



Breastfeeding and feminism: social and cultural journey in Spain^a

Lactancia materna y feminismo: recorrido social y cultural en España *Lactância materna e feminismo: uma viagem social e cultural pela Espanha*

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: To analyze the influence of socio-political, educational and feminist changes in Spain on the maintenance of breastfeeding. **METHOD:** Historical-descriptive review of documentation in databases, Official State Bulletins, of the Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs and Social Welfare. **RESULTS:** Breastfeeding is a complex phenomenon influenced by demographic, biological, social and psychological factors. It has changed throughout history and evolved with the feminist movements. The incorporation of women to the labor market (19th century), produced a modification in the family and couple role. The society of the 21st century demands from the public authorities the personal and labor conciliation for the upbringing of their children. **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATION FOR PRACTICE:** There have been multiple factors and evolutionary processes for the socio-cultural situation of women in breastfeeding. Nowadays, it is still complicated to combine pregnancy and upbringing with employment, and formal and informal networks allow advances in health policies.

Keywords: Breast Feeding; Feminism; Sucking Behavior; Family; History.

RESUMEN

OBJETIVO: Analizar la influencia de cambios socio-políticos, educativos y feministas de España en el mantenimiento de lactancia materna. **MÉTODO:** Revisión histórico-descriptiva de documentación en bases de datos, Boletines Oficiales del Estado, del Ministerio de Sanidad y Consumo y Bienestar Social. **RESULTADOS:** La lactancia materna es un fenómeno complejo influenciado por factores demográficos, biológicos, sociales y psicológicos. Ha cambiado a lo largo de la historia y, evolucionado con los movimientos feministas. La incorporación de la mujer al mercado laboral (s.XIX), produjo una modificación en el rol familiar y pareja. La sociedad del siglo XXI reclama a los poderes públicos la conciliación personal y laboral para la crianza de sus hijos. **CONCLUSIONES E IMPLICACIÓN PARA LA PRÁCTICA:** Han sido múltiples los factores y procesos evolutivos para la situación socio-cultural de la mujer en la lactancia materna. Actualmente sigue siendo complicado compaginar gestación y crianza con el empleo, las redes formales e informales permiten avances en políticas sanitarias.

Palabras clave: Lactancia Materna; Feminismo; Conducta en la Lactancia; Familia; Historia.

RESUMO

OBJETIVO: Analisar a influência das mudanças sócio-políticas, educativas e feministas em Espanha na manutenção do aleitamento materno. **MÉTODO:** Revisão histórico-descritiva da documentação em bases de dados, Boletins Oficiais do Estado, do Ministério da Saúde e do Consumo e da Previdência Social. **RESULTADOS:** O aleitamento materno é um fenómeno complexo influenciado por factores demográficos, biológicos, sociais e psicológicos. Ela mudou ao longo da história e evoluiu com os movimentos feministas. A incorporação das mulheres ao mercado de trabalho (século XIX), produziu uma modificação no papel da família e do casal. A sociedade do século XXI exige do poder público a conciliação pessoal e laboral para a educação dos seus filhos. **CONCLUSÕES E IMPLICAÇÕES PARA A PRÁTICA:** Tem havido múltiplos factores e processos evolutivos para a situação sociocultural das mulheres em aleitamento materno. Hoje em dia, ainda é complicado combinar gravidez e educação com emprego, e as redes formais e informais permitem avanços nas políticas de saúde.

Palavras-chave: Aleitamento materno; Feminismo; Comportamento de Sucção; Família; História.

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INTRODUCTION

Contextualization of the topic

Currently, the Royal Academy of Language (RAE) defines feminism as "*Principle of Equal Rights for Women and Men, referring to women's liberation movements*". In its second meaning the concept is defined as "*A movement that fights for effective realization in all orders of feminism*".¹ This concept has been the subject of debate over time and has generated different social and cultural movements.

However, in order to reach this concept, it is necessary to analyze a continuous process of social and political changes in the history of Spain. The continuous changes have had a direct impact on the symbolism of the figure of women and, therefore, of their education, social situation and decision-making capacity.

Thus, on entering texts from the first decades of the 16th century, Spanish philosopher, humanist, and pedagogue Juan Luis Vives, demonstrated how in this society education was differentiated by genders that were established. This marked the doctrine of women's education by assigning women a domestic role of caring for the family.² In this way, women were instructed in the acquisition of good customs and educated in a demure manner, with the sole purpose of finding a good husband and administering good care to the offspring, whose feeding at birth was, exclusively, breastfeeding.³

In turn, the author assigned man a role of domination, which highlighted in him a visible masculinity, in the physical aspect, as in intelligence and education. These thoughts established the rules for living together as a couple, arguing that the woman should be in charge of the family, under the authority and power of the man.^{2,3}

This conception of education was rejected by a French priest, Cartesian philosopher and writer (Fran'ois Poulain de la Barre), who showed his total opposition in the 17th century (1673-1675). He even rejected that women should be assigned exclusively the domestic role of caring for the family and that she be instructed to be subordinate to men.⁴

In contrast, in the eighteenth century, the ideas preceding previous centuries of teaching women about domestic and religious tasks were again defended by a French writer, educator, and philosopher (Jean-Jacques Rousseau). Therefore, academic training was considered exclusively for man.³

Rejection of this form of thought along with the ideas of freedom, equality, and fraternity that emerged after the French Revolution (1789-1799) led a group of women and men to come together to defend equality between the two sexes. All of them sought to show that oppression towards individuals was not only part of the powers of the state, but that such oppression was placed in any space, being easily observable in the contingency that women owed to men, regardless of their social or economic position.²

In the 19th century, associationism and social movements emerged as a consequence of the exploitation of labor, dehumanization and misery that the industrial revolution produced in the working class. This movement fought for the pursuit of freedom and equal

rights of the proletariat and women. In addition to improving the working conditions of female employees, aimed at eradicating strenuous hours, discrimination at work was banned and advocated for equal men's and women's wages.^{5,6}

In the mid-20th century, Breastfeeding (LM) was relegated to the background, as the discourse on newborn feeding revolved around artificial breastfeeding.⁶ However, when there was an increase in infant mortality resulting from the change in the way the newborn is fed, the biopolitics for the promotion and defense of LM against the economic interests of the food industry were activated.⁷ For these reasons, at the end of the 20th century (1981), the World Health Organization (WHO) together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) published the International Code for the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. It regulated the advertising of these products in the media and in health centers. Spain acceded to that code in 1992.⁸

Likewise, in 1990 to promote the LM, the *Innocenti Declaration* emerged and in 1991 WHO-UNICEF created the Initiative for the Humanization of Birth and Breastfeeding Assistance (IHAN), and through this initiative the ten steps for happy breastfeeding were published^{9,10}

The member countries of the United Nations ratified the importance and urgency of implementing a "Global Strategy for infant and young child feeding" which was approved in 2002 by the World Health Assembly.¹¹ The Spanish Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality published the IHAN Guide in 2004 and has since promoted that initiative.¹²

In Spain and from the Health Service of Castilla-La Mancha (SESCAM), in particular, the Primary Care Management of Toledo works in the Promotion of Breastfeeding. Thus, there are basic health areas, such as Fuensalida (rural area), which have obtained accreditation as an IHAN center for humanized assistance to the mother.¹⁰

METHOD

This is a historical-descriptive review, with the aim of studying existing documents and information, which is relevant to the approach of the study objective, in this case on breastfeeding and the involvement of women in it from a socio-political vision, in a specific period. The search for information was carried out in several phases: Phase one included an investigation, which was carried out on PubMed through MeSH terms. For the expression "Breast Feeding" it was necessary to use qualifiers as follows: ((epidemiology) AND (economics)) AND ((adverse effects) OR (methods) and (psychology) AND (therapeutic use and trends)) AND ((Feminism) OR (history)). Additionally, an electronic database search was conducted through Scielo, Dialnet, Cuiden, MEDLINE/PubMed, CINAHL (CINAHL (Cumulated Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature), and Science Direct as well as Google Academic, through the selected keywords: "breastfeeding", "feminism", "artificial lactation" and "history". In all search strategies, the abstracts of those researches were reviewed in relation to the objective of the study. A pre-analysis

of 42 articles was carried out, of which 28 articles were finally carefully studied.

In the second phase, the reading of books was carried out, which have been cited throughout the development of the study. The discussion focused on several sub-themes such as: history of women's rights; history of the feminist movement; woman, family and work; breastfeeding, democracy and feminism. 32 books were reviewed, of which a total of 11 were considered for an analytical description.

In the third phase, a manual and electronic review was carried out on official documents drawn from the Official State Bulletins (BOE), the Ministry of Health, Consumer Affairs and Social Welfare, as well as International Organizations (Unicef and WHO). A total of 14 documents were reviewed from this type of literature, but only 5 of them were studied in depth.

In the fourth phase, the literature used for this historical research was subjected to inferential interpretation by researchers. It was sought to know the reality already investigated and written, confronting it with social reality in Spain. The bibliographic material used for this research was criticized by researchers, performing an inferential interpretation that seeks to reflect and relate the reality already investigated, embodied, described, and confronted with social reality. This involved the establishment of categories of analysis by thematic blocks, which organized the data obtained through the search carried out: 1) breastfeeding and characteristics; 2) feminism and socio-political connotations; 3) women and social culture; 4) Occupational and women's health. The defining characteristics for clarifying feminism at different stages were established by consensus among the authors, once the categories of analysis were analyzed. These thematic blocks are related to the study objective.

Finally, the following were set as the criteria for inclusion: 1) documentation related to breastfeeding; (2) maternity-related manuscripts; (3) writings relating to motherhood and feminism; 4) documents written in Spanish, English, Portuguese and French. The exclusion criteria were: 1) documentation noting for the subject; 2) duplicate material; 3) material not found in full text; 4) documents written in language outside the selected ones. Once the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, a total of 44 valid documents were obtained for this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the 16th century, child and youth education was differentiated by sex. This issue resulted in gender inequality.² This fact led to the exclusive training of women in domestic work and in the care of family and children. Some authors show how the figure of the man was instructed to stand out socially, which is why the women of the time were subordinated to male authority.^{2,3}

At the end of the 17th century, one of the forerunners of feminism (François Poulain de la Barre), denounced the injustice and inequality to which women were subjected.³ He advocated gender equality through a model of society based on justice and equal opportunities for people.⁴

In the first decades of the eighteenth century, a pedagogical change was proposed that brought the fate of women back to the care of family unity, prayer and charity, which sealed the position of superiority of the male.⁴ Thus, under this educational model, obedience, submission to man, and exclusion of women from the public sphere continued.^{3,4} Society rose up against gender inequality, giving rise to a social movement at the end of that century led by Olympia de Gouges and Mary Wollstonecraft. This current sought to achieve freedom and equal rights for women and men, universally held by the male figure.³

Genesis of first feminism

The economic system that developed throughout the nineteenth century, promoted by the currents of thought and changes of the eighteenth century through the industrial revolution, produced two female archetypes. On the one hand, there was the working woman, incorporated into the world of industrial work as cheap and submissive labor to man (pattern and / or foreman). On the other hand, the bourgeois woman, relegated to the private sphere of the home, responsible for the care of the family and the breastfeeding of her offspring.^{3,5} The latter observed the professional success of his male environment, an issue that in Spain materialized with the emergence of social, educational and feminist movements.⁵

Some of the most representative figures of this current in Spain were Emilia Pardo Bazán, writer and advocate of the work of women in equal conditions to men. Also noteworthy is Concepción Arenal, who defended the education of women. She advocated for the improvement of nutrition and hygiene in the most disadvantaged households. This issue allowed the health of families to improve.⁵ In addition, feminist groups emerged in different Spanish cities. Highlights include the figure of Belén Sárraga Hernández, promoter of the Women's General Association in the city of Valencia.^{5,13} At this historic moment, women fought for institutional education with equal curriculums for both sexes, an issue that affected the upbringing of children, especially those of working women.^{3,13}

On March 13, 1900, the Institute of Social Reforms published a law that accommodates the conditions of work for women and children. The issue of motherhood was addressed for the first time, allowing pregnant women a work break in their eighth month of pregnancy. Additionally, her job would even be reserved so that she could join three weeks after delivery.^{3,6} This law established in its 19th article that during the period of breastfeeding the woman would have one hour a day to breastfeed her child. An issue that promoted the maintenance of breastfeeding for infants of working mothers. This law allowed the division of breastfeeding time into two thirty-minute intervals, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. It even stated that if the woman preferred it, and whenever the infant was taken to her job, she could divide the hour into four periods of fifteen minutes, two in the morning and two in the afternoon. In addition, it cautioned that the mother could spend more time on breastfeeding than established, provided she took the corresponding discount on her salary.⁶

In 1905 at the VIII Congress of the General Union of Workers held in Madrid, Virginia González Polo, political leader and founder of Socialist Feminist Groups, proposed a social reform of article 9 of the 1900 law. In it, the woman's rest would be extended after childbirth to four weeks. In addition, this period could be increased up to six weeks, under medical certification to justify it. This led to improved maternal recovery and longer breastfeeding time. This law reform was enacted on January 8, 1907.^{3,6}

However, through the Royal Decree of August 21st, 1923, the 1900 Act was reformed for a second time.⁹ On this occasion, the periods of forced unemployment of working women were extended to six weeks before and after childbirth. In addition, the rights of free medical care and financial compensation during the cessation of employment were established (Figure 1). This monetary remuneration was received in case of non-abandonment of the newborn and breastfeeding thereof.^{6,9}

During the first third of the 20th century, the importance of women in defending their rights was recognized. An example of an important feminist figure from this period is writer, journalist, and activist Carmen Burgos. Through her articles and journalistic surveys, she defended legal equality and women's suffrage.^{15,16} In 1927, she published *"The Modern Woman and Her Rights"*, a book that addressed women's status from the socioeconomic, legislative, and religious spheres.¹⁶ For Burgos, being a feminist meant to be respected, with responsibility and personality, without renouncing love, home, child-rearing, and motherhood in achieving her rights.¹⁶

Another important feminist figure from this period was lawyer, writer, and deputy for Madrid (1931), Clara Campoamor, who

was an advocate for the rights of Spanish women. She achieved great benefits for women, such as the passage of the divorce law (1932), which made it legally possible for equality between spouses and even a pension for the maintenance of children. Additionally, she promoted the abolition of the crime of adultery contained in the Penal Code; also making effective the equality of women's rights with men during the government of the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939) through women's suffrage.¹⁷ However, Victoria Kent, the first female lawyer from Spain and a parliamentarian in the same legislature as Clara Campoamor, argued against universal suffrage. Therefore, she considered that the woman was subjected to the will of the husband and the instructions of the parish priest confessor, which prevented her from having her own judgment.^{15,17}

Additionally, it is worth noting the figure of Federica Montseny, who was a politician, writer, and the first woman Minister in the Second Spanish Republic. One of her revelations was the prevention of venereal diseases and the creation of care centers for prostituted women, where they were taught a trade to get out of this activity.^{18,19} She thought motherhood was the artistic culmination of a work that would be bequeathed to posterity. Montseny advocated the creation of a close mother-child bond, which benefited from breastfeeding. One of the achievements within her ministry was the enactment of an abortion bill.¹⁹⁻²¹

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), paralyzed all the labor and civil rights obtained for women. It should be noted that at the end of the war, Spain was under the command of a dictatorial government. This new situation led to the repeal of laws, such as divorce (September 1939).^{20,21} A new period began in the history



Figure 1. Shoemaking Workshop (1920), Lluçmajor (Palma de Majorca, Spain).¹⁴

of Spain in which the woman was relegated to the home and in the care of the children, losing much of the rights achieved thus far.²² At this stage, the Women's Section, a political organization of the prevailing regime, disseminated and strengthened the secondary role of women.^{4,16,23}

Second feminism

During the years of the dictatorship, all the egalitarian policies developed by the previous government were annulled.^{15,20} Women's work was associated with an unfavorable family socio-economic situation, an issue which was linked to the neglect of children. The Women's Section, promoted by the prevailing political regime, was responsible for training women in motherhood, child-breastfeeding, and submission to men.²² Women remained out of the workforce during this time until after the 1960s, when they began to return, which was motivated by the great need for labor in the country. This situation caused women not to engage exclusively in homecare and breastfeeding, which, in turn, led to an increase in artificial breastfeeding.^{23,24}

On the other hand, in Europe during the late 1940s and 1950s, movements emerged that embraced the ideas of Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan. These thinkers tried to eliminate the false belief that the woman felt totally realized in her role as wife and mother.^{25,26} They not only sought women's equality with men, but also recognized the particular needs of men, but with identical opportunities for development.^{15,25} (Figure 2) Simone de Beauvoir's *"The Second Sex"* (1949) was banned in Spain until 1962. In it, motherhood was recognized as a place of male domination, even considering a risk to women, because by breastfeeding their newborns, they did so to the detriment of



Figure 2. Ladies walking alone along the Gran Vía de Madrid, Spain (1953).¹⁴

their own lives.²⁶ It showed that inequality was a cultural construct and femininity somewhat artificial. Additionally, education was considered to be an essential tool for achieving economic liberation and independence.^{15,26}

1975 was declared the International Year of Women by the UN, coinciding with the end of the Spanish dictatorship and the beginning of the Democratic Transition.²⁷ In fact, it brought visibility to the feminist movement, within a context of very profound political and cultural change in the country. Thus, a change of the prevailing patriarchal order and social connotations of decades past was promoted.²⁴ During this time, the figure of Lidia Falcón O'Neill was of importance. O'Neill suffered significant reprisals for her liberal and political ideas during the years of dictatorship that Spain lived and was the driving force behind Barcelona's feminist collective in 1976. That same year, together with Carmen Alcalde, writer and journalist, they created the magazine *Feminist Vindication*. These women argued that female emancipation was linked to the rejection of motherhood.²²⁻²⁴ In 1977, Lidia Falcón founded the Revolutionary Feminist Organization. This led to the creation of the Feminist Party of Spain and in future years, it would gain broad social support.²⁴

During the years 1976 and 1978, feminist movements demanded the right to the free use of contraceptives along with the decriminalization of abortion and adultery. The 1978 Constitution was a major step forward for social, political, and cultural development, where equal rights between men and women are recognized. The right to healthcare was also included.^{15,24} At the time of 1983, the Women's Institute would be created. This was an official recognition to end female discrimination and promote gender equality.^{24,25} The legalization of contraception and the new decriminalization of abortion would arrive in Spain in 1985. Additionally, this brought about changes in the marital relationship and the role of mother.²² Unfortunately, this led to the abandonment of breastfeeding and led to a greater boom in artificial breastfeeding.^{24,25}

In 1989 the French feminist movement caused unease among women. This was because the female population did not identify with the ideas of motherhood that this movement enacted, leading the efforts of women, childcare, and breastfeeding to be devalued.²⁵

Due to the influence of sociocultural factors and liberal movements during the 1970s and 1980s, there was a widespread decline in breastfeeding worldwide. This led WHO and UNICEF to develop measures to promote breastfeeding to improve the health of mother and infants.^{28,29}

Third feminism

The feminist movement of the early 21st century aims to empower women in search of gender equality. It focuses efforts on eradicating gender-based violence, prostitution, and human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In short, it seeks the autonomy of women and men in all dimensions.¹⁵

It is worth noting the figure of Gloria Steinem, feminist journalist and writer, who has reaffirmed the capacity for

equality between men and women. She focuses her concern on combating discrimination and identifying elements that underpin the subordination of women, such as marriage.²² This refers to the existence of significant changes at the legislative level in the 21st century, which support such developments.^{4,15}

Another movement that has been of importance is the eco-feminist movement, created by the sociologist Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1970 and is currently still active today. This movement argues that motherhood implies a return to mammalian status. This considers breastfeeding as a reunion with one's own body.^{29,30} Additionally, this is part of the social movement that links environmentalism and feminism. In this way, women return to the principles of natural care, far from industrialized society.³⁰

Nonetheless, during the first decade of the 21st century in Spain, changes have been promoted by the government in biopolitics related to breastfeeding.^{10,12} In addition, the involvement of health professionals and international bodies in relation to maternity has increased.¹⁰⁻¹² All of them consider breastfeeding as an ideal biological process during the development of the newborn. Breast milk being the best source of nutrition for the infant.¹¹ WHO recommendations even indicate that breastfeeding should begin within the first hour of life.¹¹ At this time, the first reactive period occurs in the newborn, which enhances the mother-child bond.^{12,31} It also supports exclusive maternal feeding during the first six months of life, being able to incorporate a complementary diet into the breastfeeding.^{31,32}

In order to comply with these criteria, Spanish law applied the Labour Prevention Regulation (2009) which aimed to improve the care of pregnant and nursing women. The objective of this ordinance is to promote the improvement of health and safety at work, modifying the activity during these stages and even promoting work leave.³³

The incorporation of women into education has facilitated and enhanced access to the world of work. However, this has, in some circumstances, delayed and altered motherhood for many women.³⁴ In Spain, this situation is regulated by a Royal Decree-Law, which specifies urgent measures to ensure equal opportunities between women and men relating to employment and occupation.³³ Thus, article 28 of that law governs equal pay on grounds of gender to be paid for the benefit of a worker. It even modifies the maternity leave, with the biological mother and father sharing the rest periods after birth. These legislative reforms have been taking place since April 2019, continuing in 2020 and ending in January 2021. On that date, the law will allow each parent will enjoy equal period of suspension of the employment contract for the care of newborns.^{33,34}

Nowadays, motherhood has become more of an option than an obligation. Additionally, women have less pressure to have children at a certain age and the styles of parenting have changed as well.^{22,34} Women can even opt for an upbringing in which the role of the father does not exist, a common reality in the 21st century.³⁵ In addition, there are women-led breastfeeding support groups in which other mothers are taught, accompanied, and assisted in the process of caring for and breastfeeding their

children. These resources, together with the support of healthcare professionals, provide support and information to women who request breastfeeding.^{32,35,36}

LM is a complex phenomenon influenced by demographic, biological, social, and psychological factors, which have changed throughout history. For this reason, they have evolved with successive feminist movements.³ The history of the LM is parallel to the beginning of humanity and its benefits have been documented over time.^{5,7}

For centuries, women have been relegated exclusively to the care of the home under the command of the man. Due to the search for female freedom and independence, feminist movements have emerged that seek recognition of gender peculiarity and women's job development.^{3,15}

In the last decades of the 19th century, a feminist movement appeared that sought equal civil rights for both sexes. It even tried to offer social improvements for more disadvantaged women and children.⁵ An equal education was also demanded with measures to improve conditions during maternity, postpartum and breastfeeding.^{3,5}

During the first decades of the twentieth century in Spain, a Catholic and conservative morality was maintained, which was a reduction of the social, cultural, and political freedom of women as citizens.^{15,16} Consequently, demands for women's educational and labor equality took full force at the social and political level.¹⁵ Due to the working hours of women, breastfeeding and childcare were difficult.⁶ However, female reproduction still played an important role in Spanish culture and it was supported during the early years of the twentieth century by Spanish laws. These laws encouraged the care of the mother and the feeding of her children.⁶

In the 1930s, significant improvements were made to women's freedom.¹⁷ Relevant social positions in politics were reached along with, education and health improvements, which in turn, improved their socio-cultural situation.^{20,21} However, despite these significant achievements in equality for women, The Civil War (1936-1939), diminished the improvements achieved so far for the female gender.²⁰ After the end of the war, a dictatorship present until the 1970s was established in Spain. This new regime fostered patriarchy and religious ideologies on a social level, aided by feminist associations belonging to the dictatorial state. These instructed the woman by enhancing her role as mother and relegating her again, to the home under the command of man. The regime even promoted the increase in offspring, which was at least four children per family.^{15,24}

In this first generation of feminism, the labor barrier of women is broken, allowing the incorporation of the same one to the work. This fact is promoted by legislative reforms that encourage freedom of pay and, which make the family sphere compatible with the world of work, without losing the status of mother. With the advent of the Civil War, there is a regression in the achievements of women so far, making this a turning point.¹³

In the international framework, the creation of the International Milk League in 1956, an organization that tried to spread the

benefits and interest in the maintenance of breastfeeding, stood out.³⁰ Possibly motivated by the abandonment of this practice in Europe, coinciding with the end of the Second World War (1945).^{3,15}

One of the great social advances in the 1960s in Spain, was a change in the situation of women, who began to be incorporated into the workforce. This led to changes in the composition of gender roles and responsibilities at home.¹⁵ After the end of the dictatorship in 1975, strategies were promoted towards a free sexuality for the female figure, and even the control of one's own body. In addition, family planning services and even shelters for abused women were created. Social and labor reforms were enacted, accompanied by political demands.^{24,27}

Women therefore stopped orienting themselves towards family life and began to do so towards the labor market. This change led to important social transformations and adaptation to this new social order (family and paid work).^{15,24}

During the 70s and 80s in Spain, feminist publications were released that promoted the idea of dispensing with motherhood so that women could achieve their true emancipation and equality with men.²⁷ Consequently, breastfeeding was relegated to the background for the mother, who sought to become a working woman.²⁵ This led to the implementation by international and governmental agencies of measures to promote and protect breastfeeding.⁸

In this second feminism, changes regarding women's freedom were closely related to cultural, political, and labor contexts, which have determined female visibility in this period.²⁵ In addition, the different social classes in which women were immersed were decisive for the continuation, or not, of breastfeeding.²⁹ It was therefore necessary for policies to be promoted at the international level in favor of breastfeeding.²⁷

In Spain, women since the 1990s have claimed a "return to nature", through the drive of on-demand breastfeeding, the bedding (a practice in which children sleep in the same bed as parents), and even the use of washable diapers to protect the planet. This thought is framed in the eco-feminist current, which persists today.^{30,35}

With the beginning of the 21st century, Spain creates the observatory of equal opportunities between women and men. Which aims to advise, analyze, evaluate, and disseminate information in relation to cross-cutting policies.³⁷ In addition, it promotes the participation of women in all social, political, health, and educational fields on an equal footing.^{35,37}

At the year 2010, lactivism resurfaced in Spanish public opinion with movements establishing networks of cooperation, altruism, and mutual solidarity between breastfeeding mothers.³⁸ (Figure 3) This rebirth led to the union of pro-breastfeeding activists, leading to different breastfeeding support groups.^{35,38} Women involved in this movement share the idea that offspring can be raised and cared for within the current capitalist system.^{32,38}

On the contrary, both Elisabeth Badinter and Edurne Uriarte agree that the naturalistic model of mother-child symbiosis excludes the father from the relationship.⁴⁰ In this sense, it frees the male figure from domestic tasks and the care of offspring.⁴¹



Figure 3. Mothers breastfeeding the Alamillo Park (2017).³⁹

Moreover, the defense and promotion of breastfeeding is in fact a setback in returning women to the home.⁴²

Some studies show that taking on the role of primary caregivers in the home involves abandoning, temporarily or definitively, the labor market. Additionally, the most frequent factor in combining both jobs (work and family) is the availability of an informal support network that helps to care for.³⁴⁻³⁶

With the incorporation of women into the labor market in the 21st century, new forms of family emerge, which implies a change in the configuration of the home and the role of couple.⁴³ By having the public powers legislate, members of the domestic unit are able to continue working while maintaining their social and family lives during the rearing of their offspring.^{33,34,44} Additionally, the availability of health professionals and breastfeeding support groups aids in helping women during the upbringing of their children. These pillars are free from stigmas or judgments that generate negative feelings for the breastfeeding woman; always taking into account the socio-cultural environment in which they develop.^{25,36,45}

CONCLUSION

The results of this research show that the feminist movement has been present throughout history, influencing the development, promotion, and maintenance of breastfeeding.

However, the factors involved in the loss of his hegemony as an exclusive process of feeding the newborn were several: 1) sociological changes in industrial society throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; (2) incorporation of women into wage labor; (3) economic interests arising from the marketing of food substitutes; (4) the active participation of health professionals, strong advocates of scientific motherhood; and 5) the re-emergence, reform, and creation of formal and informal laws, organizations and associations that promote gender equality, support for women in the process of gestation and lactation, and parents in fostering.

Today, being a mother is not a simple task, because sometimes it is not easy to conceive, to have a respected birth, to breastfeed where and when a mother wants, and to combine parenting and employment. Women during maternity have to overcome great obstacles, one of which is the labor market.

Therefore, the feminist movement of the 21st century claims an emancipatory motherhood, where women can decide whether or not to have offspring, and if they aspire to it, they can choose how to raise their lineage.

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