

Tradition and Transformation of Social Representations of Adolescent Pregnancy in the Family and the Nasa Indigenous community

Tradición y transformación de las representaciones sociales del embarazo adolescente en la familia y la comunidad indígena Nasa

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Abstract

This qualitative research, conducted through a collaborative ethnographic approach, explored the social representations of adolescent pregnancy in the Nasa community of the Huila reservation, Río Negro, Colombia. The aim was to identify the care practices, beliefs, and traditions associated with pregnancy within this community. Collaborative ethnography, understood as a horizontal process between researchers and participants, made it possible to comprehend the ways of life and cultural knowledge of the Nasa people settled in Río Negro–Huila following the Páez River avalanche in 1994. The findings reveal that pregnancy is conceived as an act of cultural resistance and a form of endurance/survival, rather than a public health issue. For the Nasa, adolescent pregnancy is not considered a mistake, but rather a challenge when it interferes with academic endeavors and the training of future professionals within the territory. Metaphorically, pregnancy is viewed as a "seed" that connects with the earth and reaffirms the essential role of the territory as a vital space for the family and cultural strengthening. Although modernity



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and historical conflicts have impacted community life, social organization, ancestral knowledge, and access to state programs tailored to their context have proven to be key tools for preserving their identity. These strategies, led by community members, reflect their determination to resist the influences of an invasive Western culture while maintaining their core identity as the Nasa Indigenous people.

Keywords: adolescent pregnancy, social representations, indigenous culture, collaborative ethnography, cultural resistance, Nasa community.

Resumen

Esta investigación cualitativa, de enfoque etnográfico colaborativo, exploró las representaciones sociales del embarazo adolescente en la comunidad Nasa del resguardo Huila, Río Negro, Colombia. El objetivo fue identificar las prácticas de cuidado, creencias y tradiciones relacionadas con el embarazo en esta comunidad. La etnografía colaborativa, entendida como un proceso horizontal entre investigadores y participantes, permitió comprender las formas de vida y el conocimiento cultural de los Nasa, asentados en Río Negro-Huila, tras la avalancha del río Páez en 1994. Los hallazgos revelan que el embarazo es concebido como un acto de resistencia cultural y una forma de pervivencia, más que un problema de salud pública. Para los Nasa, el embarazo adolescente no se considera un error, sino un desafío cuando interfiere con proyectos académicos y la formación de futuros profesionales en el territorio. Metafóricamente, el embarazo es visto como una “semilla” que conecta con la tierra y reafirma la importancia del territorio como espacio fundamental para la familia y el fortalecimiento cultural. Aunque la modernidad y los conflictos históricos han impactado la vida comunitaria, la organización social, el conocimiento ancestral y el acceso a programas estatales adaptados a su contexto han sido herramientas clave para preservar su identidad. Estas estrategias, lideradas por miembros de la comunidad, reflejan su determinación de resistir ante las influencias de una cultura occidental invasiva, manteniendo su esencia como pueblo indígena Nasa.

Palabras clave: embarazo adolescente, representaciones sociales, cultura indígena, etnografía colaborativa, resistencia cultural, comunidad Nasa.

Introduction

This study analyzed the social representations of adolescent pregnancy in the Nasa Páez indigenous reservation of Río Negro, Huila. Defining adolescence as the period between 10 and 19 years of age, according to the World Health Organization (WHO, n.d.). This organization recognizes it as a stage of human development, characterized by significant physical, emotional, and social changes, which are also influenced by cognitive and sociocultural factors. In Colombia, adolescent

pregnancy constitutes a major social and public health challenge. As stated by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), based on results from the National Demographic and Health Survey (ENDS, 2010), 19.5% of female adolescents aged 15 to 19 had been pregnant, a percentage that rose to 26.7% in rural areas (UNICEF, 2015). However, few studies address this phenomenon in indigenous communities, thereby omitting their ancestral practices and knowledge.

This qualitative research, grounded in collaborative ethnography, made it possible to identify care practices, beliefs, and traditions related to adolescent pregnancy within this community while respecting its worldview. The study engaged a purposive sample of reservation members, including community leaders, youth, and professionals. The findings highlight adolescent pregnancy as an expression of cultural resistance, deeply linked to territory and ancestral practices. Despite the influence of Western culture, the community seeks to preserve its identity through strategies led by its own members.

The study emphasizes the importance of understanding these social representations from an intercultural approach, promoting respect for and the integration of indigenous perspectives into policies and programs affecting these communities.

Literature Review

Social Representations in Indigenous Communities

Studies that analyze how indigenous communities are represented in both international and national contexts were identified. Correia and Maia (2021) highlighted the symbolic and cultural violence directed toward these groups due to representations grounded in stereotypes and prejudice. Barreiro et al. (2019) found that in Argentina, indigenous communities are perceived as belonging to the past, which reinforces anachronistic narratives and contemporary invisibilities.

In Colombia, Sarrazín (2015) addressed the phenomenon of "indigenism" and its tensions with Western cultures, while Navarro (2002) explored adaptive social representations in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, emphasizing the impact of the armed conflict on indigenous cultural systems. Sanabria (2017) analyzed the role of mass media, identifying a tendency to reinforce problematic or negative representations of indigenous people, thereby invisibilizing their legitimate demands and accentuating exclusionary narratives.

Social Representations of Adolescent Pregnancy in Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Contexts

In Mexico, Jiménez-Arroyo and Rangel-Flores (2018) identified seven categories of social representations of adolescent motherhood, ranging from subjection to the perception of motherhood as a source of meaning in life. For their part, Mejía Benavides et al. (2019) linked adolescent pregnancy in Indigenous communities to school dropout, while Hernández Ramos et al. (2018) highlighted social consequences such as instability, insecurity, and poverty. Likewise, Rivas et al. (2009) pointed to gender-based violence as a factor associated with unwanted pregnancy among Indigenous women in Chiapas. In Colombia, the Ministry of Culture (2011) found that, in Amazonian Indigenous communities, pregnancy and motherhood are understood within their own cultural and social frameworks. However, several adolescents expressed interest in finishing their studies and pursuing personal life plans before assuming motherhood or fatherhood, recognizing that early pregnancy can limit these goals.

In the context of the Nasa people of Huila, the reviewed literature reveals a limited body of research specifically aimed at understanding the social representations of adolescent pregnancy from the perspectives of community actors. This gap is particularly significant, given that the meanings attributed to adolescent pregnancy, motherhood, and fatherhood may be mediated by specific cultural, family, community, and territorial elements. Therefore, studying these representations within the Nasa context expands the understanding of a phenomenon that, while addressed in other Indigenous and non-Indigenous settings, exhibits its unique characteristics that require examination through the experiences and meanings constructed within the community itself.

Research on Care Practices during Pregnancy and Childbirth in Indigenous Communities

In this section, we present research findings regarding pregnancy and childbirth care practices within Indigenous communities. In this sense, Bula Romero et al. (2019), in *Prácticas de cuidado cultural en el continuo reproductivo de la mujer Embera Katío del alto Sinú* [Cultural care practices in the reproductive continuum of the Embera Katío woman of Alto Sinú], described the cultural care practices across the reproductive continuum of Embera Katío women in Alto Sinú, identifying the importance of traditional midwives, rituals, nutrition, and spiritual care during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period.

Oviedo et al. (2014), in their research with Embera and Wounaan communities in the department of Chocó, demonstrated that care during pregnancy is primarily grounded in the partner and the involvement of the traditional midwife. Pregnancy is monitored through community knowledge, focusing on specific moments such as maternal illness and childbirth, which typically takes place at home. The authors identified a preference for home birth due to the high value placed on indigenous practices and distrust toward Western medical services, associated with the exposure of the female body and medical procedures such as C-sections.

These findings align with those of Ramos Lafont, Campos Casarrubia, and Bula Romero (2019), who found that pregnant women of the Zenú people consider vertical birth to be a cultural practice that protects the newborn and preserves the connection with their worldview. Similarly, Portela Guarín (2002) highlighted the fundamental role of traditional midwives within the Nasa traditional health system, particularly in accompanying pregnancy, childbirth, and the puerperium, where they integrate knowledge of the body, spirituality, and territory.

On the other hand, research conducted with Nasa Indigenous communities has shown that care

practices during pregnancy articulate ancestral knowledge, cultural practices, and healthcare delivery. In this context, care encompasses the support of midwives and family members, the use of medicinal plants, ritual practices, and nutrition tied to the well-being of both the mother and the baby. Furthermore, the importance of dialogue between ancestral knowledge and healthcare services from an intercultural perspective is emphasized (Ferrer-Pérez et al., 2025).

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that pregnancy and childbirth care practices are rooted in Indigenous worldviews and underscore the need to articulate traditional knowledge with Western health services.

Adolescent Pregnancy as a Public Health Problem and Strategies for its Reduction

This section brings together research addressing adolescent pregnancy as a social problem and describes the strategies implemented for its prevention. In this context, Loredó Abdalá et al. (2017) note that pregnancy in adolescence affects young women's life plans and is associated with consequences such as school dropout, family conflicts, social rejection, difficulties in accessing employment, and impaired emotional well-being. Furthermore, they warn that its effects can extend into the medium and long term, increasing the risk of child abuse and perpetuating cycles of family and social vulnerability.

In the same vein, Molina et al. (2019) identified that adolescent pregnancy yields consequences related to the disruption of educational trajectories, parenting difficulties, family conflicts, and limitations on labor market integration. For his part, Calvache López (2015) argues that, in Colombia, this phenomenon stems from multiple factors, including social inequalities, deficiencies in the educational and health systems, social exclusion, and various forms of violence affecting the adolescent population.

Faced with this issue, international organizations

have promoted comprehensive strategies to reduce adolescent pregnancy. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and UNICEF (2018) recommend delaying marriage before age 18, strengthening education and support to prevent pregnancies before age 20, expanding access to contraceptive methods, preventing sexual violence, reducing unsafe abortions, and guaranteeing skilled care during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period. These organizations also warn that Indigenous female adolescents constitute one of the most vulnerable groups regarding early pregnancy.

In Latin America, various studies have demonstrated the importance of considering the socio-cultural particularities of Indigenous populations when addressing adolescent pregnancy. In Mexico, disparities have been identified in access to information and sexual and reproductive health services, as well as in the knowledge and use of contraceptive methods among Indigenous women—conditions that are related to their reproductive behavior and to greater vulnerability to adolescent pregnancy (Sosa Sánchez et al., 2019). Similarly, Calvillo Paz and Rodríguez Cabrera (2014) showed in Guatemala that sex education directed at students in Indigenous communities fosters the acquisition of knowledge regarding sexual and reproductive health and constitutes a key strategy for the prevention of early pregnancies and other associated risks.

In Colombia, the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF, 2019) holds the Andean Week for the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy annually—a strategy that brings together entities from the National Family Welfare System, academia, and social organizations to transform societal perceptions surrounding early motherhood and fatherhood. These actions prioritize rural territories and ethnic communities, promoting adolescent pregnancy prevention through a rights-based and intercultural framework.

These initiatives are relevant to the present study because they demonstrate that public policies

also reach Indigenous communities and can influence the transformation of their social representations. Along these lines, Posso (2010) found that access to education has driven significant changes in the life plans of Misak youth, who prioritize professional training and tend to postpone motherhood and fatherhood.

Youth in Indigenous Communities

The following section brings together research analyzing the tensions experienced by Indigenous youth when facing Western society, as well as their role in the vindication and cultural survival of their communities. In this regard, Mendoza Zapata et al. (2020), through a literature review, analyzed how processes of migration, education, and organizational participation influence Indigenous youth. The authors found that these processes lead to a reconfiguration of youth identities by confronting them with the demands of modernity, such as the use of the official language, schooling, employment, and consumption. Likewise, they noted that education represents an opportunity for individual and family development, although it also creates tensions between Indigenous worldviews and Western models. In the case of migration, young people re-signify the city as a new territory from which they maintain and strengthen their cultural identity.

Along the same lines, Arredondo Velázquez et al. (2021), in their study on the Hakib'al collective of the Maya Chuj people, found that youth play a fundamental role in the recovery of historical memory, the preservation of community practices, and the strengthening of collective identity. For this community, being young transcends the biological dimension and is associated with the progressive acquisition of responsibilities aimed at cultural stewardship and community service.

In the department of Huila, Parra Chacón et al. (2018) analyzed the social representations of school constructed by children and youth in an Indigenous reservation. The results demonstrated that school is represented as a space for learning and the transmission of knowledge, as well as a

setting linked to identity and a sense of belonging. Furthermore, participants emphasized the need to improve school conditions and renew pedagogical practices. Complementarily, the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC, 2021), during the VI National Assembly of Indigenous Youth, highlighted the importance of strengthening processes aimed at youth to guarantee the transmission of ancestral knowledge and the cultural continuity of Indigenous peoples.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate the role of Indigenous youth in community survival and in constructing identities that articulate Western influences with their own community values. In this regard, Kessler (2006, as cited in Arredondo Velázquez et al., 2021) notes that young people negotiate between the demands of modernity and a commitment to the cultural identity and continuity of their peoples.

Methodology

Research Approach

This research is conducted using a qualitative approach aimed at understanding and interpreting the social representations of pregnancy constructed by an Indigenous community. From this perspective, knowledge is understood through the values, perceptions, and meanings that subjects construct within their social contexts. Furthermore, qualitative research is characterized by its methodological flexibility, allowing for the deployment of diverse strategies to approach the phenomenon under study, and requiring the researcher's immersion in the context where the investigation takes place (Galeano Marín, 2018).

The study design corresponds to a collaborative ethnography. Ethnography, understood as both a process and a product, seeks to comprehend and represent the ways of life, meanings, and practices of a given culture (Guber, 2001). Collaborative ethnography expands the participation of research subjects and recognizes their active role in knowledge co-creation. In this sense, Lassiter (2005, as cited in Katzer & Samprón, 2011) posits

that this perspective diverges from traditional ethnographic approaches by positioning collaboration and ethical commitment with participants as foundational principles of the research process.

From this perspective, participants are recognized as collaborators in the production, interpretation, and validation of knowledge through horizontal relationships, shared interests, and participatory co-construction processes (Katzer & Samprón, 2011; Rappaport, 2018). Although this approach retains elements characteristic of traditional ethnography—such as field immersion and the understanding of cultural practices—it aims to transcend the traditional researcher-informant dynamic (Lassiter, 2005; Rappaport, 2018).

The choice of collaborative ethnography is particularly suitable due to the bond established between the researchers and the Indigenous community, as well as their shared interests surrounding the social representations of pregnancy. Collaboration serves as a space for dialogue and collective construction that enables the retrieval and strengthening of the community's own knowledge. As Rappaport (2018) points out, deliberate collaboration throughout the various stages of the research process fosters the generation of meaningful and actionable knowledge for the participating social groups.

Population

The Nasa Páez Indigenous Reservation, Huila, Río Negro, is located in the Municipality of Íquira, Department of Huila, Colombia. The community settled in Río Negro in 1994 following the Páez River avalanche. The general population of Río Negro is classified under socioeconomic strata 1 and 2. The Indigenous community is categorized in stratum 1. Currently, according to the 2021 census conducted by the Huila Reservation, the reservation has a population of 2,385 inhabitants and comprises 10 villages (*veredas*): Huila (Kuee – Dsi'j), Casa Blanca (Sanxee – Yat Chi'jme), Chachucue (Chajuu – Ucue, Enz Zhi Ucue), Caloto (Kluutu), San Miguel (Shita Vits), Llano Buco (Bukj – U'kue), Irlanda

(Musequijnz), Arrayán (Tsita Chjamb), Yosayó 21 (Yu'syu, Cjii – Chucue), and Palmito (Yu'jnePesatje).

Unit of Analysis

The sampling method was non-probabilistic, specifically by convenience, which allows for the selection of accessible and available participants who meet the criteria established in alignment with the study's objectives (Otzen & Manterola, 2017). The sample consisted of two community elders (*mayores*), one psychology professional, one teacher, and three young people, all of whom participated in a semi-structured interview.

Inclusion Criteria

- Community members registered in the census and residing within the community.
- Adolescents aged 14 and older.
- Community members willing to collaborate and participate in data collection.

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals not belonging to the Nasa community.

Data Processing and Analysis

The methodological procedure followed the stages proposed by Rodríguez Sabiote et al. (2005) for data analysis in qualitative research:

A) Preparatory Stage:

- The initiative to conduct a research process within the community was shared with the ancestral authority of the territory, receiving a favorable response.
- The Reservation's Life Plan (*Plan de Vida*) and the 2021 census were reviewed to understand historical, demographic, and structural aspects of the community.

B) Fieldwork Stage:

- Participant observations were conducted in

various community spaces across the territory.

- Semi-structured interviews were designed and administered to community elders (2), a psychology professional (1), a teacher (1), and young people (3). All interviews were audio-recorded, and most were conducted in the community's native language.

C) Data Analysis Stage:

- The audio interviews were translated (since they were in the participants' native language) and transcribed. Once transcribed, they were imported into an open coding matrix with lines numbered sequentially from start to finish.
- Textual units were then extracted and assigned specific codes. These codes were reviewed and grouped into broader categories. This process occurred in two phases: a) A thorough, independent reading of the transcripts was conducted by the researchers to identify themes related to the research objectives and relevant aspects addressing the research question; b) The findings identified by each researcher were debated and agreed upon by consensus.
- Next, to address the research objectives, both a descriptive phase and an interpretive phase were established. The former consisted of describing the categories in detail using verbatim narratives from the interviews and identifying trends, which were presented in graphs for clearer comprehension. The second phase involved identifying the social representations and developing broader categories reflecting the community's current perspectives. Subsequently, the results were discussed, and conclusions were drawn.

D) Final Stage:

- Presentation of results, along with the drafting of the discussion and conclusions.

Data Collection Instrument

To collect the data, an ethnographic semi-structured interview was employed. This tool seeks to capture social, institutional, and historical aspects that give rise to the construction of social representations regarding the object of study through a flexible set of questions (Cuevas, 2016). According to Moscovici (1979, as cited in Cuevas, 2016) and Jodelet (2003, as cited in Cuevas, 2016), this is an indispensable tool in any study of social representations.

The interviews were conducted between May 1 and May 20, 2022, within the Indigenous territory, in the context of various spaces for community reflection and dialogue. Participants were contacted in advance, and their selection considered criteria related to their involvement in and knowledge of community processes. In this regard, participants included Indigenous community leaders (*comuneros líderes*), individuals affiliated with institutions operating within the territory—among them a psychologist and a teacher—and young people belonging to the community. Additionally, factors such as accessibility, potential for contact, and voluntary willingness to participate were taken into account. During the recruitment process, some of the individuals contacted decided not to participate in the study.

Ethical Considerations

In accordance with the standards governing ethical considerations in Colombia, such as Law 1090 (2006) and Resolution 8430 (1993), this study was conducted with the written authorization and informed consent of each participant. Emphasizing the responsibility for confidentiality and anonymity of the data provided, participants were assured that the results would be used exclusively for academic and research purposes. Based on ethical principles, the findings of this research will be disseminated to the community.

The data analyzed in this study were collected in 2022; thus, the time interval between data collection and the publication of the results constitutes a relevant aspect for their interpretation. Considering the dynamic, historical, and sociocultural na-

ture of social representations, the findings do not claim to describe current representations of the Nasa community in a generalizable manner, but rather to account for the meanings constructed by the participants within the specific context in which the research took place. Precisely, the value of retrieving and publishing these findings lies in establishing a temporal benchmark to understand potential processes of continuity, change, and transformation in these representations. In this regard, work is currently underway on a new research project aimed at exploring present-day social representations and contrasting them with those identified in the initial study, with the purpose of understanding how meanings surrounding adolescent pregnancy, family, and Nasa identity have been maintained, transformed, or emerged over time. This perspective is particularly relevant given the limited scientific literature available on these experiences within the studied community; therefore, disseminating these findings contributes to making visible the knowledge, meanings, and experiences constructed within the community's own context, while providing a baseline for the longitudinal analysis of their transformations.

Results

Pregnancy-related practices and beliefs in Indigenous communities are deeply rooted in their social representations, influencing both thoughts and behaviors (Melguizo & Alzate, 2008). These practices are understood as conscious and socially organized activities with implicit and explicit meanings, whereas beliefs provide alternative and coherent ways of interpreting the world.

In the Indigenous community of Río Negro, four main practices were identified:

- **Nutrition:** Priority is given to the consumption of "hot" foods cultivated by the partner and family on their own plots of land.
- **Ritualistic practices:** Rituals are performed to connect the newborn with the family, territory, and community, transcending the biological realm into the social and cultural sphere.

res. These rituals include the burial (*siembra*) of the placenta and umbilical cord, medicinal plant baths, and the "road opening" (*abrir camino*) ritual.

- **Family support:** The traditional midwife and traditional doctor (*médico tradicional*), recognized as wise figures (*sabios*), guide the pregnancy and childbirth processes, ensuring physical, emotional, and cultural well-being.
- **Postpartum care (*cuarentena*):** This 45-day period is considered essential for the recovery of both the mother and the newborn. Physical activities and contact with "cold" or sacred elements—such as rivers and waterfalls—are restricted to prevent illness.

These practices and beliefs reflect a holistic approach to pregnancy that combines spiritual, cultural, and physical dimensions, ensuring both the health of the mother and baby and the continuity of cultural identity.

The practices presented in Table 1 possess meaning and significance; that is, practices and beliefs operate dynamically rather than being static. Purnell and Paulanka (2003) propose three types of practices and beliefs: descriptive, those that ought to be performed to achieve harmony and positive outcomes within society; restrictive, actions that should be avoided to secure favorable social results; and taboo, those that, if carried out, cause profound concern.

Thus, it can be inferred that the four practices presented are predominantly descriptive and restrictive in nature. On the one hand, they constitute cultural patterns that guide behavior and social communication; on the other hand, they function to prevent behaviors that, if violated, could generate varying degrees of distress or uncertainty (Melguizo & Alzate, 2008).

In summary, beliefs provide individuals with a particular way of understanding and inhabiting their world; that is, they constitute social representations. Beliefs are often associated with supersti-

tions and mythological elements; nevertheless, they represent an internal force that mobilizes social groups, without which existence would remain bound to a meaningless world (Melguizo & Alzate, 2008).

Below are the representations of pregnancy identified through descriptive analysis and the recognition of pregnancy-related practices and beliefs. As previously noted, given the close relationship between the family and the Nasa identity (*ser Nasa*), family dynamics were incorporated into the interpretation.

Pregnancy is a natural, necessary, desired, and planned process within the territory

Processes of modernization, formal education, and transculturation have brought about transformations in how indigenous communities construct and redefine their practices, values, and identities. Within this context, tensions may arise between traditional meanings associated with cultural reproduction and emerging perspectives related to individual autonomy, formal education, and personal life plans. Consequently, pregnancy can acquire diverse meanings within a community, being understood through both individual dimensions tied to personal and academic aspirations, and collective dimensions related to the cultural and political continuity of the Nasa people.

From the concept of transculturation, cultural transformations can be understood as dynamic processes in which communities incorporate new cultural elements while simultaneously preserving, reinterpreting, or modifying their own practices and knowledge (Marrero León, 2013). This perspective is useful for understanding that social representations of pregnancy within the Nasa community are not static, but are rather constructed and transformed in response to the social, educational, and cultural changes experienced by the community.

Furthermore, duality constitutes a fundamental principle in several Andean indigenous worldviews,

Table 1
Practices and Beliefs Regarding Pregnancy

	Self-care practices during pregnancy	Personal beliefs about pregnancy
Nutrition	• Sowing of corn, beans, arracacha • Consumption of hot foods and restriction of red meats. • Consumption of hot beverages	Good nutrition is prioritized so that the woman's body regains strength and to avoid cold in the woman.¹ "Because that's cold food, and that should never be eaten in the diet" (Interview 2, participant B1, 10 May 2022, lines 106-107). "From the nutrition aspect. They should consume hot food: Garlic, chocolate, ... among others. Rice and arepas should not be given..." (Interview 2, participant B1, 10 May 2022, lines 62-63).
Rituals	• Conception of the seed of life following the cycles of the moon and the sun² • Planting of the placenta and the umbilical cord • Medicinal plant baths • Path-clearing ritual	Moon cycles define the feminine gender of the woman and the personality she will possess, whereas the sun cycle defines the masculine gender and the personality that the seed of life will inherit. "They indicate at what time we want to have a boy, at what time we want to have a girl, and with what spiritual strength we want that child to be conceived in the woman's womb" (Interview 1, participant S2, May 5, 2022, lines 45-47). To root the seed of life to its territory and community, ensuring its return when grown, while also safeguarding the good health of both the baby and the mother "The umbilical cord is planted so that this seed or person returns to their territory; it is like a call made by the earth for the child to return to their territory and not forget their people, their community, their culture—that they are Nasa, that they are indigenous" (Interview 3, participant C1, May 20, 2022, lines 242-245). To protect the woman from contracting coldness. After one month, the seed of life is taken out of the house in the mother's arms or on her back, travels around the home garden (huerta), and returns to the house; this is done with the intention of welcoming the new person, familiarizing them with their surroundings, and always ensuring their return home. "After one month, the woman must go out with her baby on her back. That is the path-clearing ritual for the new little person" (Interview 2, participant B1, May 10, 2022, lines 67-70). "The elder or spiritual leader who accompanies them tells the mother that she must go visit someone, and before the woman begins to walk, they blow remedies on her" (Interview 2, participant B1, May 10, 2022, lines 67-70). "Yes, and it is so that they will always return home. That is a truly Nasa ritual" (Interview 2, participant B1, May 10, 2022, line 85).
Family Support	• Support primarily from the mother and the partner • Support from the traditional midwife (partera) • Support from the traditional healer (médico tradicional)	The mother guides the couple toward proper care during pregnancy and the upbringing of the seed of life, while the traditional midwife and the traditional healer safeguard the physical and emotional health of the pregnant woman. "Mainly, I would believe it is that of her partner, her romantic partner, one of the primary individuals responsible for that pregnancy. So I would believe that both he and the woman's family play a role" (Interview 3, participant C1, May 20, 2022, lines 38-41). "The traditional midwife, as the name implies, is the person in charge, trained to deliver the baby and to provide the initial guidance to the mother" (Interview 3, participant C1, May 20, 2022, lines 275-277). "As for the traditional healer, I consider that his role is to intervene immediately if complications arise during delivery" (Interview 3, participant C1, May 20, 2022, lines 280-281).
Postpartum Confinement (Cuarentena)	Observe a 45-day postpartum confinement period Refrain from any hand-weaving or needlework The woman binds her abdomen using the <i>chumbe</i>³	To protect the woman from the wind to prevent coldness, and to prohibit strenuous activities that could weaken the body, particularly eyesight. "The female elders (mayoras) recommend that women should not weave during their postpartum recovery, because if they do, their eyes will be damaged; they must stay rested, focusing solely on caring for the baby, as that is the only way the body will gradually recover" (Interview 2, participant B1, May 10, 2022, lines 64-65). "During the early months, a binding is applied so that, in the event the woman exerts... let's say... excessive physical force, it prevents her from experiencing complications such as potential miscarriages" (Interview 1, participant S2, May 5, 2022, lines 50-52).

Note. The practices and beliefs surrounding pregnancy care in the Nasa community of Río Negro originate from actions promoted by the family and maintain a close relationship with the territory

1. Disease acquired due to lack of health care, particularly during pregnancy and the menstrual period, which causes body aches.

2. Refers to the phases of the moon and the position of the sun. Within the indigenous worldview, it is believed that the sex of the baby can be determined based on the moon and the sun.

3. Ancestral woven sash crafted by women to carry the baby on their back, as well as to swaddle the infant.

where it is conceived as a generative and organizing element of the cosmos (Llamazares, 2011).

In this context, indigenous communities undergo ongoing processes of negotiation between the incorporation of new cultural elements and the preservation of their traditional knowledge, values, and practices. Far from a simple opposition between tradition and modernity, these processes reflect the community's capacity to redefine its culture and adapt to social changes without losing its collective identity.

The family is the central core in the formation of the Nasa identity (*ser Nasa*)

The impact of the dominant society on indigenous cultures is reflected in significant sociocultural transformations, such as the loss of essential practices within the Nasa community of Río Negro, including traditional foodways, rituals, and family relationships. These transformations have been exacerbated by forced displacement from Cauca to Huila in 1994 and by sustained contact with peasant communities and state institutions, which has intensified transculturation processes (Paño Yáñez, 2005).

Currently, young families have adopted lifestyles associated with the global market, manifested in shifts such as the reduced use of *tules* (traditional kitchen gardens), the replacement of the *tulpa* (hearth) as a space for dialogue by television, and the weakening of the native language relative to Spanish. Family disintegration is also observed, marked by an increase in young single mothers. Nevertheless, the representation of the family as the cultural core and essential pillar for the resistance of the Nasa people persists, reinforced in response to the new "rules of the game" imposed by the modern context.

From the Nasa worldview, the family is symbolized by the *tulpa*, a space for intergenerational dialogue and the oral transmission of knowledge (Guegia Hurtado, 2017). This initial process of primary socialization is subsequently complement-

ed by interaction in external environments during secondary socialization, where the community adapts pedagogical approaches to align new family realities with traditional values.

Seeds of Life as Hope for Cultural Strengthening

A significant social representation within the Nasa people is the conception of the infant as a "seed of life" (*semilla de vida*), an expression that symbolizes cultural continuity, collective identity, and the commitment to the survival (*pervivencia*) of the community (Hurtado, 2020). From the researchers' interpretation, this metaphor transcends the biological fact of birth and expresses the intimate relationship between the newborn, the territory, and the community. In this sense, the ritual of planting the umbilical cord constitutes a cultural practice through which the bond connecting the seed of life to Mother Earth, identity, and Good Living (*Buen Vivir*) of the Nasa people is strengthened (Tumbo-García et al., 2021). Just as a seed requires care to germinate and grow, the child is expected to strengthen their sense of belonging, learn their native language, value ancestral medicine, and assume a commitment to the defense of the territory.

Despite contemporary challenges, the cultural legacy is not regarded as lost, but rather as dormant, which has spurred educational processes focused on the "seed of life." These community-led efforts involve the family, local institutions, and programs operating under an indigenous-led differential framework (*enfoque diferencial propio*), aimed at guaranteeing Nasa cultural survival beyond state mandates.

The metaphor of the seed also underscores the necessity of "fertile ground," represented by a family and community environment that fosters the comprehensive development of children. In this regard, the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC, 2013) recognizes the family as the fundamental foundation of both the community and the organization, asserting the need to strengthen family processes, promote parental responsibility,

and accompany the education and guidance of children and youth.

Conclusions

In indigenous communities, pregnancy is understood as a form of resistance and cultural survival (*pervivencia*). From this perspective, it constitutes a community and family matter that involves putting ancestral knowledge into practice to strengthen the sense of belonging in the new human being. Although the concept of adolescent pregnancy is present within the community, it is not primarily framed through the notion of a "mistake" or "problem," nor is it defined by its psychological, physical, family, and economic consequences. The main challenge identified arises when pregnancy interferes with academic projects and the education of future professionals within the territory.

Metaphorically, pregnancy is understood as a "seed" (*semilla*), closely linked to the land and the act of planting. This representation reaffirms that, from the indigenous worldview, territory constitutes an essential setting for the formation of the family and community, as well as for cultural strengthening. Furthermore, modernity, its conflicts, and the collective history of the community have brought about transformations in the social life of the reservation. Nevertheless, the commitment to guarantee the effective enjoyment of rights and cultural survival remains firm. Community organization, local knowledge, and engagement with state entities have allowed institutional programs to be integrated into the territory, striving to ensure that these initiatives contribute to strengthening cultural processes with members of the community serving as their primary pro-

motors.

Finally, the representations surrounding the pregnancy process reflect transformations in the collective consciousness of the community, while also demonstrating a strong determination to maintain and strengthen their identity as the Nasa indigenous people. In this sense, pregnancy acquires meanings that transcend its biological dimension, remaining deeply interconnected with family, territory, community, and cultural survival.

Limitations and recommendations

Among the main limitations of the study is its focus on a specific Nasa indigenous reservation; consequently, the findings reflect the context and experiences of the participants and are not intended to be generalized to all Nasa communities or indigenous peoples. Likewise, the results reflect the representations present at the particular time the research was conducted. Future research is recommended to expand the study to other Nasa reservations and communities and to incorporate the perspectives of diverse actors, such as adolescents, families, traditional authorities, traditional midwives (*parteras*), educators, and healthcare professionals. Additionally, it would be pertinent to further investigate the relationship between cultural practices, institutional services, and the social transformations experienced by indigenous communities.

Authors' contribution

María Paula Ortiz Andrade: conceptualization, data curation, research, methodology, analysis, writing: initial and final.

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