



Parental stress and child development in children aged 0 to 6 years: a systematic scoping review

Estrés parental y desarrollo infantil en niños de 0 a 6 años: una revisión sistemática de alcance

Estresse parental e desenvolvimento infantil em crianças de 0 a 6 anos: uma revisão sistemática de escopo

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KEYWORDS

child development,
childhood, parental
stress.

ABSTRACT. This systematic scoping review examines research that supports the relationship between parental stress and the evolutionary development of children aged 0 to 6 years. The review followed the guidelines of the PRISMA statement and selected items from its checklist. Electronic databases were searched, identifying an initial pool of 142 studies, of which 18 were subsequently selected and analyzed. The findings indicate that parental stress is a strong predictor of emotional and behavioral problems in both children and parents, influences the choice of coping strategies within parenting styles, and is associated with deficits in social relationship formation, competencies, emotional regulation in children, as well as cognitive and behavioral problems. High levels of stress, experienced mainly by mothers, are characterized by factors such as the number of children, single-parent families, low economic income, the evolutionary development of children, and the age of both parents and children. Finally, the need to establish preventive and interventive programs is highlighted.

PALABRAS CLAVE

desarrollo infantil, estrés
parental, infancia.

RESUMEN. Esta revisión sistemática de alcance examina las investigaciones que sustentan la relación entre el estrés parental y el desarrollo infantil en niños de 0 a 6 años. La revisión siguió las directrices de la declaración PRISMA y elementos seleccionados de su lista de verificación. Se realizaron búsquedas en bases de datos electrónicas, identificando una población inicial de 142 estudios, de los cuales 18 fueron seleccionados y analizados posteriormente. Los hallazgos indican que el estrés parental es un fuerte predictor de problemas emocionales y conductuales tanto en

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niños como en padres; asimismo, influye en la elección de estrategias de afrontamiento dentro de los estilos de crianza y se asocia con déficits en la formación de relaciones sociales, competencias y regulación emocional en los niños, además de problemas cognitivos y de comportamiento. Los altos niveles de estrés, experimentados principalmente por las madres, están caracterizados por factores como el número de hijos, las familias monoparentales, los bajos ingresos económicos, el desarrollo del niño y la edad de los padres e hijos. Finalmente, se destaca la necesidad de establecer programas preventivos y de intervención.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

desenvolvimento infantil,
estresse parental,
infância.

RESUMO. Esta revisão sistemática de escopo examina as pesquisas que fundamentam a relação entre o estresse parental e o desenvolvimento infantil em crianças de 0 a 6 anos. A revisão seguiu as diretrizes da declaração PRISMA e itens selecionados de sua lista de verificação. Foram realizadas buscas em bases de dados eletrônicas, identificando uma população inicial de 142 estudos, dos quais 18 foram posteriormente selecionados e analisados. Os achados indicam que o estresse parental é um forte preditor de problemas emocionais e comportamentais tanto em crianças quanto em pais, influencia a escolha de estratégias de enfrentamento nos estilos de parentalidade e está associado a déficits na formação de relações sociais, competências e regulação emocional nas crianças, bem como a problemas cognitivos e comportamentais. Níveis elevados de estresse, vivenciados principalmente pelas mães, caracterizam-se por fatores como o número de filhos, famílias monoparentais, baixa renda econômica, o desenvolvimento da criança e a idade dos pais e filhos. Por fim, destaca-se a necessidade de estabelecer programas preventivos e de intervenção.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most common challenges faced by fathers and mothers in contemporary parenting is understanding and managing their children's emotions during episodes of intense emotional and behavioral demand (García et al., 2016). In this context, parental stress is conceptualized as an evaluative process in which parents assess their own resources in relation to the demands imposed by their children, as well as the coping strategies employed to address caregiving difficulties (Abidin, 1995). High levels of parental stress have been associated with reduced parental competence, lower satisfaction with the parenting role, and diminished emotional responsibility toward children (Pérez et al., 2014).

Research consistently indicates that parental stress negatively affects family functioning and dynamics, increasing the likelihood of mental health problems among family members, interpersonal conflicts, and reduced coping capacities (Pérez Padilla & Álvarez Dardet, 2016). García and Grau (2016) further emphasize that elevated parental stress directly influences children's developmental trajectories, particularly in the acquisition of social skills and emotional regulation, while also constituting a significant risk factor for parents' psychological well-being (Díaz et al., 2011). Parents experiencing high stress levels are more prone to symptoms of anxiety and depression and tend to employ dysfunctional parenting practices, including physical punishment (Pérez et al., 2014). The intensity of parental stress has been shown to depend largely on the perceived severity of children's difficulties and the availability of social support (Mercader et al., 2014; Durán et al., 2016).

Several factors have been identified as contributors to parental stress, including poverty and low educational attainment (Vera et al., 2005), number of children (De la Piedra, 2016), job type and employment stability (Sánchez, 2015), and significant life events such as childbirth, divorce, bereavement, chronic illness, or disability (Vera et al., 2009). Additionally, children's evolutionary development itself, particularly early childhood and adolescence, represents a critical period in which parental stress levels tend to increase (Pérez & Santelices, 2016).

Considering children's developmental stages is therefore essential when analyzing parental stress. Elguera (2019) highlights the importance of fostering self-concept and self-esteem from early stages of development, as this enables children to gradually value their own perspectives beyond caregivers' judgments. According to Papalia and Martorell (2017), the search for autonomy often manifests through developmental crises characterized by irritability, stubbornness, and oppositional behaviors. By approximately three years of age, children typically begin to distinguish, express, and regulate their emotions, leading to a gradual decrease in tantrums. Around five years of age, children develop greater awareness of the consequences of their actions and begin to exhibit empathy and an understanding of others' emotions (Puche et al., 2009).

Parental stress tends to intensify at specific developmental milestones. During pregnancy, elevated stress levels may interfere with emotional bonding and negatively affect infants' neurodevelopment (Spanish Association of Neuropsychiatry, 2015). At approximately two years of age, exploratory behaviors and oppositional attitudes may be perceived negatively by parents, potentially leading to disengagement from the parenting role (Papalia & Martorell, 2017). Entry into the educational system poses additional challenges, particularly for children with separation anxiety or introverted personality traits, increasing the risk of socialization difficulties or exposure to violent situations (Rodríguez, 2009; Villarroel, 2012). At around five years of age, the development of independent skills such as self-feeding and dressing may also become a source of stress, especially in families with overprotective parenting styles (Limachi, 2020).

Empirical evidence shows that parents experiencing high stress levels are more likely to adopt dysfunctional parenting practices, leading to disruptive parenting styles and emotional distress in children (Pérez et al., 2014). Nayelly and Quintana (2022) report that parental incapacity may trigger emotional distress, frustration, violence, learning difficulties, attentional and memory deficits, poor academic performance, impulsivity, and low self-concept in children. Similarly, Vera et al. (2009) assert that emotionally demanding experiences for parents can compromise their emotional sensitivity and, consequently, their children's developmental outcomes. According to the Gallup Global Emotion Index, stress levels increased to 40% in 2020, particularly among mothers with young children (LaMotte, 2021). In Ecuador, however, updated statistical data on parental stress remain scarce, representing a significant gap in the literature.

Given this context, parental stress emerges as a critical issue with potentially detrimental effects on children's evolutionary development. The relevance of this study lies in the systematic collection and synthesis of scientific evidence using rigorous and transparent methods to support informed decision-making by professionals. This knowledge is essential for the design of prevention and intervention programs that consider parental stress as a determining factor in emotional and behavioral problems during early childhood.

Accordingly, the research question guiding this study is: What scientific evidence supports the relationship between parental stress and the evolutionary development of children aged 0 to 6 years? The main objective is to explore and understand the impact of parental stress on children's evolutionary development. The specific objectives are: (a) to identify factors influencing parental stress throughout evolutionary development; (b) to analyze the consequences of parental stress on children's development; and (c) to examine differences in levels and manifestations of parental stress across developmental stages.

2. METHODS

The methodological design of this study was based on a systematic scoping review, as this approach allows the research question to be addressed through the identification, review, and analysis of scientific studies with both aggregative and interpretative components, providing a comprehensive overview of the available evidence on a given topic (Peters et al., 2020; Torres & López, 2014).

The review followed the guidelines of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) for the processes of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of studies, ensuring methodological rigor and reliability (Page et al., 2021). Although the review did not comply with all 27 items of the PRISMA checklist, the following items were met: 1, 3–9, 16a, 17, 23a, 25, and 26, in accordance with PRISMA recommendations.

Search Strategy

The initial population consisted of 142 records identified through database searching. After the screening and eligibility processes, a final sample of 18 studies was selected, which constituted the unit of analysis for this review.

The search was conducted in six electronic databases: Dialnet, Google Scholar, ProQuest Psychology, SciELO, Redalyc, and Scopus. Searches were performed between May and November 2023, considering studies published between 2005 and 2023, in both English and Spanish. In addition, a manual search of reference lists from the selected articles was carried out to identify potentially relevant studies.

The search strategy included the following keywords in Spanish: *estrés parental*, *desarrollo evolutivo*, *apego*, *familia*, *estrategias de afrontamiento*, *primera infancia*, *crianza*, and *competencia parental*; and their corresponding terms in English: *parental stress*, *evolutionary development*, *attachment*, *family*, *coping strategies*, *early childhood*, *parenting*, and *parenting competence*. Boolean operators (AND, OR) were applied using different combinations across databases to broaden the search and capture all potentially relevant studies (see Table 1).

Table 1

Combination patterns in databases

Database	Keywords	Boolean operators	Nº studies
Dialnet	Parental stress, parenting, childhood	Y (and), o (or)	19
Google Scholar	Parental stress, early childhood, family, parental competence	Y (and), +, o (or), No	37
Proquest Psicología	Evolutionary development, parenting, attachment, parental stress, parental competence	Y (and), +, o (or),	28
Scielo	Parenting competence, parenting stress, evolutionary development, coping strategies	Y (and), o (or)	22
Redalyc	Parental stress, family, parenting competition	Y (and), +, o (or), No	24
Scopus	Coping strategies, parenting stress	Y (and), o (or)	12

Selection Criteria

The inclusion criteria were as follows: (a) studies addressing parental stress in parents with children under seven years of age; (b) research employing methodological approaches and designs that demonstrated reliability and scientific quality; and (c) publications presented in academic formats, specifically peer-reviewed scientific articles or academic theses.

Accordingly, the exclusion criteria included: (a) articles published on non-academic dissemination websites that were not indexed in scientific databases or institutional repositories; (b) studies that were unavailable, incomplete, or not accessible through open access; and (c) case studies or studies focused exclusively on the analysis of intervention outcomes.

Study Selection and Data Extraction Process

The study selection process was conducted independently by the authors through an initial review of titles and abstracts to determine compliance with the established selection criteria. Subsequently, the full texts of the selected studies were examined using a data extraction protocol developed by the research team.

Data were systematically extracted using reading records and organized into a structured table that included the following information: authors, year of publication, title, publication type, methodological scope, objectives, main results, and conclusions or other relevant characteristics.

3. RESULTS

The study identification and selection process followed the PRISMA flowchart illustrated in Figure 1. A total of 142 records were initially identified. After the removal of duplicates ($n = 8$), 134 titles and abstracts were screened, of which 87 were excluded based on the eligibility criteria. Forty-seven full-text articles were then assessed for eligibility, and 29 were excluded for not meeting the established criteria. Consequently, 18 studies were included in the final analysis of this review. The characteristics and main findings of the included studies are summarized in Table 2.



Figure 1

Study flow chart according to the PRISMA model

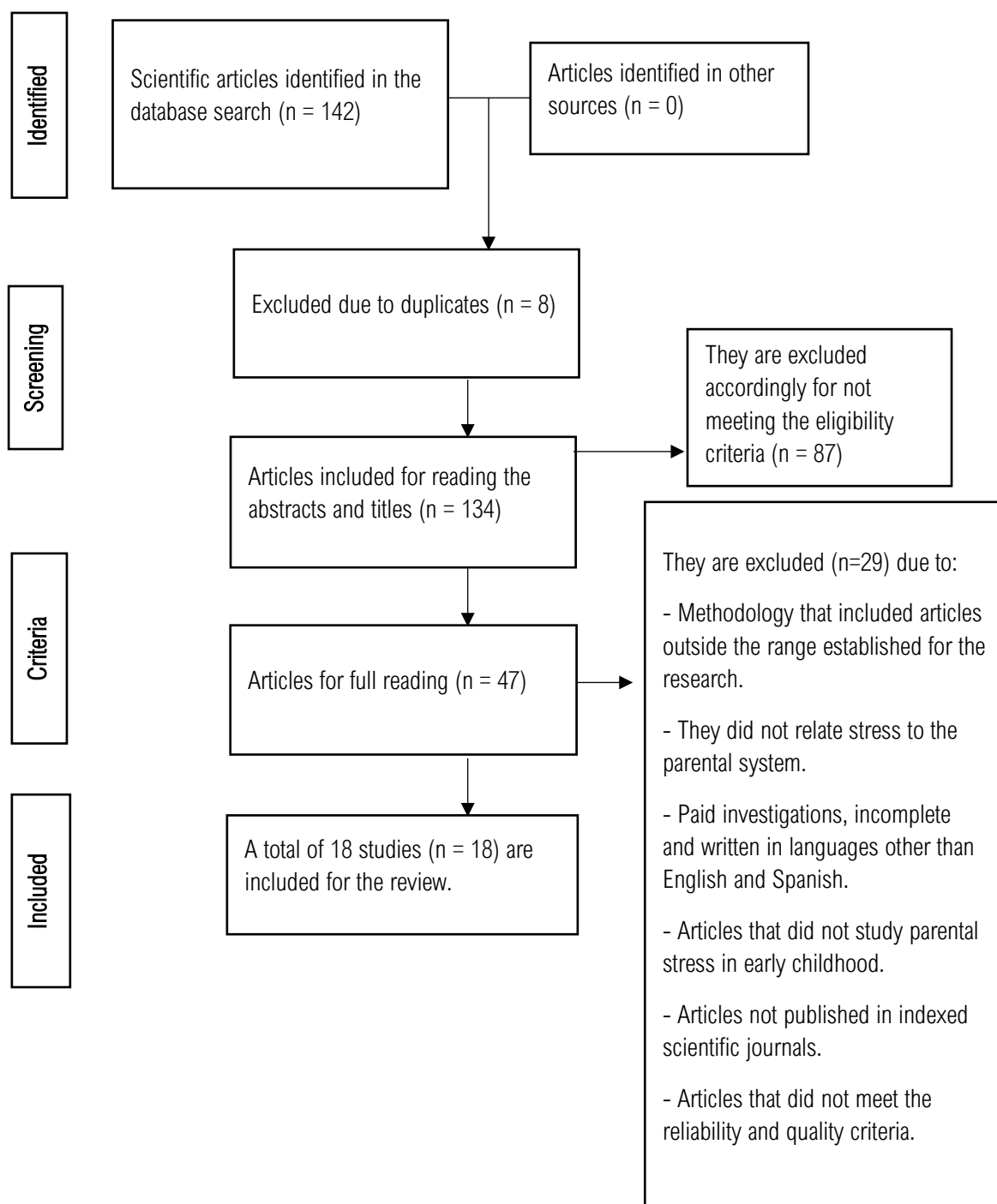


Table 2

General characteristics of the studies considered for this review

Authors Nº and year	Study title	Type and scope of the study	Objective	Results	Conclusions and/or relevant characteristics
De la 1 Piedra (2016)	Parental stress and anemia in children from 6 to 49 months in Pachacámac	T - Correlational.	Explore the association between parenting stress and anemia in children	It highlights that factors such as the number of children, work situation and marital relationship generate high levels of parental stress. No study significant relationship was found between parenting stress and anemia in children 6 to 49 months of age.	They report limitations in the precision of the data collected, affecting the relational inferences of the variables. A health promotion intervention model is recommended to improve empowerment and self-efficacy in mothers.
Díoses 2 (2017)	Parental stress and coping styles in parents of 3- year-old children. Students online 16-UGEL 03-San Miguel, 2017	T - Correlational.	Determine the relationship between parenting stress and the coping styles of parents of 3-year-old children.	Teenage parents and young new mothers experience high levels of stress. There is a positive relationship between these two variables, with the avoidant coping style being the one most related to parental stress.	Based on the relationship, they propose to develop psychoeducational programs and plans to work on the coping style with emphasis on the problem and promote secure attachment relationships.

Durán 3 el al. (2016)	Coping, parental stress and quality of life of primary caregivers of people with ASD.	SA - Explanatory.	To analyze the quality of life, coping strategies and parental stress in caregivers of children with ASD.	82% of caregivers present clinically significant levels of parenting stress. The use of strategies such as aggressive reaction, emotional avoidance or coping difficulties is related to a worse quality of life in the psychological, social and environmental domains.	It was demonstrated that there is no significant association of these in the evolutionary development of the infant. Quality of life is better in caregivers who use adaptive coping strategies, such as social support or positive reappraisal.
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Table 2 (continued)

General characteristics of the studies considered for this review

Nº	Authors and year	Study title	Type and scope of the study	Objective	Results	Conclusions and/or relevant characteristics
4	Enríquez y Garzón (2018)	Parenting, family and education guidelines.	SA Descriptive.	Identify the theoretical advances around the topic of parenting patterns and their current typology.	The central role attributed to parents is upbringing within the socialization process. Its effectiveness determines the behavior and mental health of children.	Families constitute a key factor in the psycho-affective development of minors where parenting styles allow their behavioral regulation. Emphasizes the importance of making paternal behaviors more flexible during the stages of the family life cycle.
5	García y Grau (2016)	Behavioral Training and Mindfulness on Parental Stress and Parent-Child Relationship.	SA Explanatory.	To evaluate the effectiveness of a traditional parenting procedure combined with a mindfulness procedure in reducing parental stress and increasing positive parent-child interaction.	They demonstrate the effectiveness of the program in reducing parental stress and its consequent improvement in the quality of the parent-child relationship. Parental stress affects the acquisition of emotional competencies.	The results confirm the effectiveness of the behavioral parent training procedures, and procedures that use mindfulness strategies in reducing parental stress.



Table 2 (continued)

General characteristics of the studies considered for this review

Authors Nº	Study title	Type and scope of the study	Objective	Results	Conclusions and/or relevant characteristics
6	García et al. (2016) Relational flexibility and parental stress.	SA - Explanatory.	To evaluate the relationship between high and moderate levels of parental stress and derived relationships based on a training procedure in conditional discriminations.	High stress is related to lower response accuracy and greater latency towards relationships. High levels of parental stress decrease the ability to establish adaptive social relationships with children and the close social circle.	Parents with high levels of stress have greater difficulty using positive parenting practices and use more aversive strategies to reduce inappropriate behavior.
7	Limachi (2020) Evaluation of maturational development in children aged 4-5 years in preschool.	SA - Explanatory.	Determine the course of current development of children in five spheres: psychomotor, language, cognitive, socio-affective and autonomy.	It is determined that the lower the levels of autonomy and socio-affective capacity in children aged 4 to 5 years, the lower the abilities to explore and adapt to stressful situations for both children and parents.	Healthy relationships enhance satisfactory child development, resulting in confident and proactive adults. This stage offers the greatest opportunities to strengthen autonomy and the socio-affective relationship.



Table 2 (continued)

General characteristics of the studies considered for this review

Nº	Authors and year	Study title	Type and scope of the study	Objective	Results	Conclusions and/or relevant characteristics
8	Moreira et al. (2012)	Parenting skills required in interaction with the preschooler to promote secure attachment.	SA - Descriptive.	Present evidence of the factors associated with evolutionary development and their implications for attachment.	Parental behavior is fundamental in the development of the child's attachment, while evolutionary changes require parental skills of adaptation and modification according to their capabilities and contexts.	They recommend analyzing attachment and preschool age, due to the impact they have on them.
9	Nayelly Quintana (2022)	Strengthening parental skills and attachment: proposal for a psychoeducational program for fathers and mothers in Ciudad Juárez.	SA - Experimental.	Design humanistic psychoeducational program to strengthen parental skills and attachment.	a They propose as risk factors: absence of a significant attachment, dysfunctional relationships with the context, parental stress and difficulty deciphering the children's needs. In turn, they harm the development of parental skills.	It is important to promote programs that focus on training parental skills in favor of child development, due to the benefits and support it provides.
10	Pérez et al. (2014)	Parental stress, coping strategies and risk assessment in mothers from risk families who use Social Services.	SA - Experimental.	Analyze parental stress levels and coping strategies.	More than half of mothers experience clinical levels of stress and primarily use problem-focused strategies. Both variables are related to sociodemographic characteristics such as educational level, economic level, personal discomfort and type of family.	Parental stress can cause emotional distancing with parents in the case of children and states of depression and anxiety in parents. They suggest the need to incorporate specific programs that work on these aspects.



Table 2 (continued)

General characteristics of the studies considered for this review

Authors Nº and year	Study title	Type and scope of the study	Objective	Results	Conclusions and/or relevant characteristics
Pérez y 11 Álvarez (2016)	Parental stress as a predictor of psychological symptoms in mothers from families at risk.	SA - Explanatory.	To explore the degree of psychological symptoms and parental stress of mothers at psychosocial risk. Study stress in psychological symptoms	The symptoms derived from stress in the majority of participants are related to situations of poverty, accumulation of stressful life events, low locus of control, personal discomfort and avoidance. It has a direct impact on family functioning.	The majority experience high levels of stress, which is related to a decline in their psychological well-being and alters the experience of their maternal role.
Pérez y 12 Santelices (2016)	Depressive symptoms, parental stress and family functioning.	SA - Correlational.	Analyze the relationship between depressive symptoms, parental stress and different dimensions of family functioning.	Mothers tend to demonstrate higher levels of depressive symptoms and stress due to family and relationship aspects, while fathers tend to be more affected by instability in maternal mental health and contextual risks. A protective factor is having an occupation for mothers and having an educational level and older age for fathers.	The sociodemographic level generates high levels of stress. There is an association between parental mental health and family functioning, with differences between the two.



Table 2 (continued)

General characteristics of the studies considered for this review

Nº	Authors and year	Study title	Type and scope of the study	Objective	Results	Conclusions and/or relevant characteristics
13	Pérez et al. (2012)	Parental stress, child development and early care.	SA - Explanatory.	To analyze the incidence of parental stress levels on the mental and motor development of children born small or premature.	Mothers score higher in the different dimensions of stress; however, paternal distress is significant. Children's motor development is affected by the stress of the mother.	Low levels of stress promote better mental and psychomotor development when reaching 2 years of age. They recommend programs to promote and prevent child development, highlighting the need to reduce parental stress.
14	Rodríguez (2009)	The importance of the adaptation period in three-year-old students: a practical experience.	SA - Explanatory.	Explain and plan the adaptation period in first-school children.	The school adaptation period must be guided according to the stage of evolutionary development and has to be planned due to the separation of the child from his parents. This is associated with high levels of stress in children and parents, being essential for strengthening their autonomy.	The form of separation is fundamental for the subsequent socialization process. Knowing the child's reactions, behaviors and feelings will allow for a serene and confident attitude that will have an impact on her emotional well-being.



Table 2 (continued)
General characteristics of the studies considered for this review

Authors Nº	Study title	Type and scope of the study	Objective	Results	Conclusions and/or relevant characteristics
15	Sánchez (2015) Parental stress questionnaire: psychometric characteristics and comparative analysis of T - parental stress in parents with sons and daughters from 0 to 3 years of age in modern Lima.	Correlational.	Compare total stress and its dimensions according to sex, age, number of children and external support of parents with children between 0 and 3 years of age.	Mothers experience greater stress than fathers, whether in children with expected developmental or with difficulties. Phenomena such as the maternal constellation, the diversity of roles to fulfill and primary maternal concern predispose to experiencing high levels of stress.	Parenthood is a stage of human development that involves stress, which can be influenced by both external and internal factors. Parents' personality characteristics and children's behavior have a greater impact on parenting stress levels.
16	Isaza y Henao (2011) Relationships between the family social climate and performance in SA - social skills in Correlational. boys and girls between two and three years of age.	Correlational.	Relate the social climate of the family and the performance in social skills of boys and girls between two and three years of age.	Democratic families, with a predominance of adequate communication, affection and clear rules, promote a wide repertoire of social skills in children, contrary to families with a disciplined structure, characterized by authoritarian actions of the parents.	Children's social competence skills largely depend on the motivational conditions that parents provide.



Table 2 (continued)

General characteristics of the studies considered for this review

Nº	Authors and year	Study title	Type and scope of the study	Objective	Results	Conclusions and/or relevant characteristics
17	Vera et al. (2009)	Stress levels in mothers of children cared for in a child development and early care center and of children in the general population.	SA - Explanatory.	Compare the levels of stress experienced in mothers of children cared for in child development and early care centers versus new mothers of children attending nursery schools.	Significant differences are evident, mothers whose children present some type of developmental difficulty have higher stress levels than first-time mothers whose children have normative development.	The need to carry out interventions on parents of children who require Early Care is supported.
18	Andrés y Fernández (2016)	Parents' parenting practices: their influence on new problems in early childhood.	SA - Descriptive.	Know the role of the family in the development of the child and the risk factors associated with the origin of childhood disorders.	It is important to attend to signs of emotional risk in early childhood, with early identification being essential to reduce family stress. Current living conditions combined with upbringing tend to increase stress levels, and the personal history of vulnerability to these elements is crucial. Situations such as pseudo-child abandonment could be explained by work stress.	It is vital that health, family and education professionals continue to train and actively and responsibly acquire skills in the emotional development of children.

The authors analyzed 18 studies that support parental stress as a strong predictor of emotional and behavioral problems in both children and parents, as well as its influence on the choice of coping strategies used in the parenting process. The findings highlight the importance of the family in children's evolutionary development and emphasize the need to establish preventive and intervention programs. The included studies were published between 2009 and 2022, with a higher concentration in 2016 ($n = 7$), followed by 2009 ($n = 2$), 2011 ($n = 1$), 2012 ($n = 2$), 2014 ($n = 1$), 2015 ($n = 1$), 2017 ($n = 1$), 2018 ($n = 1$), 2020 ($n = 1$), and 2022 ($n = 1$). In addition, the Newcastle–Ottawa Scale (NOS) (Wells et al., 2014) was applied to assess the methodological quality of the included studies, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3*Quality Assessment Tool*

No.	Authors	Inclusion Threshold	Rating
1	De la Piedra, (2016).	6	Moderate
2	Dioses, (2017).	6	Moderate
3	Durán et al., (2016).	7	High
4	Enríquez y Garzón, (2018).	8	High
5	García y Grau, (2016).	7	High
6	García et al., (2016).	7	High
7	Limachi, (2020).	8	High
8	Morera et al., (2012).	6	Moderate
9	Nayelly y Quintana, (2022).	8	High
10	Pérez et al., (2014).	7	High
11	Pérez y Álvarez, (2016).	7	High
12	Pérez y Santelices, (2016).	7	High
13	Pérez et al., (2012).	6	Moderate
14	Rodríguez, (2009).	6	Moderate
15	Sánchez, (2015).	7	High
16	Isaza y Henao, (2011).	7	High
17	Vera et al., (2009).	7	High
18	Andrés y Fernández, (2016).	8	High

In accordance with the stated objectives, the reviewed research indicates that several factors contribute to the experience of high levels of parental stress during children's evolutionary development. These factors include children's irritable temperament, poor emotional self-regulation, excessive dependence on parents, neurodevelopmental disorders, the birth of a new family member, pregnancy- and childbirth-related difficulties, a larger number of family members, younger child age, parents' employment and economic conditions, quality of the marital relationship, accumulation of stressful life events, divorce, and single parenthood (Vera et al., 2009; Pérez et al., 2014; Andrés & Fernández, 2016; De la Piedra, 2016; Pérez & Álvarez, 2016; Pérez & Santelices, 2016).

Furthermore, a low perception of social support and parental age have been identified as relevant factors, as adolescent fathers and young first-time mothers tend to experience higher levels of stress, which is significantly

associated with avoidant coping styles (Dioses, 2017). Mothers frequently report greater stress due to the multiple roles they assume, as well as experiences related to the maternal constellation and primary maternal concern (Pérez et al., 2012; Sánchez, 2015).

With regard to the consequences of parental stress on children's evolutionary development, deficits have been observed in the establishment of social relationships, competencies, and emotional regulation, which may subsequently lead to cognitive and behavioral problems (Pérez et al., 2014; García & Grau, 2016). The absence of a secure attachment bond may result in emotional distress, frustration, attention and memory deficits, impulsivity, poor academic performance, apathy, lack of behavioral control, and low self-concept in children (Nayelly & Quintana, 2022).

In relation to parents, high stress levels and difficulties in understanding and managing children's emotions limit their ability to establish healthy social relationships and hinder the development of parental skills (García et al., 2016; Nayelly & Quintana, 2022). Evidence shows that parents who lack effective coping strategies tend to adopt rigid, neglectful, or violent parenting styles, which are associated with anxiety, distorted perceptions of reality, and a deterioration in quality of life across multiple domains (Pérez et al., 2014; García et al., 2016; Pérez & Álvarez, 2016; Enríquez & Garzón, 2018).

It is also important to note that mothers exhibit higher levels of depressive symptoms, whereas fathers appear to be more affected by maternal mental health and contextual factors (Pérez & Santelices, 2016). In this context, parental stress may trigger negative family dynamics in which children are perceived as a burden, leading to deterioration in children's mental health and adversely affecting family interaction and overall quality of life (Isaza & Henao, 2011; Pérez et al., 2012; Pérez & Álvarez, 2016; Durán et al., 2016; Enríquez & Garzón, 2018).

Regarding parental stress across children's evolutionary development, situations such as the acquisition of autonomy and parent-child transitions, including entry into the school environment, may generate high levels of stress, particularly when children present characteristics such as shyness or introversion, which often lead parents to adopt overprotective behaviors (Rodríguez, 2009; Limachi, 2020). Delays in the acquisition of developmental skills, as well as difficulties related to sleep, eating, and sphincter control, may further increase parental stress while simultaneously reducing parental skills and coping strategies. Additionally, maternal stress has been shown to contribute to delays in children's motor development (Pérez et al., 2012; Andrés & Fernández, 2016).

Finally, it is important to emphasize that until approximately three years of age, children primarily communicate their needs through non-verbal behaviors. From this stage onward, it becomes essential for attachment figures to provide verbal responses adapted to children's level of comprehension; otherwise, states of anguish, confusion, and stress may arise in both children and parents (Morera et al., 2012).

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to explore and understand the impact of parental stress on children's early development. From this perspective, it is evident that the methodology and results obtained in the reviewed studies are satisfactory. Through this analysis, it is concluded that mothers experience higher levels of stress than fathers. These levels are influenced by factors such as the perception of an excessively demanding child, lack of social support, and postpartum depression (Pérez et al., 2011; Mendoza & Saldivia, 2015; Navas et al.,

2016). In accordance with Cano et al. (2010), mothers experience higher levels of stress when children present lower levels of cognitive and psychomotor development.

Factors such as the number of children, single-parent families, low income, children's evolutionary development, and the younger age of both parents and children contribute to significantly increased stress levels (Olhaver & Farkas, 2012; Ayala et al., 2014). In fact, behaviors such as irritability, tantrums, the need for special care, and characteristics related to children's evolutionary development increase stress levels and make parenting styles more complex (Lila & Gracia, 2005; Navas et al., 2016; Papalia & Martorell, 2017). This study is consistent with the findings of Montealegre et al. (2012) and Andrés and Fernández (2016), who confirm that children who show less autonomy in eating, dressing, grooming, or who present difficulties in these areas can generate increased stress and reduced coping strategies in their parents.

According to Bernal et al. (2021), parents who experience difficulties in promoting their children's comprehensive development, care, and socialization may negatively affect children's attention capacity. Additionally, De Cock et al. (2017) establish that stress derived from a negative parent-child bond affects social interaction, leading to cognitive difficulties and impairments in executive functioning in children. Parental rejection produces symptoms of anxiety and depression and predisposes parents to the use of harsh, neglectful, and/or violent disciplinary methods (Lila & Gracia, 2005; Cabrera et al., 2012).

Finally, this study agrees with Isaza and Henao (2011), who highlight that family dynamics are a key element generating changes in children's cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. Therefore, expressions of cohesion, harmony, and organization allow positive relationships both within and outside the family system. Similarly, Ruiz et al. (2023) indicate that relationships characterized by conflict, lack of clear boundaries, parental stress, and negative interactions among family members negatively influence the healthy development of autonomy and independence in children under six years of age.

Regarding the limitations of this study, it is necessary to emphasize the need to expand the search for information on specific factors influencing parental stress during the evolutionary development of children aged 0 to 6 years. Although the breadth of the search allowed the inclusion and analysis of a wide variety of studies, the use of gray literature was largely excluded. Most of the reviewed articles focus on determining the level of parental stress in families of children with neurodevelopmental disorders or special care needs, rather than on normative development. In addition, this research primarily focuses on mothers; although they are reported to experience higher levels of stress during child-rearing, it is important to consider the paternal role.

The findings of this review are relevant and up to date, revealing the need to develop prevention and early childhood care programs that provide families with information and coping strategies. These programs may help reduce parental stress levels while simultaneously supporting the regulation of children's behavior.

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Los autores declaran que el presente proyecto no representó conflicto de intereses de ninguna parte.

Rol de los autores / Authors Roles:

Belén Suárez: Conceptualización, validación, curación de datos, investigación, recursos, escritura – borrador original, escritura – revisión y edición, visualización, administración del proyecto.

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