileged space for learning the essential foundations of communication, motor skills, and adaptive abilities<sup>(1)</sup>. Additionally, it is within the family environment—particularly in the relationship between parents and children—that children internalize and externalize social norms and practices, establishing the foundations for socialization in adult life<sup>(2)</sup>. In this sense, parenting is defined as the interactions, emotions, beliefs, attitudes, practices, knowledge, and behaviors of parents associated with providing comprehensive care to the child<sup>(3)</sup>.

The behavioral patterns adopted by parents have significant repercussions on children, shaping not only their personality but also influencing the development of social, emotional, and cognitive skills<sup>(4)</sup>. To explain this, a widely used model for examining the relationship between parents/caregivers and children defines parenting styles as a combination of attitudes and practices adopted by parents toward their children. According to this model, parental values and beliefs, together with the child's temperament, shape the parenting style. Baumrind identified three parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and indulgent/permissive<sup>(5)</sup>. As studies in this field advanced, another parenting style was added: the neglectful<sup>(6)</sup>.

The authoritarian style is characterized by high levels of demandingness and low levels of responsiveness. These are strongly controlling parents/caregivers, with frequent punitive behaviors that often frustrate their children. The indulgent/permissive style is one in which parents/caregivers display low levels of demandingness and high levels of responsive-

ness. It is marked by parents' difficulty in setting limits for children, resulting in excessive flexibility and conflict avoidance, as well as a strong tendency not to acknowledge or correct misbehavior. The neglectful/absent style is characterized by low levels of both demandingness and responsiveness. In this style, parents/caregivers are not engaged or are minimally engaged in their children's lives and show little interest in providing support. In contrast, in the authoritative/democratic/participative style, parents demonstrate high levels of demandingness while also maintaining high levels of responsiveness. Parents/caregivers adopt behavioral standards based on respect for the individuality of family members, reflecting openness to dialogue and a desire to promote the child's autonomy<sup>(6)</sup>.

Parenting practices have the ability to generate specific behaviors in children and are employed by parents/guardians to achieve direct goals, often involving strategies to avoid behaviors or actions considered socially inappropriate. On the other hand, parenting styles not only incorporate parenting practices, but are also influenced by other factors that indirectly affect the child, such as the temperament and behavior of the parents. Together, they constitute the set of parental attitudes expressed through the actions of both caregivers, creating an important emotional influence on the child<sup>(7)</sup>.

Thus, this study takes into account the problem of the influence of parental/guardian behavior on the development of children in early childhood. It is known that this phase of life stands out for its strong potential for neuroplasticity and epigenetics, being considered a golden period of human life and a window of opportunity

for the formation of an individual who is complete in his unique skills and competencies<sup>(3)</sup>.

In the context of healthcare professionals' practices, especially those related to the comprehensive care of children in early childhood, there has been increasing questioning about the possible influence of parenting practices and styles on the growth and development patterns observed and/or reported during clinical assessments. Seeking an answer to this question can benefit healthcare activities, especially regarding the health of the family and the children. Based on this understanding, it becomes possible to plan and implement actions that promote the development of parental abilities, such as strengthening the affective bonds between parents and children and validating parental behaviors appropriate to the child's needs for health, safety, autonomy, and quality of life. Furthermore, this knowledge has the potential to help overcome difficulties related to parenting, reducing feelings of guilt and helplessness, with possible positive repercussions on parental self-esteem and the development of children aged 0 to 6 years. Given this context, the objective of this review is to describe the scientific evidence on the influence of parenting, styles, and parenting practices on the development of children in early childhood.

## METHOD

This is an integrative review of national and international literature. This method aims to gather and synthesize research results on a delimited theme or question, in a systematic and orderly manner, with the objective of obtaining a deep understanding of a given phenomenon ba-

sed on previous studies<sup>(8)</sup>.

The construction of this review took place in six stages, following the guidelines of Mendes, Silveira and Galvão<sup>(9)</sup>, namely: identification of the theme and definition of the research question; establishment of criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies; definition of the information to be extracted from the selected studies and categorization of the studies; evaluation of the included studies; interpretation of the results; and presentation of the review and synthesis of knowledge.

The research question was developed considering the object of study and the proposed objective, thus being defined: How do parenting, style and parenting practices influence the development of children in early childhood?. The PCCo strategy was used to formulate the question, where "P" stands for population/participants; "C" for the concept to be investigated; "Co" for context<sup>(10)</sup>. This strategy involves the precise identification and clear definition of the problem to be addressed, the exploration of the theoretical concept related to the problem, and the thorough analysis of the context in which the problem is embedded, thus contributing to an in-depth analysis of the topic and a greater basis for the conclusions of scientific work<sup>(11)</sup>. Adjusting the mnemonic to the object of this study, we have: P: parents of children in early childhood; C: parenting styles and practices; Co: development of children aged 0-6 years.

The bibliographic search was conducted in the electronic databases Virtual Health Library (VHL), PubMed; Scopus; PsycINFO and Embase. The search strategy was developed from the selection of Health Descriptors (DeCS), both in Portuguese and Spanish, and the equivalent

terms in English through Medical Subject Headings (MeSH). The following descriptors were chosen: “family power”, “child”, “infant”, “preschool” and “newborn”. To perform the cross-referencing in the databases, the search strategy used was the combination of descriptors with the Boolean operators AND and OR (Box 1). The choice of descriptors, DeCS and MeSH,

was based on a careful analysis of the central theme of the study, seeking terms that best represented the content and facilitated information retrieval. To ensure accuracy, there was support from a specialized librarian, who guided the selection of the most appropriate terms and the use of best indexing practices.

**Box 1.** Bibliographic search strategy in databases

Base	Estratégia de busca
VHL	(poder familiar) OR (parenting) OR (responsabilidad parental) AND (lactente) OR (infant) OR (lactante) AND (pré-escolar) OR (preschool) OR (preescolar) AND (recém-nascido) OR (newborn) OR (recién nacido) AND (criança) OR (child) OR (niño)
PubMed	(Parenting) AND (Infant) AND (Preschool) AND (Newborn) AND (Child)
Scopus	(Parenting) AND (Infant) AND (Preeschool) AND (Newborn) AND (Child)
PsycINFO	Any Field: parenting AND Any Field: infant AND Any Field: preschool AND Any Field: newborn AND Any Field: child AND Year: 2018 To 2023
Embase	('parenting'/exp OR parenting) AND ('infant'/exp OR infant) AND ('preschool'/exp OR preschool) AND ('newborn'/exp OR newborn) AND ('child'/exp OR child).

**Source:** Source: Prepared by the authors, 2023.

The selection of works considered the following inclusion criteria: works derived from research (original articles, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses) and grey literature (monographs, dissertations, and theses). The survey included works published in Portuguese, English, and Spanish, from 2018 to 2023, whose full versions were freely available.

The literature review was conducted in two stages, independently, by two researchers: selection of articles based on titles and abstracts, and then full reading of the studies to define the final sample. For each stage described, the researchers met to compare the findings, and any disagreements were resolved by consensus. The data were extracted into a standardi-

zed table in Microsoft Excel®, which included the following information: title, main author, year of publication, country of publication, objective, study design, sample size and age, and main results. The level of evidence was assessed using the AACN (American Association of Critical-Care Nurses) tool, which classifies studies into six levels, including qualitative approaches, integrative reviews, and observational studies<sup>(9)</sup>.

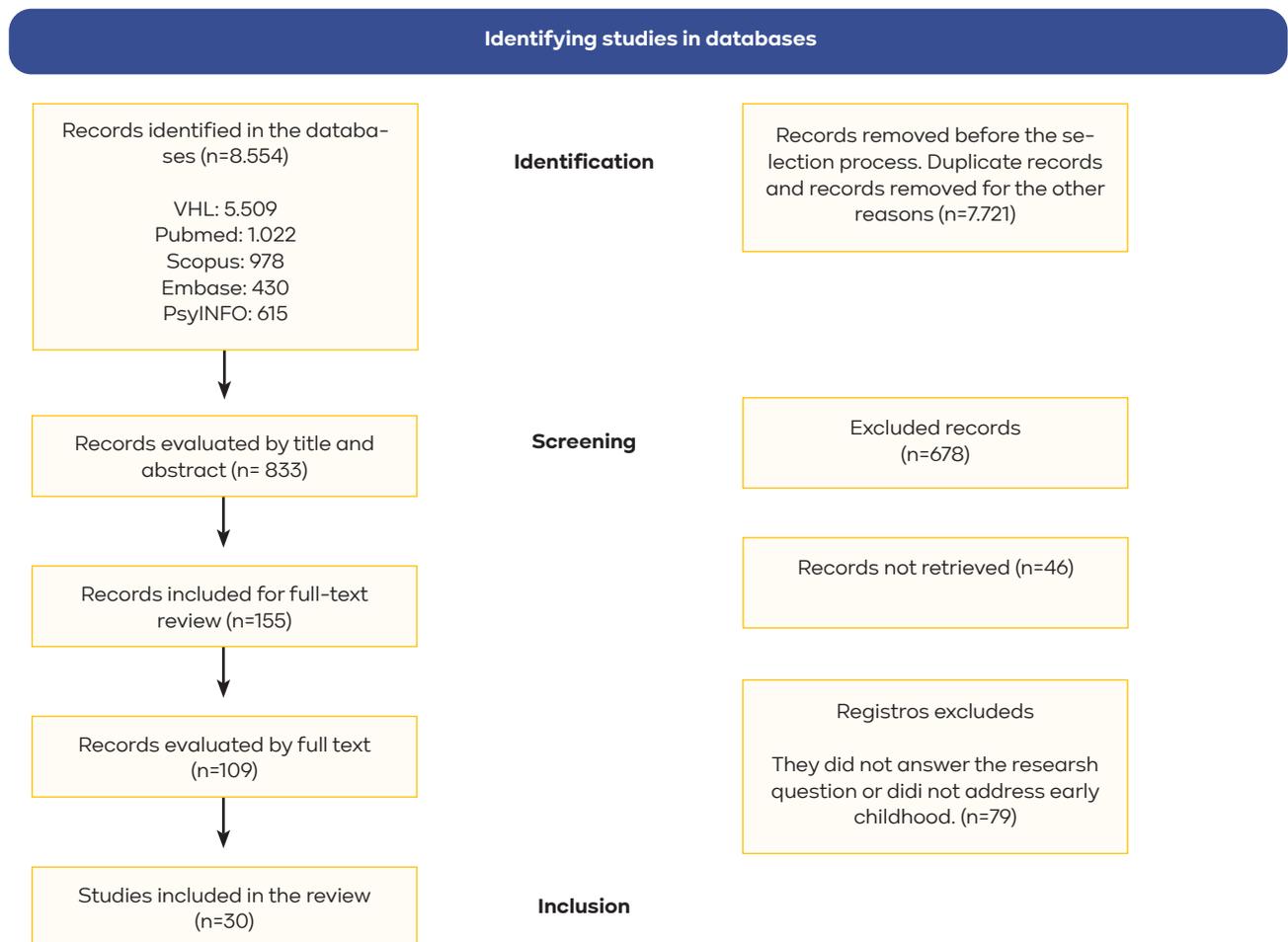
The data were synthesized and organized into thematic categories to facilitate the interpretation of the results, which were presented using a narrative approach and in tables. A descriptive analysis was adopted, highlighting recurring patterns and trends among the studies, in order to

provide an overview of the main characteristics and findings of the included studies.

## RESULTS

Initially, 8,554 articles were identified. After applying filters and excluding duplicates, 833 studies were selected for title and abstract reading. Of these, 109 were retrieved for full-text reading. After this stage, 79 studies were excluded because

they did not address early childhood or did not answer the research question. Thus, the final sample for this integrative review consisted of 30 studies. The selection process is described in Figure 1, according to the flowchart proposed by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses<sup>(12,13)</sup>.



Source: Adapted from Page et al., 2021.

The studies included in the final sample were conducted in 14 countries, with the greatest representation in the United States, 7 (23.3%), and Canada, 5 (16.7%). Regarding the methodological approach,

25 studies were quantitative (83.3%); and 5, qualitative (16.7%). As for the language, 21 were in English (70.0%); 5, in Portuguese (16.7%); and 4, in Spanish (13.3%). Table 2 details the characteristics of the studies.

**Box 2.** Characterization of the articles included in the integrative review, ordered by publication date

Code	Authors/year/country	Type of study and level of evidence	Sample size and age	Main Results
1	Wall (2018) <sup>(14)</sup> Canadá	Qualitative case study Level 6 evidence	88 children aged 0 to 7 years	Children who develop a secure attachment tend to rely on their caregivers as a source of emotional support and security. Children with anxious-ambivalent attachment may demonstrate excessive concern about the availability of their caregivers, while those with avoidant attachment tend to avoid emotional closeness.
2	Woodward et al. (2018) <sup>(15)</sup> Estados Unidos	Longitudinal observational study Level 2 evidence	976 children aged 7 to 36 months	The personality traits of both parents directly affect the cognitive and motor development of children and influence parenting styles.
3	Silva et al. (2018) <sup>(16)</sup> Brasil	Integrative literature review Level 5 evidence	18 studies analyzed children aged 0 to 5 years	The personality traits of fathers and mothers can resonate in different parenting behaviors. Dimensions of parental personality, such as extroversion and agreeableness, have been linked to positive parenting and better cognitive development in children.
4	Gomez et al. (2018) <sup>(17)</sup> Estados Unidos	Cross-sectional observational study Level 4 evidence	64 children aged 3 to 5 years	The greater the family involvement, affection, recognition, communication, and control of parental stress, the better the socio-emotional skills of the children. Greater emotional development in children translates into more positive parental behavior.
5	Olla et al. (2018) <sup>(18)</sup> Indonésia	Qualitative study with a phenomenological approach Level 6 evidence	60 children aged 0 to 5 years	Parents who strictly controlled their children to achieve certain values and expectations became frustrated because the children did not meet those expectations. Additionally, the problems experienced by the children were a result of the authoritarian parenting style.
6	Mcdonald et al. (2019) <sup>(19)</sup> Canadá	Prospective cohort study Level 4 evidence	1.994 children aged 0 to 3 years	Adverse childhood experiences increase the risk of stress-induced changes in a child's neurobiological systems, with long-lasting effects. Mothers who experienced adverse childhood experiences tend to adopt inadequate parenting styles and have children with higher levels of behavioral problems.
7	Neel et al. (2019) <sup>(20)</sup> Estados Unidos	Scope review Level 5 evidence	27 studies analyzed children aged 0 to 17 years.	Parental responsiveness was the only parental axis associated with improved cognition and behavior in children. Parental demands are associated with improved cognition in children. Parental affection and rejection are associated with child behavior.

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Código	Autores/ano/país	Tipo de estudo e nível de evidência	Tamanho e idade da amostra	Principais resultados
8	Jiyang et al. (2020) <sup>(21)</sup> China	Non-randomized controlled clinical trial Level 3 evidence	134 children aged 0 to 3 months	Infant neurobehavior at term has been associated with parental involvement, suggesting that these positive parenting practices better support the early neurobehavioral development of babies.
9	Hattangadi et al. (2020) <sup>(22)</sup> Canadá	Prospective cohort study Level 4 evidence	148 children aged 0 to 48 months	Parental stress during childhood was significantly associated with mental health problems in 3-year-old children.
10	Bezzone et al. (2020) <sup>(23)</sup> Espanha	Observational cross-sectional study Level 4 evidence	246 children aged 0 to 5 years	Approximately 30% of the children evaluated presented developmental risks, influenced by social and environmental factors. Low paternal education levels and parental unemployment are associated with this risk. Inadequate parenting practices, such as failing to interpret the children's signals or not stimulating them with play, increase this risk.
11	Xihong et al. (2020) <sup>(24)</sup> China	Prospective cohort study Level 4 evidence	976 children aged 0 to 48 months	Poor parenting quality has been associated with suspected developmental delays in children.
12	Bizzego et al. (2020) <sup>(25)</sup> Itália	Cross-sectional study Level 4 evidence	25,048 children aged 2 to 5 years	Early positive parental intervention can promote brain maturation, favoring the child's cognitive and social development. Furthermore, its neural effects can contribute to the prevention of behavioral problems and generate lasting psychosocial benefits in childhood.
13	Nolvi et al. (2020) <sup>(26)</sup> Alemanha	Longitudinal study Level 2 evidence	53 children aged 0 to 5 years	Larger total neonatal brain volume was associated with affectionate and positive maternal parenting behavior in nearly all cognitive domains from 2 to 5 years of age.
14	Neppl et al. (2020) <sup>(27)</sup> Estados Unidos	Longitudinal study Level 2 evidence	559 children aged 1 to 13 years	Children's exposure to parental aggression at home was associated with reduced verbal skills and more behavioral problems. Furthermore, the negative associations are similar for boys and girls, stronger for 5-year-olds and for families with mothers who have less education.
15	Berthelon et al. (2020) <sup>(28)</sup> Chile	Longitudinal observational study Level 2 evidence	4,073 children aged 6 to 83 months	Children's exposure to parental aggression at home has been associated with reduced verbal skills and more behavioral problems throughout life.
16	Oosterom et al. (2020) <sup>(29)</sup> Holanda	Longitudinal observational study Level 2 evidence	120 children aged 18 months to 6 years	The results highlight the impact that perinatal risk factors, such as prematurity and negative parental behaviors in early childhood, have on the development

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Código	Autores/ano/país	Tipo de estudo e nível de evidência	Tamanho e idade da amostra	Principais resultados
17	Fernandes et al. (2021) <sup>(30)</sup> Portugal	Descriptive cross-sectional study Level 4 evidence	143 children aged 0 to 17 years	of behavioral problems in early school age.  The use of positive parenting in relation to children's fears has allowed us not only to understand the scope of the problem, but also to develop sensitive and appropriate parenting practices, promoting optimal emotional development in children with regard to their fears.
18	López et al. (2021) <sup>(31)</sup> Espanha	Prospective longitudinal cohort study Level 4 evidence	2,266 children aged 3 to 6 years	The association between parental psychopathic traits and childhood conduct problems has been evidenced, with parents with high levels of neuroticism, when adopting neglectful parenting styles, having children with more conduct problems at 5-6 years of age.
19	Richmond et al. (2021) <sup>(32)</sup> Austrália	Observational cross-sectional study Level 4 evidence	145 children aged 0 to 8 years	Variations in maternal behavior that are negative are associated with poorer structural organization of brain networks in children.
20	Souza et al. (2021) <sup>(33)</sup> Brasil	Systematic review Level 1 evidence	37 studies were selected and the children were evaluated from 0 to 13 years of age.	The results indicated a strong relationship between different parenting practices and children's executive functions, suggesting the influence of parenting on executive development during childhood.
21	Alves et al. (2021) <sup>(34)</sup> Brasil	Integrative literature review Level 5 evidence	Thirteen articles analyzed children aged 0 to 13 years.	The parenting style associated with the best socio-emotional development in children is the authoritative style. This style emphasizes that affection and, at the same time, the establishment of limits using positive reinforcement have a greater impact on socio-emotional skills than the behavioral strictness evident in authoritarian parenting.
22	Fang et al. (2021) <sup>(35)</sup> Holanda	Cross-sectional analysis of initial data from a prospective cohort study Level 4 evidence	938 children aged 0 to 7 years	Higher levels of assertive parenting behaviors have been associated with less parental stress, fewer childhood behavioral problems, better eating behavior, improved overall health for both parents and children, and greater levels of social support, resulting in positive impacts on child development.
23	Black (2021) <sup>(36)</sup> Estados Unidos	Prospective cohort study Level 4 evidence	4,789 children aged 0 to 15 years	Greater partner support for the mother during childhood and child-rearing was associated with better emotional behaviors (externalization and internalization) in children.
24	Ochi et al. (2021) <sup>(37)</sup> Japão	Population-based longitudinal study	53,575 children monitored from	The greater number of paternal hours of childcare, both on

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Código	Autores/ano/país	Tipo de estudo e nível de evidência	Tamanho e idade da amostra	Principais resultados
		Level 2 evidence	birth to age 5.	weekdays and weekends in early childhood, had a protective effect on behavioral problems at age 5.
25	Martins et al. (2022) <sup>(38)</sup> Portugal	Cross-sectional study Level 4 evidence	347 children between 10 and 36 months	The results show the existence of positive correlations between socio-emotional development and dimensions of positive parenting.
26	Murphy et al. (2022) <sup>(39)</sup> Estados Unidos	Prospective longitudinal cohort study Level 2 evidence	1,015 children aged 6 to 90 months	For children of parents who practice positive parenting, there was a decrease in teachers' reports of negative childhood emotional symptoms over time, and it predicted fewer negative emotional symptoms in the 5th grade.
27	Ward et al. (2022) <sup>(40)</sup> Estados Unidos	Cross-sectional study Level 4 evidence	218,824 children between 3 and 4 years old	Efforts should be made to reduce aggressive parenting behaviors and promote positive parenting among caregivers in low- and middle-income countries, as these negatively impact children's emotional development.
28	Vásquez et al. (2022) <sup>(41)</sup> Uruguai	Cross-sectional study Level 4 evidence	4,693 children between 0 and 79 months	Maternal personality and depressive symptomatology were negatively associated with parenting practices.
29	Miller et al. (2022) <sup>(42)</sup> Canadá	Prospective and observational cohort study Level 4 evidence	146 children aged 0 to 3 years	Greater maternal support significantly influenced cortical fractional anisotropy values (a quantitative analysis used to demonstrate the density and myelination of the fibers that make up the brain's white matter) and improved cognitive development in childhood.
30	Hamel et al. (2023) <sup>(43)</sup> Canadá	Observational cross-sectional study Level 4 evidence	32 babies aged 1 to 42 months	Authoritative parenting is positively linked to children's socio-emotional development. Furthermore, familism (an ideology that prioritizes the family) is associated with positive parenting.

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2023.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this review showed that parenting, parenting styles and practices have the potential to influence neurodevelopmental outcomes in early childhood in various ways. Parenting behavior and caregivers' personality traits play a key role in child development, affecting cognitive, emotional and social aspects of the child, with impacts that can last a lifetime. Studies indicate that negative paren-

ting practices can not only influence child behavior, but also modulate interactions between genetic and environmental predispositions, contributing to dysfunctional behavior patterns in adulthood<sup>(44)</sup>.

Parenting can be considered the primary responsibility of parents, who must prepare their children to deal with the physical, economic and psychosocial challenges they will face throughout life<sup>(44)</sup>. With this in mind, each experience lived in chil-

hood stimulates a neural pathway, generating a chemical signal strengthened by repetition, becoming resilient to neuronal pruning and permanently integrating into the brain structure. This means that a child exposed to adequate stimuli develops a denser and more complex synaptic network than one in a less stimulating environment. In this way, childhood experiences shape cognition, motor control, and the efficiency of synapses, directly affecting information processing and the nature of synaptic connections. Negative experiences, on the other hand, when experienced repeatedly or with high intensity – such as deprivation, abuse, loss, violence, and neglect – significantly increase toxic stress, which leads to an increase in free radicals and the increased production of inflammatory mediators. These factors favor the emergence of various conditions – such as delays in neurodevelopment, character and personality formation – from childhood to adulthood, including depression, other psychiatric disorders, and neurodegenerative diseases<sup>(45,46,49,50)</sup>.

In this context, positive parenting practices are essential for a healthy family environment, promoting emotional, social, and cognitive skills. However, negative approaches can harm development, resulting in low self-esteem, interpersonal difficulties, and greater vulnerability to mental disorders<sup>(2,46,47,53)</sup>. The effectiveness of parenting practices is embedded in specific parenting styles that express the emotional environment created by parents. These styles encompass not only attitudes but also forms of nonverbal communication, such as tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language

ge<sup>(47,48,52,54,55)</sup>.

Evidence from longitudinal and cross-sectional studies indicates that the psychological distress of parents, especially mothers, affects their responsiveness and emotional availability. A cohort study in the United States revealed that partner support during the birth period promotes maternal well-being and positively influences the child's emotional development, favoring healthier internalizing and externalizing behavior trajectories<sup>(49)</sup>. At the same time, stressed parents show less involvement, greater irritability and emotional detachment, which can compromise interactions with their children, reduce parental sensitivity and negatively impact child development<sup>(46)</sup>.

A cross-sectional study conducted in Uruguay reinforces the association between maternal depression and impairments in the cognitive, motor and socio-emotional development of children. The lack of responsiveness and emotional unavailability of mothers creates hostile environments, with less stimulation and support, harming child development<sup>(50)</sup>.

Parental personality also emerges as a relevant factor. A Brazilian review identified that characteristics such as extroversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability are associated with the authoritative parenting style, characterized by affection, discipline, and emotional support. On the other hand, high levels of neuroticism and low openness to experience were related to more authoritarian or permissive styles, associated with less control, low affectivity, and weaknesses in setting limits<sup>(1)</sup>.

In addition, differences between maternal and paternal roles were observed.

Extroversion influences fatherhood more, favoring involvement in playful activities, while agreeableness has a greater impact on motherhood, promoting sensitive and responsive care. Parental neuroticism, in turn, affects mood and daily frustrations, directly interfering with parenting practices<sup>(1)</sup>.

Understanding these factors allows us to elucidate why some parents demonstrate greater ease in connecting, caring for, and playing with their children, while others are more inhibited and insecure. Children of parents with higher stress levels, lower education, and less social support tend to exhibit emotional impairments, while those whose parents exhibit characteristics such as empathy, emotional stability, and greater involvement show gains in cognitive and emotional development<sup>(1,46,47,49,52,53,54,55)</sup>. Studies also indicate that positive parental interactions are associated with greater social competence, less hostility, and fewer internalization problems. The authoritative parenting style has been shown to be favorable to emotional competence, while the permissive style has been related to difficulties in emotional regulation and lower maturity<sup>(1,46,47,49,52,53,54,55)</sup>.

Maternal sensitivity, especially in preterm infants, has demonstrated a significant impact on cognitive and language development and cortical neuroplasticity, in addition to being associated with white matter maturation and increased brain functional efficiency. Stimulating family environments correlate positively with the development of executive functions, essential for problem-solving and decision-making<sup>(57)</sup>. Positive parenting behavior has also been associated with structural

brain changes, such as accelerated cortical thinning in regions associated with emotional regulation and cognition. On the other hand, negative parenting behaviors, such as those observed in hostile authoritarian styles, are related to lower efficiency of neural networks and a higher risk for psychopathology throughout life<sup>(45)</sup>.

In this way, considering the studies presented, analyzing the factors that interfere with parenting practices and styles and their possible influences on child development can provide insights that help explain why some parents engage, play, and care more easily, as well as feel closer to their children, while others may feel more withdrawn, inhibited, and insecure during these interactions. It can be stated that children of parents with lower levels of education, higher neuroticism, greater parental stress, and less social support tend to show impaired emotional development. In contrast, parents with social advantages, high levels of extroversion and empathy, greater socio-emotional stability, and stronger social support demonstrate greater attention to their children's cognitive development, enhancing their knowledge through scientific methods and thereby providing more opportunities for sensitive and positive interactions<sup>(1,46,47,49,52,53,54,55)</sup>.

These studies indicate that children whose interactions with their parents were characterized by positive engagement showed high levels of social competence and reduced hostility and internalizing problems. Moreover, positive associations were found between the authoritative parenting style and emotional competence, suggesting that authoritative parenting plays a crucial role in emotional development. Conversely, negative associations

were identified with a permissive parenting style, as children of permissive parents tend to have more difficulty with emotional regulation and are less likely to develop emotional maturity and self-regulation<sup>(1,46,47,49,52,53,54,55)</sup>.

In addition, researchers concluded that maternal sensitivity—that is, the mother's ability to perceive and infer the meaning behind her child's behavioral cues—is a determining factor in cognitive and language development at 3 years of age, especially in children born pre-term. Furthermore, the study indicated that supportive and responsive maternal behavior is associated with better white matter maturation and cortical neuroplasticity in children and, consequently, with better cognitive outcomes at school age. A cognitively stimulating family environment has been associated with better executive function (EF) in children. Executive functions are advanced mental skills responsible for maintaining, managing, planning, and optimizing information, enabling individuals to solve problems, make decisions, and achieve specific goals. It is recommended that interventions aimed at promoting greater sensitivity—not only in mothers but also in fathers and other caregivers—and fostering a healthy bond between them be implemented early and in a timely manner so that children can reach their full potential<sup>(57)</sup>.

The results confirm the hypothesis that positive (warm and supportive) parenting positively influences child development and has been associated with changes in brain structure, including accelerated cortical thinning in various brain regions. In contrast, negative parental behavior (e.g., authoritarian parenting

style—controlling, aggressive, and hostile) has been associated with an increased risk of psychopathology throughout life and attenuated cortical thinning. Based on cortical thickness analysis, which provides a complementary source of neurodevelopmental information, the study demonstrated that high levels of negative maternal affective behaviors were associated with decreased local network efficiency in children, whereas high levels of positive maternal affective behaviors were associated with increased local efficiency. Finally, the influence of environmental factors on the developing brain tends to be stronger during sensitive periods (e.g., early childhood), when neuronal properties are particularly receptive to acquiring certain types of information and more susceptible to modification through experience<sup>(45)</sup>.

Therefore, in order to create an environment conducive to fostering healthy child development, it is crucial that parenting styles be assertive and responsive to the child's specific needs. The use of positive educational practices is associated with lower rates of developmental problems. Conversely, the use of negative educational practices has been associated with a higher incidence of both internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems, and such outcomes become increasingly difficult to reverse after the early years of life. Thus, to ensure that a child becomes a psychologically healthy adult, parents must be able to meet their children's emotional needs in order to promote a healthy developmental trajectory<sup>(2,44,45,54,55,57,58,59)</sup>.

Nursing plays a crucial role in supporting the development of parenting,

acting as an essential bridge between parents and the early journey of parenthood. Throughout the pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum cycle, nursing professionals fulfill a multifaceted mission, offering emotional, educational, and physical support<sup>(59)</sup>. During pregnancy, obstetric nurses are essential in parental education, providing information about prenatal care, birth planning, and breastfeeding techniques. During delivery, the presence and assistance of the nursing team are fundamental to ensuring a safe and supportive environment. In the postpartum period, nurses assist parents with practical matters such as newborn care, breastfeeding, and adapting to changes in family dynamics. Whether in hospital, outpatient, or home settings, nursing contributes to strengthening parenting skills and promoting family well-being<sup>(59)</sup>.

Furthermore, nursing should provide ongoing support in promoting healthy parenting throughout the child's development. Primary care nurses are essential in offering guidance on developmental milestones, child nutrition, vaccination, and preventive health measures. They are important allies in the early identification of potential parenting challenges, such as postpartum depression, offering emotional support and referral to specialized interventions when necessary. In this way, nursing professionals act comprehensively and holistically in supporting parenting, contributing to healthy growth and family resilience<sup>(60)</sup>.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Parenting and parenting styles profoundly influence child development, affecting cognitive, social, and emotional aspects. The results of this review con-

firm that positive parenting practices are associated with better outcomes for the children, while negative practices can lead to behavioral challenges and difficulties in emotional regulation.

Parental interventions should focus on building emotional bonds, mutual respect, and setting limits, going beyond the perspective of creating more economically productive individuals. In Brazil, the role of nurses is fundamental in promoting parental assessment and guidance, especially in growth and development consultations. This contributes integrally to the health of the children and the family, respecting the particularities of each context.

In terms of public policies, this review reinforces the need to invest in programs that address parental education and promote healthier family environments. This may include training for parents in schools, health centers, and community spaces, as well as collaboration between different sectors, such as health, education, and social assistance.

Among the limitations of this study, the predominance of studies focused on mothers stands out, reinforcing the need for research that also includes the paternal role and other caregivers in parenting. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of studies that directly observe the children's interaction with their environment, without relying exclusively on information provided by caregivers. It is recommended that future research explore parental sensitivity at different times in childhood, especially during critical phases of neural development.

In addition, the reviewed studies are mostly conducted in Western countries,

with high incomes and homogeneous demographic profiles. Thus, there is an urgent need for investigations that analyze parenting practices in different cultural, economic, and social contexts, expanding the validity and generalizability of the results.

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