

INTERGENERATIONAL SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES¹

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ABSTRACT. The different forms of behavior among generations influence the quality of family relationships, which allow the individual to build, to develop and to achieve himself as a social being. This study aimed to identify the experience of the grandmothers and the mothers of families of children with intellectual disabilities, regarding their everyday life, the support and the intergenerationality practices. The exploratory study of qualitative approach had the participation of six mothers and grandmothers of six children / adolescents with intellectual disabilities. Semi-structured interviews scripts were used to collect the data. The main results showed that support practices exercised within the family are part of the grandparents' daily lives and represent an important source of support for mothers and their grandchildren. In addition, the study pointed out the importance of the intergenerational relationships in view of the benefits produced by the same for both the generations involved. Considering the heterogeneity of Brazilian families, yet it is pointed out to the need for further intergenerational studies that focus on the opinion of different generations in different locations and contexts.

Keywords: Relations among generations; grandmothers; intellectual disabilities.

APOIO INTERGERACIONAL EM FAMÍLIAS COM CRIANÇAS COM DEFICIÊNCIA

RESUMO. As distintas formas de comportamento entre as gerações influenciam a qualidade das relações familiares, as quais permitem que o indivíduo se construa, desenvolva-se e se realize como um ser social. Neste artigo, objetivou-se identificar a experiência de avós e de mães de famílias de crianças com deficiência intelectual, acerca do cotidiano, das práticas de apoio e da intergeracionalidade. O estudo exploratório de abordagem qualitativa contou com a participação de seis mães e seis avós de crianças/adolescentes com deficiência intelectual. Para a coleta de dados, foram utilizados roteiros de entrevistas semiestruturadas. Os principais resultados apontaram que as práticas de apoio exercidas no contexto familiar integram o cotidiano das avós e representam importante fonte de apoio às mães e aos netos. Além disso, o estudo apontou a importância dos relacionamentos intergeracionais, tendo em vista os benefícios por eles produzidos para ambas as gerações envolvidas. Considerando-se a heterogeneidade das famílias brasileiras, aponta-se ainda para a necessidade de estudos intergeracionais que focalizem a opinião de diferentes gerações em localidades e contextos distintos.

Palavras-chave: Relações entre gerações; avós; deficiência mental.

APOYO INTERGENERACIONAL EN LAS FAMILIAS CON NIÑOS CON DISCAPACIDADES

RESUMEN. The different forms of behavior among generations influence the quality of family relationships, which allow the individual to build, to develop and to achieve himself as a social being. This study aimed to identify the experience of the grandmothers and the mothers of families of children with intellectual disabilities, regarding their everyday life, the support and the intergenerationality practices. The exploratory study of qualitative approach had the participation of six mothers and grandmothers of six children /

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adolescents with intellectual disabilities. Semi-structured interviews scripts were used to collect the data. The main results showed that support practices exercised within the family are part of the grandparents' daily lives and represent an important source of support for mothers and their grandchildren. In addition, the study pointed out the importance of the intergenerational relationships in view of the benefits produced by the same for both the generations involved. Considering the heterogeneity of Brazilian families, yet it is pointed out to the need for further intergenerational studies that focus on the opinion of different generations in different locations and contexts.

Palabras-clave: Relaciones entre generaciones; abuelas; discapacidad mental.

The different forms of behavior among the generations influence the quality of family relationships, which allow the individual to build, to develop and to achieve himself as a social being. It is through these relationships that the links are established and different roles are played. These roles, assumed by each member of the family, govern the intergenerational relationships and they are responsible for creating the coherence among the group and the bonds that are established within it (Heredia, Casara, & Cortelletti, 2007).

Contemporary research has described that the relationships among generations are influenced by issues such as age and gender; socioeconomic variables; educational level; geographical proximity and contact frequency; psychological compatibility and personality characteristics; ethnic and cultural diversity, among others. Thus, to understand the contemporary intergenerational relationships, one must consider the diversity and the context in which the relationship is grounded, family experiences, among others (Stelle, Fruhauf, Orel, & Landry-Meyer, 2010; Herédia et al., 2007).

The family system, by its long duration and by its level of interrelation, can be considered the most important in the individuals lives. If we also consider the relationship between generations, we can say that this system has continuity and a level of complexity that challenge our investigations on the subject (Cervený & Berthoud, 2002, p. 18).

In view of the complexity and importance of this issue, recent studies seek to broaden the understanding on development and the family adaptation processes through intergenerational focus on Brazilian reality of families of children with and without disabilities (Araújo & Dias, 2002; Dias & Silva, 2003;

Falcão & Solomão, 2005; Grisante & Aiello, 2012; Gvozđ & Dellaroza, 2012; Herédia et al., 2007; Matsukura & Oliveira, 2010; Matsukura & Yamashiro, 2012; Ruschel & Castro, 1998).

Dessen and Braz (2000) in a study that involved the participation of 15 fathers and 15 mothers living in the Federal District, for the purpose of describing the changes in the support network of families due to the birth of children, indicate that in the period from the birth of a child with typical development, the grandmothers present themselves as a significant source of support and care for mothers and for the grandson family. Thus, according to the authors, as the parents as the mothers appreciate the different types of assistance that grandmothers provide to family and they highlight the psychological support, the concern, the financial and material assistance and the contribution arising through their life experiences when facing and managing difficult situations.

In the case of families of children with disabilities, although the lack of intergenerational studies that address the topic with such families is evident, it is known that the particular characteristics, experienced by the same, impact on the quality and on the quantity of interaction established by their members (Lee & Gardner, 2010; Matsukura & Yamashiro, 2012; Mirfin-Veitch, Bray, & Watson, 1997; Mitchell, 2007; Ravindram & Rempel, 2010).

In past decades, people with disabilities were stigmatized and not seen in public, usually living within an institution. Hence, who did not have in his family a disabled person was deprived of the contact and of the experience with this reality, as is the case of a significant portion of the grandparents of the present generation, who have acquired little knowledge and/or experience with disability children (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001).

However, although the attitude of the society has changed significantly regarding the disability, it is possible that many grandparents do not consider or are unprepared for the possibility of having caring experience when dealing with a disabled child (Woodbridge, Buys, & Miller, 2011). Nevertheless, the literature has shown that the grandmothers play an important and vital role in supporting mothers and other family members related to the practical, financial, emotional and affective support (Katz & Kessel, 2002; Lee & Gardner, 2010; Matsukura & Yamashiro, 2012; Mitchell, 2007; Ravindran & Rempel, 2010; Woodbridge et al., 2011).

Grisante and Aiello (2012) conducted an intergenerational study, of a qualitative approach, which aimed to describe patterns of interaction established among a child with Down Syndrome and his families. With the participation of a family consisting of the father, the mother, an older daughter (11 years), a child with Down syndrome (seven years) and the maternal grandmother, it was observed, from the perspective of the father and the mother, that the social support comes from the family members, especially the maternal grandparents, from their own children and from the husband or the wife; in turn, from the perspective of the grandmother, the husband, the daughters and the neighbors are the key people to support them. From these results, it is observed that in families of children with disabilities the social support comes mainly from their own relatives. In addition, there is the presence and the assistance provided by the maternal grandmother to the family.

Matsukura and Yamashiro (2012), in a study that involved the participation of grandmothers, mothers and siblings of children with physical disorders, found that the mothers of these children often feel overwhelmed by the demands of caring for their child with disabilities and that grandmothers seem to alleviate this burden as providing support not only to their own mothers, but also to their grandchildren.

Katz and Kessel (2002) investigated the perceptions and beliefs of grandparents in relation to the involvement in the care of the grandchildren. The authors noted that the quality and quantity of grandparents interaction

in the lives of his grandson with disabilities were determined by the intergenerational dynamics established among the children grandparents and parents.

Lee and Gardner (2010), through a literature review, pointed out that over time the grandparents of children with disabilities become involved in the family by providing practical and emotional support. However, their support and involvement in relation to the family is influenced by the proximity among households and the grandparents' level of understanding about the disabled grandson.

According to Herédia et al. (2007), the older generation attaches great value to the family and, due to the own old age characteristics, seeks a greater strengthening of the relationships with the family members as well as a way to meet the need for companionship and attention. Thus, given the importance of the intergenerational relationships for all involved, and given the complexities and specificities present in the daily life of these relationships, the present study aimed to identify the experience of grandmothers and mothers of families of children with intellectual disabilities related to the daily life, the support practices and the intergenerationality.

METHOD

This was an exploratory and a qualitative approach study.

Participants

Six mothers and six grandmothers of children/adolescents with intellectual disability were the participants of this study, who were linked to special and/or regular schools, located in a city in the state of São Paulo (Brazil).

As inclusion criteria of the participants, the mothers should live with their children and the grandparents should reside in the same city as the mothers.

Measuring Instruments

Semistructured interviews scripts

Two scripts of semistructured interviews designed to grandmothers and mothers of

children with intellectual disabilities were developed.

The interviews scripts used with the grandmothers had divisions. The first part was concerning the own grandmother; the second, the mother of his grandchildren (her daughter or her daughter in law); and the last, to her grandchildren (with intellectual disabilities or with a typical developing).

Similarly, the interviews scripts for mothers the questions were divided into three major themes: the first referring to the own mother; the second, to their children; and the last, to the grandmother who was a participant of this study.

Family Identification Questionnaire

It was created with the goal of obtaining personal data of the survey participants, such as name, age, occupation and the level of education, and also information about the diagnosis of children with disabilities.

Local

The study was conducted in a town in the state of São Paulo (Brazil). The data collection was done in the participants homes. It was contacted the APAE (Associação de Pais e Amigos dos Excepcionais - Association of Parents and Friends of Exceptional Children), in the municipal area, in order to get in touch with these families.

Ethical Procedures

The research proposal was submitted and approved by the Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa com Seres Humanos da Universidade Federal de São Carlos - UFSCAR - Ethics Committee on Human Research of the Federal University of São Carlos - (Opinion No. 186/2011).

After the approval from the Ethics Committee and from the permission of institutions for the entry of the researcher, the study participants were contacted and informed about the objectives and the research stages. Then, both mothers and grandmothers, who were participants of this study, signed the free consent form.

Data Collection

At the moment the six families were located, they were contacted in order to initiate

the data collection. The days, times and locations were previously combined with the participants according to their preference. All families have chosen to respond to the survey instruments in their own homes.

Each family member had the opportunity to respond his interview alone, without the presence of others. It is noteworthy that the participation of only grandmothers was established according to the mothers' indication who should indicate a grandparent (among the maternal and the paternal). So, the grandparents were not indicated by them.

The duration of the interviews with the mothers was about 20-45 minutes and with the grandparents, about 25-55 minutes.

Data Analysis

It was used the technique of the Collective Subject Discourse - CSD (Lefèvre & Lefèvre, 2005, 2010) for the analysis of the semistructured interviews. Such a technique has been developed since the late 1990s for research on social representations. This method provides that, through a single speech, the community opinion is exposed, without, however, mischaracterizes the qualitative nature of each gathered and analyzed evidence for the composition of this collective speech. Thus, it was sought to recover, through the opinion of the participants, the attributes of the collective dimension which is in each speech (Lefèvre & Lefèvre, 2005, 2010). So, after all the evidence has been collected, a "meeting in speech-synthesis of the content and arguments that shape these similar opinions" (Lefèvre & Lefèvre, 2010, p. 17) was held. In this manner, the technique consists of a series of operations on the collected speeches in order to develop collective evidences from the significant literal strata, of similar meaning, from the different reported discourses.

Thus, the data obtained in this study were analyzed by means of the full transcriptions of the interviews, whose contents were grouped, and categorized, identifying representative themes in the participants speeches and building common representative discourses of each group (mothers and grandmothers) considering the goals that have been proposed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participants Characterization

Five of the participants were maternal grandparents and only one was paternal. The ages of the them ranged from 44 to 90 years. All reported being housewives, except for one participant. On the level of education, there was variation among no studies and to have completed the primary education. About marital status, three grandparents reported being married, and two were widows and one was divorced. In addition, all reported having religion.

With respect to the participating mothers' age, it ranged among 26 and 45 years, having two to three children. About marital status, four mothers were living with the parents' children and two were single. In addition, all reported having religion.

On occupation, four mothers reported having a assistance job outside the home and two reported being housewives. Regarding the level of education, one of the mothers stated she had not studied and the education level of the others ranged from having studied until the 2nd grade of elementary school and having completed high school.

On the diagnosis of children / adolescents belonging to the IGD (Intergenerational Dialogue Group), two had a diagnosis of Down syndrome and four of Intellectual Non-Specific Disability. Importantly, though, that these children / adolescents with disabilities are represented here by "D", when the references to them are identified in the responses of the participants.

Daily Life, Supporting Practices and Intergenerational Relationships

The family is a system in constant transformation, which evolves in its development as a unit while ensuring the differentiation of its members. Thus, throughout the family life cycle there is the life cycle of each individual member, which is in a complex interdependence. In this sense, one can say that, like other family members, the elderly experiences, along his cycle of individual and family life, the loss and the gain of new roles (Cerveny & Berthoud, 2002).

From this perspective, becoming a grandmother (or a grandfather) implies the acquisition of new roles to be played in the

family context. On the subject, the participants' grandmothers in this study, when expressing their opinion about the role they play in the family, emphasize that the assistance to the mothers and to the grandchildren, as observed with the CSD below:

They can be much time here at home; I help to take care of everything. D. comes, stays here, then we do what we can. If we can help, we help. Then I see well, I see myself well along with them, when they come home, it's a joy, they consider me too, we have a beautiful friendship. (Grandparents CSD, "Role in the family as a whole" category).

It is also observed that the speech of the participants' mothers in this study confirms the grandmothers' view about their role in the family; they also highlight the importance of the help given by them in their daily lives, as verified by the CSD presented below:

It's a very important mother, grandmother and friend role who advise us. It is a very good mom role, a big momma, who loves the grandchildren, who is so affectionate with them. Ah! She is everything, good for my family, she is my safe port, the bedrock. Since childhood, I see her role as a mother, father and head of the house, then she is everything to us. She is an example; she taught me everything, so I got her as an example. When I need something, or when I need a little talk, I talk to her, then she is. (Mothers CSD, "Role of mother, grandmother, friend and as an example" category).

From the mothers' reports, it is observed the important role that grandmothers play in the families lives, for what they represent and also for providing different types of support. However, the grandmothers reveal that the role played by them was not always the same and they point to the birth of the grandchild with disabilities as the factor that made them rethink this role, as described in the following:

Ah! Because we have to be more careful, don't we? If he comes home we have to pay attention if he goes to his house or if he goes to another place, because there are times that he

does not think. If he's on the street and sees a car with the door open, he goes in, comes out... So we change, because we wonder, we feel pity because to have a child like this, you know? Little problems like these we have to face. Then I changed to help more them, did you understand? All he needs I help him. I help in the possible and the impossible. Oh, and I think that I changed because I melt for him (grandson with disabilities). I like, for sure, my oldest grandson, he is all good, but to the D. I'm especially careful, I do want to bring him everywhere, I always go out with him, without fear life, sometimes I am asked about something related to him, we still do not know the answer, but I am not ashamed of him, no way. (Grandmothers CSD, "The grandmother role exercised previously and now modified" category).

The present study grandmothers' considerations add to the findings of Woodbridge et al. (2011), which show that after passing through the shock and disbelief of the grandchild with disabilities diagnosis, the grandmothers note that their primary role is to be present, be positive and to help the son and the grandson with disabilities the way they can. Thus, according to the authors, although the grandson deficiency does not seem to change the drastically grandmother (grandfather) role, the support provided to the family seems to gain a new dimension as after the grandson birth, it passes to play an integral part of his identity.

Such a statement confirms the judgment by the children with intellectual disabilities grandmothers who are participating in this study, since, when talking about possible changes in their role as grandmothers after the birth of their grandchild with disabilities, they highlighted that these support practices exercised in the family context were further intensified. In addition to this possible change, Woodbridge et al. (2011) observed that this experience has changed the grandparents own attitudes in their study, as they are less impatient and more tolerant. It is observed through the following CSD, whose such attributes were also cited by the grandmothers in this study:

I think that everything God does is well done, then you have to accept because it is God's will and nothing in this world happens without God's will. Then, this situation taught me to believe more that God is good and that his disability for me not ... he remained my beloved grandson, there is thing much harder out there, of course I wish he was reading, it is sad for us, but I know there are worse thing than this and he's my grandson and over, I didn't feel unhappy due to this situation. His birth also taught that we have to be more patience. More patience, more tranquility to talk to him, to give more attention, to give more attention because he is special. Ah, this situation teaches us how to live. It teaches how to live. (Grandparents CSD, "learning's acquired with the birth of a grandchild with disability" category).

It is observed that the reference to faith and religiosity emerges as an important element in both as learning as a tool for coping with the situation. On the subject, in a study conducted in Israel by Katz and Kessel (2002), the participants grandmothers when talking about the birth of grandchild with disabilities state the belief that the sins of the ancestors bring punishment over seven generations, moreover they also report that such a birth "came from above".

Although the context of the life of the Israeli grandmothers, their culture and their religion are considerably different from those experienced by Brazilian grandmothers, there are the hypothesis that regardless of race or creed, the results of this study reinforce notes about how the religious beliefs mediate the understanding, the coping and the experience handling of having a grandchild with a disability. Future studies addressing the question of the role of different beliefs and / or religiosity and different cultures may lead to an increase in the knowledge of the adaptation processes and care in these families.

Still on the grandchildren, the children with disabilities grandmothers who are participating in this study reported changes in the family after his birth:

Ah! There was change, we had to be more caring, more concern, more care. Since he was little we had to help

more. We need to pay more attention, he cannot be alone most of the time. So we had to be more careful with him, because everything we will talk, we must be more careful in speech. About the domestic disputes, we are more care due to him and the best change is that they (children parents) used to have more fights, they fight yet, but it diminished a little. (Grandmothers CSD, "Increased tenderness, care and decreased fights" category).

This discourse reinforces the findings of Katz and Kessel (2002), who report that many grandmothers' participants in their study cited as the birth of a grandchild with a disability changed the lives of families in different ways. The authors also state that sociocultural factors such as the dynamics and the past family experiences appear to determine whether the disability is perceived as a source of challenges and emotional maturation or as a source of disability and despair.

Carter and McGoldrick (1995) argue that the birth of a child or the death of a family member, for example, generate a "point of transition" (p. 11) in the family life cycle that is marked by stresses capable of creating disruptions in this cycle as well as produce other changes in the family system. Thus, from the results of this study, it has been hypothesized that the stress generated by this "transition point" seems to be exacerbated in the case of the birth of a child with disabilities.

Even though, comparative aspects about the support received by families were not focused in this paper, some intergenerational studies have shown that the support from grandmothers of children with disabilities is more common than that from friends or other relatives. The emotional support offered has greater influence on the parents' psychological adjustment and also reduces the parental stress (Trute, Worthington, & Hiebert-Murphy, 2008).

It was found, by means of mothers CSD, how the assistance provided by the grandmothers help in their daily routine:

She helps, whenever I need her to stay with D. or the youngest, she always does. D. sometimes goes there, she gives him a bath, care for him, does what she can and what she cannot. So, she's always helping. Especially

because I work so when I'm not at home she's my lookout, she gets on top of these kids down and up, taking care of my children. (Mothers CSD, "Help in the care of the grandchildren" category).

Besides the major source of help that grandmothers represent to the mothers daily routine, we could observe that such help can be a mitigating to the maternal stress, as evidenced by the speech of mothers as they express the opinion on this question.

It diminishes greatly. Sometimes I get stressed here at home because all the responsibilities fall on me. But when I do not have money to pay my rent, she pays my rent, she pays my electric power and water, got it? So if it did not so, I went crazy, because sometimes I'm with that stress and I cannot say such a thing, then I go toward her, start talking and she inspires me or since I'm half busy, the stress diminishes, it passes, you know? Because I've already to pay the psychiatrist, then you imagine if I had not this help from her? Then, her help really relieves the stress. (Mothers CSD, "The help provided by grandmothers' decreases maternal stress, especially financial and emotional help" category).

On the subject, Trute et al. (2008), in a comparative study that focused on maternal and paternal grandmothers and grandfathers, it points out that the children with disabilities grandmothers are often more supportive than the grandfathers and that, furthermore, the maternal ones offer more help than the paternal ones. In the present study, no grandfather was nominated for participation and just one paternal grandmother was indicated; still many variables may be involved in the selection/indication, it is assumed that issues relating to the culture and the role of women in families are important components in the support practices and also in the demands presented to the grandmothers. Future studies that use quantitative approach and specific tools for a more accurate verification of this dimension should help to the advance understanding of these support processes in different types of family situations and realities.

In relation to the paternal grandmothers in this study, only one was indicated for participation. Although several motivations for this choice occurred, it presents the hypothesis that the indications given by Trute et al. (2008) about the greater support provided by grandmothers can also be verified on the Brazilian reality. However, it is noted that the understanding on this process needs to be contextualized more broadly, insofar as the support offering arises in situations where it is expected, accepted as well as it implies a two way relationship (Vaux, 1990). Thus, it is necessary to consider cultural relationship patterns, specificities, among other factors, and not just understand these differences in a tight way.

Still on the support practices exercised by grandmothers to the families, what is observed in the present study is that children with disabilities mothers assistance they believed that grandmothers put aside their own interests to help the family, as can be seen by the following CSD:

She sometimes leaves. Because sometimes she has to solve her stuff and she is with them, not only with the D, but with the other grandchildren, so she leaves aside a little of her. And she's in need, poor woman, to do a knee surgery, so she's saving a buck, then I said that the children wanted a computer, then she took a significant bite of her money, which was saved to pay for the surgery, to buy the computer, then to my family she does everything. (Mothers CSD, "Grandmothers leave personal issues to help the family, especially to care and to give financial assistance to the children" category).

It is important that new studies deepen the perception of parents (second generation) on what to expect from the grandparents and what kind of evaluation they have in relation to receiving or recognizing the efforts coming from the third generation, in that, as shown by some studies on the role of social support under stress conditions, only the support that is perceived / recognized and that provides satisfaction and to the recipient is involved in the mediation among the health, well-being and stress measures (Matsukura, Marturano, Oishi, & Borasche, 2007). Thus, the

recognition of the assistance provided and the satisfaction with the same are important components for the mediation process which is possible by social support occurrence. Better understand these factors in order to consider the intergenerationality should contribute to the interventions and public policies advancement focused on the life quality and to the families health in general, and specifically, the families with children with disabilities.

Another dimension of the type of support provided by the grandmothers was observed in this study, which demonstrated that besides putting the children and grandchildren family as a priority over their own affairs, financial assistance is also provided, as verified by the CSD mothers presented earlier. This finding about the kind of support arising from grandmothers was also identified in the study of Woodbridge et al. (2011), which indicate that despite the economic situation of the users, they help the grandson family at the time of the unexpected costs associated with a child with disabilities.

In contrast, a review of intergenerational studies conducted by Mitchell (2007) revealed that some authors have questioned the need for grandmothers to receive financial assistance by granting the family. However, the studies cited by the author were held in the city of London, England, which has several differences compared to the Brazilian reality. Thus, we present the hypothesis that the possibility of families to financially pay grandmothers for the help offered is something disparate related to the economic condition experienced by most Brazilian families, especially those whose family situation and economic patterns are similar to the participating families in this study. Furthermore, it has been further hypothesized that the conceptions permeated in such an attitude would be socially unacceptable and inconceivable in the reality and the culture of such Brazilian families.

When speaking on the characteristics and complexities of the intergenerational relationships, national and international studies have emphasized the benefits that such interactions bring to those involved in all age groups (Heredia et al., 2007; Matsukura & Yamashiro, 2012; Stelle et al, 2012).

The following presents the description made by the participating grandmothers in this

study about the relationship they have with their grandchildren mother, i.e., their daughters or daughters-in-law who also participated in the study: *It's good, we understand each other well, then it is very good, great.* (Grandmothers CSD, "The relationship with the mother is described in a positive way" category).

When she was a child we got along very well, I liked our relationship, now after she married, she has her life, we do not come much more into detail of her life, because it's not very good at getting in our children's lives. But she is also very quietly, I wanted so much that she was a talkative girl, to tell me everything, you know? Ah, but it's nice, it is not a bad thing, though I miss it and I think she misses it too, but there is just a barrier between us, you know? Mother and daughter. I think I'm too hard on her, so she sees me as a sergeant, you know? (Grandmothers CSD, "The relationship with the mother is described positively, but with restrictions" category).

First, we discussed a lot, I discuss for every little thing with her, but only after I stopped, then I stopped because I know she is kind a depressing, so I stopped arguing, because I argued a lot with her, whatever she did, anything, I ever got angry, then I changed a bit. (Grandmothers CSD, "The relationship with grandmothers is described to highlight the conflicts" category).

In line with the discourses presented above, it is observed that the following speech of the participating mothers in this study also highlights the positive characteristics and the faced difficulties in the relationship between the two generations: - *Well, it is so isolated, I miss my mother, you know? I've always been like that, because she is more attached to my sister.* (Mothers CSD, "The relationship with grandmothers is described to highlight conflicts" category).

For me it's great, I think I have nothing to say. The communication is good, we communicate ourselves well, we understand ourselves well, we talk, sometimes she speaks of her problems there, I speak of my here, then it is good, very good, I always go there to

visit her that she is already old, I've lived with her as well. But I am very closed, my problem is this, but the essential, that I think I can speak about, I do. So, I think that our interaction is good for me, but what about her opinion? (Mothers CSD, "The relationship with grandmothers is described in a positive way" category).

Similar to what was presented by the participating grandmothers and the mothers in this study, the coexistence among different age groups has been described in the literature as something beneficial to human development, although it also highlighted the existence of conflicts and difficulties (Leite, Battisti, Berlezi, & Scheuer, 2008; Matsukura & Yamashiro, 2012; Heredia et al., 2007).

Leite et al. (2008) state that the reality of the simultaneous coexistence of multiple generations under one roof goes into shock due to the difference among individuals throughout the life cycle, which may have a causative effect of intergenerational conflicts.

Nevertheless, studies show the benefits that intergenerational relationships can provide to the different individuals of the family group, for example, the support, the mutual assistance, the knowledge exchange, the reciprocity arising from the interaction and the intergenerational interaction (Araújo & Dias 2002; Gardner & Scherman, 1994; Ravindran & Rempel, 2010).

When speaking about the losses and gains of the intergenerational coexistence, Heredia et al. (2007) in a study that involved grandmothers, children and adult grandchildren of 27 families, point out the similarities and the contradictions found in the family relationships. Highlighting the gains, the authors point out that the grandmothers emphasize the affection when speaking about the family life, while the mothers highlight the help.

On losses that the coexistence among generations brings to each family member, the study shows the problems and generational conflicts, which are often caused by the disease of a family member, usually the elderly, and also by the divergence of opinions, and it concludes that the exchanges among generations occur in different degrees of intensity, depending on the interests and the needs of each individual (Heredia et al., 2007).

Thus, the report presented by the participants of the present study is consistent with the literature when highlighting the positive points and also the difficulties in the interaction among different generations. However, it should be noted that although the mothers and grandmothers of this study have also pointed to the conflicts within the relationship established among them, from the discourses about other themes are evident the mutual support and the importance that one generation is for another.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It is considered that this study responded to the proposed objectives when deepening the knowledge about intergenerational relationships among grandmothers and mothers of children with intellectual disabilities as well as to broaden the understanding of the support exchange which are established when facing the demands, to the routine and to the family everyday life.

It was also observed that the support practices exercised within the family are part of the grandmothers' daily lives. It is noteworthy that such practices represent an important source of support for mothers and also to the grandchildren, since the third generation helps both the child care and other activities of everyday life of these families.

Moreover, considering the heterogeneity of Brazilian families, and due to the fact that all the participants families of this study residing in similar suburbs located in a single city in the state of São Paulo, this work points to the need for further intergenerational studies that focus on the view of different generations, that can be performed at different locations and contexts in order to understand the reality of the families and the Brazil intergenerationality.

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