

THE DEPENDENCE ON OTHERS PERSONS FOR THE AUTONOMY CONSTRUCTION OF THE ADOLESCENT FOR THE SELF-CARE

Jacira Nunes Carvalho*
Alacoque Lorenzini Erdmann**
Mary Elizabeth de Santana***

ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the stage of addiction as a necessary step for adolescent to achieve his own autonomy in the process of self-care. This is a descriptive study, with a qualitative approach, theoretically and methodologically based on the complexities described in the Grounded Theory; the research was conducted through interviews and group dynamics, with 27 participants, in four sample groups: adolescents, parents, teachers and nurses. The scenario was located in the municipality of Belém, Brazil. The category "Understanding addiction as a necessary dimension for the adolescent to acquire the autonomy in self-care" was the focus of this article, which consists in four subcategories: *Being dependent on the family as a barrier to be autonomous*; *Understanding autonomy and ability to care for themselves and make their own decisions*; *Noticing differences between subjects in the conquest of autonomy*; and, *Comparing the autonomy with maturity, security, freedom and financial independence*. The awareness of teenager autonomy occurs in different successive gradations toward self-managing life on the necessary interactions and feedbacks. When exchanging energy with the environment, the family, and other people, the adolescent sees himself dependent enough to try to experience autonomy. Thus, the subject shows himself open to experiences, and needs to go through the dependency stage in order to develop a compensatory potential of his own necessities.

Keywords: Adolescents. Personal, Autonomy. Dependence. Nursing.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period of changes and transition for the full development of the human being. The changes that were not fully acknowledged so far need to be understood, an supported by parents, teachers, relatives, friends, and health professionals – the latest eventually, during consultations – thus providing the young individual the adequate information in order to overcome this period with less damage as possible, based on the risks the teenagers are exposed⁽¹⁾.

Despite adolescence is vigorously set by psychobiological processes, it should not be considered as a group of universal phenomenon related to the growth and the somatic-mental development of the individuals, as the transformations in which adolescents go through are also a result from inherent processes from

social contexts (historical, political and economical) in which these subjects belong to⁽²⁾. Therefore, thinking the health of teenagers implies thinking the many ways of living the adolescence and life, as a whole.

It is in this stage that the thinking, the feeling and the decision making that involve not only the individual himself, but also the relationships established by the individual with the other members of the family, his pairs, or people out of the family environment take place. This moment is being defined as the ability to think, feel, to make decisions, and to act on their own⁽³⁾. In this sense, the development of independence is a crucial component to achieve the desired autonomy.

The fulfillment of this step is a palatine and daily victory, which starts since the first moments of existence; and despite being a private, singular process, it requires the support from social context. Hence, autonomy is the

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¹ Nurse. PhD in Nursing. Member of the Group of Studies and Research in Administration, Management and Care and Educational Management in Nursing and Health (GEPADES). Professor of Nursing School of the Federal University of Pará. Líder Study Group Health Policies and Nursing Care in Amazon Context (EPOTENA). Email jacirancarvalho@gmail.com.

² Nurse. PhD in Philosophy of Nursing. Professor of Nursing Department and Doctoral Program UFSC. Coordinator of GEPADES. Email: alacoque@newsite.com.br

³ Nurse. PhD, Professor of State University of Pará and the Nursing School of the Federal University of Pará Member of Study Group Health Policies and Nursing Care in the Amazonian context -. EPOTENA. Email: marybete@ufpa.br

ability to lead one's life, defining one's own goals, having the feeling of proficiency, and the ability to regulate one's own actions, and this construct is influenced by the educational practices performed by the parents⁽⁴⁾.

Based on these premises, there is the following guiding question of this study: What is the understanding, by the adolescents, regarding the dependency from others to acquire autonomy for self-care? In this perspective, the aim is to understand the dependency from the other as a necessary step to acquire adolescents' autonomy for self-care.

METHODOLOGY

This is an exploratory and descriptive study, with a qualitative approach, and supported by the methodological references described in the Grounded Theory, which aims to describe the conceptions that emerge from the data, and generates an interpretation of the relationship among these elements, thus permitting the construction of theoretical models⁽⁵⁾.

This research had a sample based on 27 participants, divided in four sample groups: the first had 16 adolescents, between 12 and 14 years old (5), 15 and 16 years old (6), and 17 and 18 years old (5). The subjects were part of the Family Health Strategic Program, and the individuals were chosen by randomly picking registration forms, by a community health worker. Four parents, two teachers, and five nurses composed the other participants' groups. As described in Ground Theory, the sample was guided based on the concepts that arose after each analysis of the material provided by the subjects themselves, the analysis of interviews, or other elements, moving the research to other participants, in order to support the researchers' theory.

This study was based on the Family Health Unit known as Home of Family Health, located on the Visconde Channel, in the district of Pedreira, which belongs to the Sacramento Administrative Division (DASAC, in Portuguese) of the municipality of Belém, Brazil. The residents of the district mentioned are of mixed ethnicity, with the presence of Portuguese and Tupinambá Native bloodline. This health unit works with two teams,

composed by physicians, nurses, nursing technicians and community health workers.

The interviews occurred at the Family Health Unit for the nurses; at the local Middle and High Public School for the adolescents and teachers; at their homes for the families. The data was collected through interviews, collage activities in group dynamics, and in compositions about the topic, for those who did not agree to have their interview recorded. The data collection occurred between February and November 2009. The analysis of this information followed the steps described in Grounded Theory.

This study is part of a thesis called "Autonomy in care experienced by adolescents for a healthy living: the sight from Nursing", which achieved, after analyzing the data, the construction of a theoretical model composed by six categories. This research focuses on the second category: "Understanding the dependency of the other as a necessary component to acquire self-care autonomy by the adolescent", in which the process of analysis was more harmonic to the paradigmatic model of Strauss, as a consequence of this phenomena. This category was divided in four subcategories: "Considering being dependent of the family as a barrier to become autonomous"; "Understanding autonomy as a capacity to care for one self and to make one's own decisions"; "Perceiving the differences among the subjects in conquering their own autonomy"; and "Comparing autonomy with maturity, safety, liberty and financial independence".

This project was approved by the Committee of Ethics in Research of Santa Catarina Federal University, under protocol n.279/08; the participating subjects signed the Free and Clear Consent Agreement. To guarantee the privacy of the elements of this study and to identify the information provided by them, their names were substituted by codenames, inspired by types of wood, fish, birds, and names of nearby rivers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study evidenced the category "Understanding the dependency on the other as a component necessary to acquire self-care autonomy by the adolescent", divided in four subcategories:

1 – Considering being dependent of the family as a barrier to autonomy. Being dependent is part of the human development, and the heteronomy is a stage characterized by full dependency, making it necessary the presence of more dynamic interactions that are retroactive over the individual in his search for resolutions to many aspects related to his countless necessities. For the adolescent, this is the moment of the search of one self, and it consists in a process that there are random occasions and sudden passions, the built of self-image, and body and psychological self-definition. In the enthusiasm of these findings, the teenager sees the family as a barrier to his own growth and independence – as described in the following testimony:

[...] I wish I was old enough, so I can move away from my parents, living by myself, being independent, having my things [...] having a place only for myself without other people to bother me. I felt unsatisfied [...] later I learned that life wasn't as easy as I thought it would be [...] any situation would trigger a fight between me and my parents [...] now I have their respect, and I changed my way to see life (Uruará).

Autonomy is part of the process of independence of an individual is always intermediated by the lifestyle of each one. This individualized lifestyle needs to clash against the experiences from relatives, which generates new experiences and different formats to deal with the challenges of life. Childish situations are merged with adult positions and postures, in a process of constant progression and regression. Based on these situations, in the adolescent rises the desire for autonomy and liberty, molten with the fears and the feelings of insecurity generated from the process of maturation⁽⁶⁾.

Therefore, autonomy emerges during this retroactive movement in the world of the lived experiences with the adults, which can be parents, teachers, or any other who assumes this position in front of the teenagers. All human beings retroacts in the environment they live. For such, adolescents can construct and maintain their existence, autonomy, individuality, and originality, in and based on dependency⁽⁷⁾.

The awareness process regarding the autonomy was mentioned as an element that is built slowly in the individual. This process starts

since birth and walks towards the management of one's own life, through the retroactive relationships that occur throughout life.

2 – Understanding autonomy as possibility to take care of one self and one's own decisions. After understanding that autonomy is based on the dependency, this category comes clear the reason of this category, in which decision-making occurs without the interference of a third party. This is an interpretation given by the adolescents who have already developed a relative capacity of self-care, which is understood as a rite of passage from the previous stage (heteronomy), thus heading to diverse possibilities to face the global world. The rise of parents' divorces impacts both the situations/feelings related to dependency and independency. The constant changes in mood due to all sorts of changes, conquests and clashes, commonly found during this moment of life. These adolescents do not completely understand they are beings inserted in a large ecosystem; the environment is co-present and co-organizer of their lives; these facts represent the desire of non-interference during the interaction with others.

[...] I take care of myself the way I want; I am very attentive and very careful with my body. I am proud of myself and I am a very clean girl. I am a person who does things, and I don't depend on the others (Jari)

[...] That's how I came here. My family lived somewhere else, and I came to live here, in Pará. [...] so, I had to work to have my things, which is what I did. Now I work, I study and I have my own things. I felt better living home. This means I can take care of myself (Solimões).

It is the role of the family to facilitate this process for the adolescent, and to support the development of the adult in socializing/individualizing, in order to build a healthy, autonomous, independent development, giving conditions for the adolescent to make his own decisions⁽⁸⁾.

It is in the social and affective environment in which the subject belongs to that the adolescent undergoes a stage of discoveries, and then to the beginning of the process of acquisition of independence, when it is necessary to set the limits, from the part of the parents, so the

teenagers are able to differentiate right from wrong and fostering a healthy personality⁽⁹⁾.

Therefore, the sense of autonomy of the subject must be based on self-organization, on the capacity to promote creativity, and to increase the capacity of generating new ideas, improve, and reproduce these new solutions. The autonomous being is the one who runs from the established order, then generating a great diversity of tasks and actions that benefit self-organization of the environment, reproducing an organizational pattern aiming to maintain it⁽¹⁰⁾.

3 – Perceiving the differences among the subjects in the conquest of autonomy. It is important to call attention to the different perceptions in the process of acquisition of autonomy by the adolescents. Through the experiences shared in their social groups, adolescents emphasized they are able to perceive the existing differences among the groups' members regarding the capacity of each one to reach certain levels in the process of independence. According to the understanding, some can have a more global perspective during the somehow complex moment they are facing. They can internalize the findings they consider healthy for themselves, and reject what can be harmful to their whole development. Others have a more narrow view, a slower walking towards personal development. Sometimes, they cannot distinguish the facts in order to make a better choice. These are the adolescents that, many times, are easy preys to the fantasy broadcasted by the consumption society, with an early sexual debut, adolescent pregnancy, and an entry into the world of drugs and prostitution.

[...] She was always by herself. I never did any projects for her; I just helped to research, to read the news, got informed, but there was no support at home. I know that the other kids always ask for their fathers to help, are slower to get the things they want, and end up asking their mothers” (Pirarucu)

[...] He is unable to live by himself, as he is highly dependent on me; on the other hand, the youngest, if necessary, he can live his life on his own” (Tucunaré)

In the families that the adolescents are encouraged to participate in the discussions and in the final decisions involving themselves and the whole family, the path taken towards

autonomy is frequently calm and safe, even with all possible retroactions present in the process. In this case, the adolescents tend to use parents as role models, and search for friends that these parents will support. Hence, the same conditions that they promote independence, the parents create a bond of proximity and affectivity between them and their children. This fact leads the adolescent to feel confident about his own journey into adulthood⁽¹¹⁾.

The family can be seen as a dynamic unit that is composed by people that coexist in the same space for a certain determined period of time, with common goals and experiencing a life story under constant construction⁽¹²⁾.

Looking through the sight of the conflicting relationships among families and adolescents, the “disorder is not an entity in itself; it is always relative in energetic, interactive, transformative, or dispersive processes”^(13: 199). At the same time, the human being does not have a linear walk; order and disorder are always present in the interactive/transformative, or disjunctive moments. Thus, the walking towards autonomy is not done in equal paths and timings by everyone; certainties and uncertainties are common elements of this journey.

4. Relating autonomy to maturity, safety, liberty, and financial independency. Based on the expectation of the adolescent to understand what goes on his own path, in a search for the inner individual and one's own subjectivity, it is seen that autonomy can be also translated in the explanation of this subcategory. These adolescents are conscious that there is a maturation process in which they are presently part of. They also consider that some youngsters do not perceive the magnitude of this moment. Others, who have a broader perception of the reality around them, reach higher to have the liberty they eager so much. They define “liberty” as a possibility to make the decisions related to their come and go. They can decide by themselves, according to their own will and desire, choosing what they consider the best and the most attractive. On the other hand, independence is attached to the financial condition, as they consider continuing their own lives without the support from parents, as soon as they feel included in a social network and inserted in the labor market.

“[...] You know, sometimes we see something in a store, we ask money for our parents, and sometimes they hand it in but complain about it, other times they don't give us any money and we get sad or angry [...] It's when we think: 'I'll have my own money someday',” (Mamoré)

“[...] There were times I asked for something to my mother and she didn't have it at the moment... [...] I left home, went to work, and now I have my own money, and I'm more independent.” (Solimões)

“[...] Being free means having their own income, only when the adolescents start to work. If he is living under my roof, he has to pay respect to me” (Tambaqui)

The relationships built by the adolescents with some autonomy can be considered as an assertive, but at the same time are relationships of dependency, as the full emancipation only exists during the productive adult life.

Hence, liberty is one of the essential characteristics for a competent and autonomous human life. The combination confidence-autonomy gives the human being a feeling of determination that boosts the individual to experience life with responsibility. In this stage, the interests for working instruments arise, as labor requires certain competences. This transformation requires the control of the productive activity, autonomy, and liberty to make one's own decisions regarding a labor process that is meaningful and emancipatory⁽¹⁴⁾.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the testimonies and considerations here presented permitted to experience and understand the dynamics of the adolescent experience regarding his own process of acquisition autonomy to practice self-care, despite identifying the strategies used by relative, teachers, and nurses regarding the mentioned experience.

When creating an intersection of the category “Understanding the dependency as a necessary dimension to acquire autonomy for self-care by the adolescent” with the other four subcategories “Considering the dependency of the family as an impossibility to become autonomous”; “Understanding autonomy as a possibility to take care of one self and to make one self

decisions without the interference of a third party”; “Perceiving the differences among people in conquering their own autonomy”; and “Comparing autonomy with maturity, safety, liberty, and financial independency”, was possible to apprehend that the awareness of the conscience of the adolescent regarding his own process of emancipation was seen as a process with a certain quantity of levels. This course starts at the birth of the subject and walks towards the self-management of life in all aspects related to the necessary interactions/retroactions. It is this shared experience, with energetic exchanges with the environment, with the family, with one's pairs and other people that the adolescent sees dependent to experience his own autonomy. Thus, it is understood that the human being is open and needs to live dependently before achieving his own independency.

It is important to reinforce the idea that the dependency of the adolescent during nursing care needs to be rethought, as it is performed further away from the expectations from those that see the teenager deserves a more affective care, ethically driven, and supported by the scientific precepts that describe the human development.

It is evident that this walk towards autonomy is not a straight line; the path can be described as a circular one, interacting and retroacting in a circuit, without an end, in a constant exchange of energies between the internal and external environments.

It is possible to observe the importance of partnerships between the school, the family and health service providers, in order to balance the existing issues in each of these contexts, presenting action plans that are aimed to minimize the problems, and that promote changes in the course of the journey of a great number of adolescents during their struggle for the desired autonomy to self-care.

The investment generated to perform such analysis, involving the complex thinking, was an opportunity to conciliate the universal and the singular, the partition and the whole, in a perspective to compose a more complex totality, taking into consideration the individual and cultural extraordinary differences of the human being, in his own process during adolescence.

Therefore, in a dialogue among the subcategories rises the understanding of the component “dependency” in the process to acquire autonomy to fulfill the self-care practices.

This dependency is a way to interact/retroact with the environment, with his pairs, and with other people of the adolescent’s everyday life. It is visible in the dependency of family care, of professional care, of affective care, and of zeal care.

A DEPENDÊNCIA DO OUTRO NA CONSTRUÇÃO DA AUTONOMIA DO ADOLESCENTE PARA O AUTOCUIDADO

RESUMO

Este estudo teve como objetivo compreender a fase da dependência como dimensão necessária à aquisição da autonomia do adolescente para o autocuidado. Estudo do tipo descritivo com abordagem qualitativa, tendo como referencial teórico a complexidade e como referencial metodológico a *Grounded Theory*, realizado mediante entrevistas e dinâmicas grupais com 27 participantes em quatro grupos amostrais: adolescentes, pais, professores e enfermeiros, na cidade de Belém, Pará. É focalizada neste artigo a categoria “Compreendendo a dependência como dimensão necessária à aquisição da autonomia para autocuidado pelo adolescente” constituída por quatro subcategorias: *Considerando ser dependente da família como barreira para ser autônomo*; *Entendendo autonomia como capacidade para cuidar-se e tomar suas próprias decisões*; *Percebendo diferenças entre os sujeitos na conquista da autonomia*; e, *Comparando autonomia com maturidade, segurança, liberdade e independência financeira*. A tomada de consciência do adolescente sobre a autonomia ocorre em diferentes e sucessivas gradações, em direção à autogestão da vida, diante das interações e retroações necessárias. No convívio de trocas energéticas com o meio, sua família e demais pessoas, o adolescente se percebe dependente para experimentar sua autonomia. Desse modo, o ser humano se mostra um ser aberto e necessita viver da dependência para desenvolver um potencial compensatório as suas necessidades.

Palavras-chave: Adolescente. Autonomia pessoal. Dependência. Enfermagem.

LA DEPENDENCIA DEL OTROS EN LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DE LA AUTONOMÍA DE LOS ADOLESCENTES A LO AUTOCUIDADO

RESUMEN

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo comprender la etapa de la adicción como dimensión necesaria para la adquisición de autonomía de los adolescentes a lo auto-cuidado. Estudio descriptivo con enfoque cualitativo y con referencial teórico de la complejidad y metodológica de la teoría fundamentada, realizado a través de entrevistas y dinámicas de grupo con 27 participantes en cuatro grupos muestrales: adolescentes, padres, maestros y enfermeras, en Belém, Pará. Centra en este artículo la categoría "Entendiendo la adicción como una dimensión necesaria a la adquisición de la autonomía de los adolescentes a lo auto- cuidado" y se compone de cuatro subcategorías: *Considerando que es dependiente de la familia como una barrera para ser autónomo*; *Comprender la autonomía y la capacidad para cuidar de sí mismos y hacer su propias decisiones*; *Notando las diferencias entre los sujetos en la conquista de la autonomía*; y, *Comparación de la autonomía con la madurez, la seguridad, la libertad y la independencia financiera*. El conocimiento de los adolescentes sobre la autonomía se da en diferentes gradaciones sucesivas hacia la vida de autogestión en las interacciones y reacciones necesarias. El intercambio de energía convivencia con el entorno, su familia y otras personas que dependen de que el adolescente perciba a experimentar la autonomía. Por lo tanto, los ser humano se mostró como un ser abierto y necesita vivir de la dependencia para desarrollar un potencial de necesidades compensatorias.

Palabras clave: Adolescentes. La autonomía personal. La dependencia. Enfermería.

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Corresponding author: Jacira Nunes Carvalho. Pass. Alvaro Adolfo 64, CEP:66085030 . Belém-Pará. E-mail: jacirancarvalho@gmail.com

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