

First 1000 Days of Life: Mothers' Economic Hardship of Caring for Their Babies

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Abstract : The purpose of the research was to explore mother's unique experience and knowledge of mothering in the first 1000 day of their child's life, from birth to age 2. The study used a qualitative research methodology with an exploratory research design. A sample of 12 mothers was used, comprising different racial backgrounds from low income areas in the Western Cape. The data was collected by means of semi-structured, in-depth interviews, which were transcribed verbatim, analysed using Braun's and Clark's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. Some of the findings revealed that the mothers who participated in the study were consistently unable to feed their children and themselves due to profound and extreme situations of poverty, stress, and lack of infrastructural support. These mothers residing in low-income communities are not adequately supported both financially and socially and are often unable to meet the needs of their infants within the first 1000 days. Given the consequential nature of this period, it is imperative that mothers are able to access such support. Single mothers especially are in need of social and financial support. Appropriate interventions are required to assist mothers generally but more specifically, mothers who have children within the first 1000 days of life. By implementing appropriate interventions to address these needs, it will assist mothers to ensure optimal developmental growth of their children. This will positively impact the developmental trajectory of children in South Africa.

Keywords : caring, economic hardship, first one thousand days, mothers

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