

- 🌀 **Name of the study:** Empowering aspects in the motherhood experience of women with an intellectual disability
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## Abstract

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Despite the social discourse regarding the right of people with disabilities in general, including people with intellectual disability (ID), to become parents and raise children, still lies a gap between the right to parenthood and its actual realization. As a result, there continues to be a negative policy towards the right of people with ID to become parents, and the common discourse in society regarding their parenthood includes negative stances. Most studies on parents with ID and especially mothers with ID have focused mainly on the difficulties and deficits, without considering the subjective experience of the mothers themselves. The aim of this current study was to enable the experience of the mothers with ID to be expressed, while focusing on the positive aspects.

The qualitative method was chosen and the study included 11 participants, all women diagnosed with ID or cognitive impairment, who live in the community and raise their own children. Three main themes arose from analyzing the interviews' transcript. The first theme dealt with the perception of said disability as a difficulty but not as a barrier to becoming a mother. The findings showed that the participants perceived motherhood as a natural realizable need that existed from an early age despite the stigmatic social perceptions regarding their right to be mothers. Moreover, most of the women found it difficult to explain their disability, even though they encountered struggles that derived from it.

The second theme dealt with the experience of the overlapping of two main identities in those mothers' lives: identifying as disabled and identifying as a mother. While their perception of their identity as women with disability was negative and degrading, their identity as mothers was perceived as positive and empowering. When those identities intersected, they felt distressed from the unique experience that was formed.

The third theme that was found referred to the place the extended family occupied in the maternal experience. The findings showed how the family involvement was, at times, experienced as enhancing while on other occasions was perceived as over involvement and affected their experience. This research findings points out the uniqueness of the experience of

mothers with ID in the face of their dual identities and they emphasize the need for service providers to take action in the spirit of the empowering approaches.

Key words: People with intellectual disability, Parenthood, Motherhood, Positive aspects, Intersectionality

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