

The participation of men in infant feeding: is this a new step towards gender equity?

A participação dos homens na alimentação infantil: novos caminhos para a equidade de gênero?

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Abstract

Our study investigates men's experience in feeding their children aged from six to 12 months to contribute to the public policy agenda in nutritional education programs focused on early childhood development. The qualitative approach was substantiated by the hermeneutic-dialectical method, based on focus groups with mothers and in-depth interviews with parents and visitors to public health services and private pediatric clinics. We were able to investigate the topic under different socioeconomic contexts and organize them into two categories, namely: male participation in feeding their children, based on both women's and men's points of view. The results evidenced the complexity of the phenomenon, which is the result of a network of interactions among individuals, their values, and their relationship with the present world. Symbolic expressions have reproduced the traditional values, guiding both female and male beliefs. However, the transformation in paternal attitudes towards sharing and getting involved in feeding their children stood out.

Keywords: Child Nutrition; Complementary Feeding; Gender Issues.

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Resumo

Este estudo objetivou compreender a vivência de homens na alimentação dos seus filhos entre 6 e 12 meses de idade, com a finalidade de contribuir para a agenda de políticas públicas em programas de educação nutricional voltados para o desenvolvimento da primeira infância. A abordagem qualitativa apoiada pelo método hermenêutico-dialético, através de grupos focais com mães e entrevistas em profundidade com pais, frequentadores de um serviço público de saúde e de uma clínica de pediatria privada, permitiu compreender o tema sob circunstâncias socioeconômicas diferentes e organizá-los em duas categorias: a participação do gênero masculino na alimentação de seus filhos sob a ótica feminina e sob a sua própria ótica. Nos deparamos, nos resultados, com a complexidade como se move o fenômeno, fruto de uma rede de interações entre os indivíduos, seus valores e sua relação com o mundo presente. As expressões simbólicas reproduziram os valores tradicionais que norteiam tanto as crenças femininas quanto masculinas. Destaca-se, entretanto, o movimento de transformação nas atitudes de compartilhamento e envolvimento paterno com a alimentação dos filhos.

Palavras-chave: Nutrição da Criança; Alimentação Complementar; Questões de Gênero.

Introduction

The importance of child nutrition, especially in early childhood, is widely documented, and its impact is reported in several international health policy reports (WHO, 2010; USAID, 2011; UNICEF, 2020), especially the dietary guidelines aimed at the child population (Brazil, 2019). If the proper diet is provided in the first thousand days of the child's life, it will influence the full development of this individual in all stages of life (USAID, 2011) and contribute to the prevention of diseases and illnesses in adulthood. It may also contribute to an active life (Victora et al., 2016; Pérez-Escamilla; Segura-Pérez; Lott, 2017), necessary for coping with the aging process with dignity, another major challenge for the public policy agenda.

Despite the evidence on its importance, national and international studies have observed that complementary feeding, defined as the food offered to children after the sixth month of life in addition to breast milk (Victora et al., 2016), is of low quality (Jaime et al., 2016; UNICEF, 2019) and its implementation depends on the knowledge of those engaged in childcare (Pérez-Escamilla; Segura-Pérez; Lott, 2017; Pérez-Escamilla; Segura-Pérez, 2019). Nutritional interventions aim to influence and improve positive behaviors to give children a better start in life and are especially focused on the maternal figure. On the other hand, the incentive for the active involvement of men in actions to support mothers in the care of their children showed improvements in health outcomes (Addati; Cassirer; Gilchrist, 2014), emphasizing the importance of the father's contribution as a potential facilitator in the adoption of healthy feeding practices for babies and young children (Addati; Cassirer; Gilchrist, 2014; Pérez-Escamilla; Segura-Pérez; Lott, 2017).

The definition of paternity currently encompasses many of the activities seen as "typically female activities" (Lamb, 2010; Figueiredo; Diniz, 2018). However, these behavioral changes do not seem to materialize in quantity and quality that satisfactorily keep up with the pace of social changes (Jablonski, 2010; Figueiredo; Diniz, 2018). Although fathers are increasingly involved in household chores and

childcare and mothers are doing more paid work outside the home, none of them has surpassed the other in their “traditional” domains (Parker; Wang, 2013; Figueiredo; Diniz, 2018). When it comes to what they value most, it is more important for fathers to have a high-paying job, while employed mothers are more concerned with having flexible hours (Parker; Wang, 2013).

The transition of men to the “new model” of paternity (Sutter; Bucher-Maluschke, 2008), especially caused by the birth of a child (Freitas; Coelho; Silva, 2007), and their effective participation as a caregiver has been relatively neglected by the investigation, but when studied, they reveal similarities and gender differences in these experiences. A deeper investigation of this theme is important because it permeates not only personal relationships but also social and institutional relationships (Ribeiro; Gomes; Moreira, 2015). In Brazil, studies call attention to the fact that awareness of “care” concerns not only men, but also health professionals, especially in primary care, who often ignore paternal participation in prenatal care, childbirth, and pediatric consultations (Ribeiro; Gomes; Moreira, 2015).

Gaps in knowledge and information of mothers and fathers, in addition to socio-cultural and institutional barriers, strongly marked by beliefs and myths, influence and compromise the provision of childcare (Ribeiro; Gomes; Moreira, 2015; Pérez-Escamilla; Segura-Pérez; Lott, 2017; Sorrentino; Venancio, 2019; Brazil, 2019).

Thus, this research is relevant due to its originality when reflecting on the male role and the division of tasks during the first year of their children’s lives, with a focus on children’s nutrition, from the female and male perspective in different socioeconomic conditions. Our hypothesis implies that understanding the phenomenon could improve the conduct of this important approach, especially in interventions for food and nutrition education (Pérez-Escamilla; Segura-Pérez; Lott, 2017) to meet and strengthen policies aimed at promoting nutrition and early childhood development (Brazil, 2019).

Methodology

We chose a qualitative approach, since it is concerned with the interpretive understanding of social action (Minayo; Assis; Souza, 2016) and includes all human behavior, considering the intelligibility of social phenomena, their meanings, and intentionality that the actors attribute to it (Minayo; Assis; Souza, 2016). Furthermore, it is focused on human experience and the complexity of this reality (Minayo, 2008).

As a theoretical framework, we use the hermeneutic-dialectical analysis method, whose combination of approaches is “very productive to support qualitative assessments” (Minayo; Assis; Souza, 2016, p. 88). Analyzing the two philosophical trends, Minayo (2008) and Minayo, Assis and Souza (2016) highlight their contributions and limitations, which complement each other in favor of understanding and criticizing social reality:

While the hermeneutic praxis based on the present penetrates in the sense of the past, of tradition, of the other, of the different, aiming to reach the meaning of the most diverse forms of text, the dialectic is directed against its time. It emphasizes the difference, the contrast, the dissension, and the rupture of the sense. (Minayo, 2008, p. 105)

In this perspective, we use the focus group and the open or in-depth interview as the technical instruments for the construction of the investigations (Minayo, 2008).

The production of data through a focus group involved two groups of mothers of children between 6 and 12 months, recruited from two locations with different socioeconomic characteristics, to investigate the topic under different circumstances and contexts. In the first study, called G₁, which took place on April 2, 2018, eight participants formed the group recruited from the Basic Health Unit Jardim Esperança, in Francisco Morato, a municipality located in the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo. The second study, named G₂, recruited participants at

the private clinic Casa Curumim, in the Sumarezinho district, West Zone of the capital of São Paulo. Twelve mothers were initially contacted, eight of whom confirmed the possibility of being present for March 24, 2018, and four attended. Both meetings took place at the recruitment sites.

To allow the connection between the research objectives and the focus groups, a semi-structured script was used in topics that provided the participants with the opportunity to express their perspectives freely. The script, previously tested in a pilot situation, included aspects related to the moment when the caregivers started complementary feeding, their doubts, difficulties, and the type of support received. In the meetings, which lasted an average of 90 minutes, the researcher assumed the role of moderator and had the assistance of an assistant. The reports were recorded in an audio system to preserve the fidelity of opinions (Mack et al., 2011) after the consent of the participants.

To understand the processes of male experience and participation in complementary feeding for their children between 6 and 12 months of age, we initially tried to promote focus groups with men. As we were not able to obtain sufficient adherence, we decided to conduct open interviews, a technique that also offers the opportunity to learn how people interpret and order a given subject based on their opinions and experiences (Minayo; Assis; Souza, 2016).

The condition for recruitment was that the participants were parents of children from 6 to 12 months of age. Two of them have children who attend UBS Jardim Esperança in Francisco Morato, here named E1, and the other two, named E2, had their children attended at the private pediatric clinic Curumim, in São Paulo, allowing us to contextualize male impressions in two different socioeconomic realities.

The interviews took place at the recruitment sites. Both those held with Francisco Morato's parents, on April 27 and 28, 2018, and those held in the capital, on May 5, took place individually, at 10 am and the other at 11 am. The latter, coincidentally, were parents of children whose mothers had participated in the focus group, which provided us with the insight that the events are interdependent and are conditioned

to each other, which can originate a new behavior (Minayo; Assis; Souza, 2016).

The instrument for the production of data, previously tested, consisted of a script with open questions similar to the script of the focus groups, allowing the participants to express themselves freely. The interviews were conducted by the same researcher who moderated the focus groups, also with the help of an assistant. The average duration of the interviews was 20 minutes, recorded on the audio system and later transcribed.

The analysis of the data based on the meticulous transcription of the recordings and the reading of all the material included two complementary moments: the specific analysis of each group, the pre-analysis (Mack et al., 2011), in which we group all the content by speeches of each participant, and the cumulative and comparative analysis of the groups and interviews (Minayo; Assis; Souza, 2016). For this exploration, it was necessary to read and re-read each testimony, allowing us great objective and intersubjective intimacy with the content (Minayo, 2008). The wealth of testimonies about the male role in the division of tasks during the first year of their children's lives, with a focus on infant feeding, led us to consider presenting them separately, separating them from the other aspects covered in the script (Sorrentino; Venancio, 2019) and organizing them in two categories (Minayo; Assis; Souza, 2016): male participation in feeding their children from the female perspective and their perspective. The socio-economic conditions of the participants did not receive a formal classification in this study and, despite being differentiated by the abbreviations G1/E1 and G2/E2, we prefer to appreciate their reports as natural representations, each from their social world (Carvalho; Luz, 2009). It is worth mentioning that the collection of information about the same phenomenon, coming from diversified individuals, strategies, and environments, despite not guaranteeing the validity, reduces the risk of associations of chance and systematic biases as it allows greater generality in favor of assessment and inferences (Minayo; Assis; Souza, 2016).

Following this stage, we aim to seek ideas beyond the lines and facts described and deepen them

through the following reflections (Minayo; Assis; Souza, 2016): did the ideas differ by factors such as gender or socioeconomic conditions? What are the common points between the testimonials? Were there any contradictions? Is there data that allows us to compare the arguments or the ideas between the two categories? Is there information from other studies on the topic that reinforce or contradict the ideas underlying the speeches?

The interpretation path was an exercise to overcome the descriptive levels, a first-order construct (Minayo; Assis; Souza, 2016), access the **inference**, and arrive at the interpretation itself (second-order construct), which, according to Minayo; Assisi; Souza, 2016, is a “burden that falls on the investigator” (p. 203).

The construction of the interpretative synthesis was based on the contribution of several scholars who explore paternity and the complex equity relationship between men and women (Szinovacz, 1984; Zagury, 2002; Balancho, 2004; Hakim, 2005; Jablonski, 2010; Vega-Robles, 2007; Sutter; Bucher-Maluschke, 2008; Aboim, 2010; Parker; Wang, 2013; Ribeiro; Gomes; Moreira, 2015; Figueiredo; Diniz, 2018), in addition to studies that led us to reflect on the difficulties in interpreting meanings and cultural meanings (Dilts; Hallbom; Smith, 1993) based on health practices (Carvalho; Luz, 2009).

Obedying the requirement of Resolution No. 510/2016 of the National Health Council, which provides for the rules applicable to research in the humanities and social sciences, this research was submitted to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Public Health, receiving CAAE approval: 78929317.7.000.5421 through opinion number 2,358,135.

Results and discussion

We emphasize that, even initially, when we predict the number of participants for both focus groups and interviews, the idea of provisionality followed us throughout the process (Minayo, 2017). Aware that the main criterion is not the numerical one “since there is no measure established a priori for the understanding of the homogeneities, diversity, and intensity of the information necessary for

an adequate research work” (Minayo, 2017, p. 11), we sought depth, breadth, and diversity in the understanding process, to access the internal logic of the object of study in all its connections and interconnections (Minayo, 2017).

Among the participants in the two focus groups, the level of education was higher in G2, in which all participants had completed higher education. In G1, most participants had completed high school. Regarding the age distribution, the age of G1 varied between 21 and 30 years, and half of them reported having other children. In the G2, all of them were primiparous, aged between 29 and 37 years. In G1, only one of the mothers worked outside her house, while in G2, all reported formal professional activities.

Among the interviewees, both those from E1 and E2, the age was homogeneous, varying between 34 and 35 years. All had formal jobs, and at E1, their workloads allowed them to be closer to their children. We observed differences between the two groups regarding the level of education, being higher for E2 (complete and incomplete higher education) and lower for E1 (complete and incomplete high school). Coincidentally, both parents of E1 reported having another child between 13 and 14 years old. For the parents of E2, it was the first paternity.

Male participation in the feeding of their children from the female perspective

G1 women, when asked about their partners’ “support”, immediately associated it with material and financial support. It is interesting to note, despite the great social changes, the feminist approach resulting from an extemporaneous culture that resists (Dilts; Hallbom; Smith, 1993; Minayo, 2008). When we opened the question further, speculating whether they received help with housework and caring for their children, what permeated all the speeches was the realization that the father and his image are still associated with the traditional role of provider (Sutter; Bucher-Maluschke, 2008).

[...] on the part of my husband, he is very afraid of doing things... So, he buys things, and says: it is up to you now. (K G1)

My [husband] supports [me] also, he goes out and buys stuff. But about doing something, he doesn't, because he says he doesn't know how to do it. Then I do it. (A G1)

Her father, from S, we live together. So, when things are running out, he goes out and buys them. I have had a lot of support since they were born. (J G1)

Although the testimonies refer to individual experiences, representations of such experiences do not arise only from individual minds (Minayo; Assis; Souza, 2016). To some extent, they result from social processes (Dilts; Hallbom; Smith, 1993) through which individuals are culturally built (Minayo; Assis; Souza, 2016) since they need to organize themselves in their world (Carvalho; Luz, 2009). It is known that care, whether with one's health or with the other, are aspects that are not part of the male repertoire (Ribeiro; Gomes; Moreira, 2015) and, thus, domestic chores and child care are not male spheres (Sutter; Bucher-Maluschke, 2008). Therefore, the socio-historical matrix that imputes to the mother the "self-sacrifice" in the fulfillment of her responsibility to guarantee the well-being of her children and family prevails (Zagury, 2002; Aboim, 2010). "I wake up 2 times a night because she wants to drink milk (bottle). I work 12 hours [...], gosh, it's very difficult (the mother gets emotional)" (A G1).

However, among the testimonies of the same socioeconomic group, the figure of the collaborator appears, revealing that there is no consensus between the behaviors. The sharing of tasks denotes a movement of transformation in attitudes (Minayo, 2008).

He (the husband) helps me a lot; he helps at home, goes to the market; makes the food... when I'm cleaning the house. (AB G1)

At the weekend he is at home, he says: I will give you a break. When dinner, or lunch, is ready, which he makes himself, because he loves to cook, we sit at the table and everyone eats. (J G1)

The accounts of N and M, representatives of the other socioeconomic group, reveal to us through the

word "help" and the expression "everything will have to be divided" that, despite both father and mother, accepting that the boundaries between them have dissolved and that each member must replace the other in caring for the children, the mother is the protagonist as a caregiver (Parker; Wang, 2013). The maternal burden is a fact that brings together the individuals and groups analyzed, regardless of socioeconomic status (Minayo, 2008).

My husband supports me 100%. (He) helps in the kitchen ... he tries to do as much as I can. (N G2)

I haven't gone back to work yet, but I also work, and he (the husband) knows that everything will have to be divided... (M G2)

Being a mother and being a professional is an exercise permeated by conflict given the performance required in her double journey. The feeling of guilt for not acting according to the roles modeled and valued by society can be present in their experiences (Zagury, 2002; Minayo, 2008).

At school, he ate. On Saturday when I prepared H's food ... he grimaced, crying desperately. What am I doing? (N G2)

I went back to work. Three times I stay at home taking care of her and twice she stays with my mother. I have to prepare her food. I usually remember that ten minutes before she eats... working at home and having to offer it to her made me feel very insecure. I had to kind of make her eat at that time, so I could go back to work and keep my appointment. (B G2)

At B's house, both husband and wife are engaged in paid work, however, the division of tasks is still traditional or not so balanced. Studies in modern and socially developed societies suggest that changes depend on a complex relationship between family and other social structures and are not necessarily determined by socioeconomic prosperity (Hakim, 2005; Vega-Robles, 2007). When things do not go well, the mother believes that nothing wrong would

happen if she were more present (Zagury, 2002) and, in general, when she is unable to reconcile the professional and maternal roles, it is common for her to give up her career (Aboim, 2010): “*This week I quit my job because I wasn’t feeling secure about being able to take care of my daughter in this food introduction*” (B G2).

Traditionally, it is the mother’s duty to care and feed; it is she who must take care of the needs that are different in each phase that the child goes through (Zagury, 2002). A, when heard a month before her husband was interviewed, revealed that she felt pressured; A required a change, a new behavior that she did not feel able to perform because she required skills that she did not master (Zagury, 2002; Aboim, 2010): “*I feel totally insecure because I hardly cook for myself*” (A G2).

The conquest, by women, of a productive universe does not exempt them from the weight of the responsibilities that are symbolically and traditionally attributed to them by the family, and then resistance, tension, and conflict arise (Vega-Robles, 2007; Minayo, 2008).

[...] I have a conflict with my husband when it comes to organics. My mother tried to help me... she saw that I was not able to do everything myself, but she also used to prepare the soup with the vegetables that she had at her house. My husband slammed the door and said he was not going to poison my daughter. My mother said: If I’m getting in the way, I’m not doing anything else. Then the situation reached a limit, and I said: you want organic, so you buy it every week. (A G2)

Male participation in feeding their children from their perspective

The speeches of M (E2), one month after the testimony of A (G2), his wife, reveal that after the conflict, there is a transformation (Minayo, 2008) and a readjustment of domains. M starts to stand out in male participation, performing tasks typically seen, even today, as components of motherhood (Lamb, 2010): “*I think that especially because of this organic issue, I ended up taking the lead, I made a*

point ... so I still do the shopping today. I develop the menu together with A and make her baby food. I make a point!” (M E2).

Social movements appear in opposition to the system and mediate the “subject’s” relations with the world (Minayo; Assis; Souza, 2016). In this “new paternity”, what is new is how the father shares his affection with the child, showing delight (Sutter; Bucher-Maluschke, 2008) and looking for his personal experience (Ribeiro; Gomes; Moreira, 2015). “*I always say to A, we know the difficulties when you go through a new phase in life. Of course, our routine changes, it is different. But I prefer today’s routine*” (M E2).

In the speeches of R (E), the paternal experience acquired as a facilitator in the sharing of tasks stands out (Pérez-Escamilla; Segura-Pérez; Lott, 2017), and seems to have a favorable impact on the incorporation of new habits by the child (Addati; Cassirer; Gilchrist, 2014).

At first, it was difficult, tricky. I didn’t really know much. She (the wife) explained to me: “give him this, give him that” so that when he (the son) arrives from school, he dines with me. And then he started the food introduction even a little better and started to loosen up, and he is doing very well! (R E2)

In general, although both work, the mother still has the largest number of chores (Parker; Wang, 2013). Efforts for gender equity focus, among others, on two overlapping issues: the labor market and family life (Vega-Robles, 2007). Thus, we see that the feminist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries do not seem to have brought about significant changes in family patterns (Hakim, 2005). *Would motherhood, due to its value as a social practice (Minayo; Assis; Souza, 2016) or because of its biological and psychosocial characteristics of the mother-child bond, have a decisive weight in all of this (Szinovacz, 1984)?*

The list is made by the mother, and I (husband) go to the market to buy things. The mother cooks at the weekend and in the middle of the week because our lives are very busy. I only have to pick it up, defrost it, put it on the plate, and give it to him. At the

weekend, sometimes I prepare the lunch, sometimes she does; in the afternoon he breastfeeds, and at dinner, she prepares it more often, because then I'm already doing other stuff. (R E2)

Regardless of the socioeconomic classes of the two groups, we observed, throughout the speeches, that there are common principles that unite them (Minayo, 2008). These principles were observed here through family life, which is guided by attitudes and values equally shared by both men and women (Vega-Robles, 2007). Reflecting on this aspect, it seems to us that changing the standards depends on the approach of innumerable non-rational barriers (Dilts; Hallbom; Smith, 1993) circumscribed not only to men but also to women (Vega-Robles, 2007).

V's statements (E1) let us realize that he is proud to be the main provider of the house and that he shares his wife's opinion on issues related to caring for his daughter, referring us once again to the traditional roles of the man (Sutter; Bucher-Maluschke, 2008) and women (Jablonski, 2010; Parker; Wang, 2013; Figueiredo; Diniz, 2018). Next, these symbolic expressions dialogue with a "new father model" (Jablonski, 2010) reported through his participation in the family routine, realizing that modernity is an unfinished, dynamic, and constantly changing project, a product of the subject's relationship with the world and the symbolic expressions that mediate this relationship (Minayo, 2008).

VE1 My wife takes care of it. No, she (the wife) does not work. She takes care of her (the daughter) all the time. Regarding children, we talk a lot to see if one agrees with what the other thinks. Sometimes there is a conflict of ideas, you see? But I always try to observe her more, because she stays with the baby more than I do. And she has been right about her choices. I am very comfortable about her upbringing (daughter), and about upbringing, education, and food, I do not doubt that I can leave the responsibility in her hands.

VE1... Both (cook), me and my wife. Most of the time I try to just cut, peel, and clean, and my wife cooks. She organizes the list and I go out and buy it.

Every other day, I'm present (at the daughter's meals), which are the days I'm off.

In this same line of thought, the visibly authoritarian character of the CR statements (E1) is opposed to the reports of sharing (Balanchó, 2004). The practice of habits and beliefs produced in a social structure express a way of "being" (Dilts; Hallbom; Smith, 1993) which, however, is subject to transformation (Minayo, 2008).

CRE1 At mealtime, I don't like television, I don't like anyone watching TV, I don't like cell phones on the table, nothing that disturbs the meal. I also don't like a lot of conversation at the table, I speak very little ... because otherwise, it ends up disrupting the meal.

... I have a good boy, I think the girl is too smart. I hope she doesn't give me any trouble!

CRE1 Shopping: sometimes it's me, sometimes it's my wife, sometimes we go together. I supervise (the daughter's meal) at lunch because at dinner I am not at home, but almost every day we have lunch together, and not only at lunch, when I am at home, I am with her.

Social movements, especially the actions of individuals, have an impact on society and can become catalysts for social change (Vega-Robles, 2007; Minayo, 2008). We would like to point out that the involvement of CR in the domestic work indicated here is being followed by the eldest son. This sensitivity could be a possible predictor for future interactions (Carvalho; Luz, 2009): "(About who cooks at home) [...] sometimes it is my wife, sometimes it is me who do it, and there are some things that sometimes the boy (the eldest son) also wants to do, so everyone contributes a little" (CR E2).

Final considerations

When trying to understand the male experience and participation in the feeding of young children, both from a female perspective and from their perspective, we are faced with the complexity of how

the phenomenon moves, as a result of a network of interactions between individuals, their values, and their relationship with the present world.

Although we note that the protagonism of care still belongs to women, a fact that does not depend on socioeconomic status, there is a movement of transformation in the attitudes of sharing and involvement of men with their children and that should be encouraged. *Children, for a better start in life, depend on a multiplicity of strategies and skills, and parental participation in the process and care of their children's food would be a potential facilitator for the adoption of positive practices.*

In this path, a new challenge presents itself for health professionals and services: raising awareness and preparing health teams, including all workers, to perceive, welcome, and value the male presence, as well as the implementation of guidelines, through strategies close to the cultural reality of the community, which include male participation in discussion circles, reflection, exchange of experiences and doubts.

A generalizable theory that could be useful in programs that explore facilitating strategies for changing caregivers' behavioral patterns is the need to redefine old values that guide women's beliefs in favor of a transformation.

As a limitation of the study, we pointed out the impossibility of carrying out, among women, focus groups with the same number of participants. Among men, there was not a minimum number of participants for the realization of a focus group, which reveals, in a way, the level of interest and involvement of men in the feeding of their children in both socio-cultural contexts in which the study was conducted. Those who agreed to participate reported some kind of sharing, favoring male participation, which could be considered a bias. Even so, we would like to confirm that, as recommended by the method, the size of the samples, both of the focus groups and the interviews, allowed us to reach the set of experiences that we intended to capture, as well as the recurrence of information and the apprehension of similarities. and differences.

Although it is necessary to expand this discussion, bringing the new experiences of parents who do not

fit into heteronormative standards, this is the first national article that deals with the roles of women and men in the feeding of young children. We believe it constitutes a path of reflection for the training contexts, being able, therefore, to contribute to the adoption of strategies and development of nutritional education programs that involve male participation in the feeding of children between the ages of 6 and 12 months.

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Authors' contributions

Sorrentino contributed to the project design, production, data analysis, and the writing of the article. Bógus and Venancio contributed to the critical review relevant to the intellectual content and final approval of the published version. In addition, Venancio guided the design of the project and data analysis.

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