

Metamorphosis in mother after 35 years: a study of Grounded Theory

Maria Anabela Ferreira dos Santos¹, Maria dos Anjos Pereira Lopes², Maria Antónia Rebelo Botelho³

^{1,2,3}Escola Superior de Enfermagem de Lisboa, Unidade de Investigação & Desenvolvimento em Enfermagem, Portugal.
 afsantos@esel.pt¹; maveiga@esel.pt²; rbotelho@esel.pt³

Introduction The present study is part of a broader research aimed to extend the understanding of the transition to motherhood after the age of 35, a trend that has been observed in developed countries (Carolan & Frankowska, 2011), including Portugal (Mendes et al., 2016). Maternity is considered the major developmental transition throughout the life cycle (Mercer, 2004), which implies that the woman restructure her goals, behaviors and responsibilities to achieve a new concept of self.

Methodology We use the constructivist perspective of Charmaz's Grounded Theory (2014). To collect data, we used the semi-structured interview, the Photovoice method (Wang & Burris, 1997; Santos et al., 2018) and field notes. For the selection of the participants, in the initial sampling we defined inclusion criteria, and later the theoretical sampling was used.

Results In the present article we present only the results obtained from two categories - "Confronting the dark side" and "Caring for herself".

Discussion "Confronting the Dark Side" participants became aware of their vulnerability associated with the transition when confronted with this obscure side of motherhood. Doubts and difficulties experienced by participants, awakened feelings of inadequacy in paper performance (Meleis, 2010), and felt that their changing identity was fragile and even threatened. "Caring for Herself" is the response patterns and the strategies used by the participants to recover their identity, previously felt as threatened. In a deeply hedonistic society, referred by Badinter (2010), and narcissistic (Lipovetsky, 2017), women when become mothers cease to worry about themselves and tend to forget about themselves, in favor of the care of the baby.

Conclusions Motherhood, because of its irreversibility, implies a new intense and lifelong relationship and, therefore, has a great impact on the personality of the woman. The study allowed us to conclude that in the process of "Metamorphosis in Mother after 35 years" two of the categories that integrate it - "Confronting the Dark Side" and "Caring for Herself" - uncovered an obscure side of motherhood, ruled by difficulties experienced by mothers in the first two months after childbirth, unknown to mothers. To overcome these perceived difficulties in role performance, the response patterns and strategies used by the participants were aimed at restoring their identity that they had previously threatened to rebalance, compensate, and care for themselves. Lack of gender equality in the division of household chores and childcare were also factors mentioned as contributors to the confrontation with the dark side of motherhood, postponing or making a decision not to have more children.

Keywords: Late Maternity, Transition, Identity, Nursing, Grounded Theory.



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