



Practices and traditional beliefs around puerpera in the regions of Ecuador

Prácticas y creencias tradicionales en torno a puérperas en las regiones del Ecuador

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ABSTRACT

This research is supported by the need to analyze specific cases of the different practices and traditional beliefs that are carried out in puerperal women in the regions of Ecuador. A research method based on a bibliographic review or exploratory description was used, having a qualitative approach, in which; For the collection of information, an exhaustive search of the most relevant concepts on traditional practices and beliefs was carried out. The results of the present show us that there is a great variety of practices, knowledge and customs that have been carried out from generation to generation with the purpose of keeping alive all the ancestral and traditional customs in relation to puerperal women, a great majority of these customs have

their ideology based on religious-spiritual thoughts, which consider women as the center of everything, which group the mind, body and spirit, and by encompassing all this, they are the main axes in altering, what which generates not only damage to the woman, but also to the mother-child relationship, from the moment of fertilization.

RESUMEN

La presente investigación se respalda en la necesidad de analizar casos puntuales sobre las diferentes prácticas y creencias tradiciones que se lleva a cabo en mujeres puérperas en las regiones del Ecuador. Se empleó un método de investigación basado en una revisión bibliográfica o descripción exploratoria, teniendo un enfoque cualitativo, en el que; para el levantamiento de información se realizó una exhaustiva búsqueda de los conceptos más relevantes sobre prácticas y creencias tradicionales. Los resultados de la presente nos manifiestan que existen una gran variedad de prácticas, saberes y costumbres que se han llevado a cabo de generación en generación teniendo como propósito la mantener vivas todas las costumbres ancestrales y tradicionales con relación a las puérperas, una gran mayoría de estas costumbres tienen su ideología fundamentada en pensamiento religiosos-espirituales, los cuales consideran a la mujer como el centro de todo, las cuales agrupan el espíritu, la identidad, lamente, la esencia y el cuerpo, y al abarcar todo esto, son los principales ejes en alterarse, lo cual genera no solamente daño en la mujer, sino también en la relación madre y recién nacido, erradicado desde la fecundación.

Keywords / Palabras clave

Pregnancy, puerperium, practices, beliefs

Embarazo, puerperio, practicas, creencias.

Introduction

Ecuador is defined as an intercultural country, because all inhabitants interact between different cultures, having a communicative process, knowing different customs and maintaining a regime of respect in which no cultural group is above the other or vice versa, this leads to a country rich in coexistence, equality and harmonious integrity.

According to the Council of Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador (CODENPE), there are currently 18 peoples and 14 nationalities in

Ecuador, reflecting the multicultural and plurinational variety (Ministerio Cordinador De Patrimonio, 2019).

"In 2020, 191 maternal deaths were registered, representing a maternal mortality ratio of 57.6 per 100,000 live births" (INEC, 2021). Of these data, the greatest vulnerability is in the indigenous women's sector, due to which the knowledge of beliefs plays a very important role as it simplifies the continuity of the problem, considering that each and every one of the different regions have their own beliefs and practices, which is why traditional practices and beliefs play an essential role in the Ecuadorian community.

The Interculturality Approach in the Model of Integrated Health Care and in the Integrated Public Health Network relates the implementation of strategies which allow us to incorporate a comprehensive approach to the well-being of different archaic-ancestral cultures, beliefs and traditional practices, having an intercultural approach (Balarezo, 2017).

Under this reality, the question arises: What are the main traditional practices and beliefs surrounding postpartum women in the regions of Ecuador?

The present study is based on the need to analyse specific cases focused on the different traditional beliefs and practices of postpartum women in the regions of Ecuador, which generates interest in future readers. Despite the different authorities and approaches of the state, it is still not understood by many communities and maternal and infant mortality is currently considered a very relevant problem in the different communities, which are affected by the lack of economic resources, ethnicity, gender, inclusion and poor access to different health services. The established objectives will allow us to identify the main traditional practices and beliefs surrounding postpartum women in the regions of Ecuador.

Pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum are stages in which women go through a large number of changes, both physical and physiological, and they are also stages of vulnerability, in which different complications can arise; because of this, health care services are essential, not only for the survival of the newborn, but also for the puerperal woman, to improve her health in all aspects (Paul & García, 2021).

It is important to have not only health services, controls and others, but also to recognise the different beliefs necessary in the postpartum process, which favour the health of these elements.

This explains the importance and relevance of the present investigation of the topic addressed, emphasising that it is carried out with the aim of recognising the main traditional practices and beliefs regarding postpartum women in the regions of Ecuador.

The present article presents the following general objective:

- To identify the main traditional practices and beliefs about postpartum women in the regions of Ecuador.

From which it derives the following specific objectives:

- To analyse the main traditional practices of postpartum women in the regions of Ecuador.
- To establish the main traditional knowledge of postpartum women in the regions of Ecuador.
- To compare the different knowledge, practices and beliefs of postpartum women in different regions.

Previous studies that have been carried out on the topic presented.

Carla María Ordinola Ramírez, Miguel Angel Barrena Gurbillón, Oscar Andrés Gamarra Torres, Jesús Rascón & Fernando Corroto, (2019). "Beliefs and customs of mothers and midwives for the care of pregnancy, childbirth and puerperium in the district of Huancas (Chachapoyas, Peru)" with the aim of providing an overview of the traditional customs used during the care executed in the period of pregnancy, puerperium and childbirth in the city of Huancas.

The study was carried out in the current descriptive phenomenology, a qualitative methodology used to gather experience in "field research", through large-scale informative interviews, participant focus groups and analysis. This allows to relate in an affective way both mothers and midwives of the province-district of Huancas, trying to understand the behaviour and human nature (Ordinola, 2019).

The purpose is to describe and analyse the ideas, beliefs, meanings, knowledge and practices of groups, cultures and communities.

Likewise, rituals, symbols, social functions, kinship, migration and networks, among others, have been studied in order to describe and analyse the living habits of the inhabitants of the district of Huancas during pregnancy, childbirth and puerperium. On the other hand, their implications for this behaviour carried out in general circumstances were considered (Ordinola, 2019).

A content analysis was conducted, resulting in a reading and re-reading of each interview. It is then separated into units of common meaning, by phrases and representative words, negative effects, loss of knowledge and ancestral practices (Ordinola, 2019).

Marisol Vega Macedo, (2021). "La atención del embarazo, el parto y el posparto brindado por el personal local de salud: la partera tradicional y la partera de la familia en comunidades indígenas de Chiapas" (Pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum care provided by local health personnel: the traditional midwife and the family midwife in indigenous communities in Chiapas), aiming to influence the midwives' company in a health system, promoting a salary or monetary merit because of their work and in this way strengthening new capacities.

Paguada Ardiles Lucia Ysabel; Salas Sumina Leny Karen, (2019). "Cultural beliefs that hinder adequate care of pregnancy and childbirth of pregnant patients in the hospital of Espinar-Cusco 2018" an article which focused on determining how cultural beliefs prevented proper monitoring and care of childbirth, postpartum and pregnant patients in the hospital centre Espinar Cusco.

Gonzales José; Villavicencio Evelin (2019). "Intercultural practices in the postpartum; Tixán 2019" whose objective was to determine the intercultural practices of the postpartum; Tixán 2019.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were carried out for data collection, which was applied to 8 postpartum women from Tixán, with a qualitative approach of a phenomenological type, thus allowing for the division by categories, it was sought to achieve all the objectives set in order to reach the principle of theoretical saturation; followed by coding the data with the use of different digital platforms (González, 2019).

The information obtained shows that postpartum women have their own cultural practices related to maternal care (care from the medical team, family support, food, daily life, etc.), daily routine, sequence,

clothing, hygiene and complications) and NB (care from the nursing staff). health, vaccinations, early consumption, bathing, examination, umbilical cord care, breastfeeding, dressing, complications), which can effectively enhance care interventions to ensure well-being and improve the adaptation of the mother-child relationship, in social and cultural contexts (González, 2019).

Ger Morales Karina Liseth; Tumbaco Vilcacundo Sandra Cristina, (2017). "Pregnancy, childbirth and puerperium a look from the Quito-Cara women in the community of Cocotog in the period October 2016 - March 2017" whose objective was to identify the main knowledge, customs, practices in pregnancy, childbirth and puerperium in reference to the culture of Quito-Cara women.

The study is ethnographic in nature as it will be carried out in a specific area of research, the Cocotog Society, descriptive as it will describe the beliefs, customs and practices associated with pregnancy, childbirth and childbirth of Quito-Cara women. It will be qualitative, through which we will collect research experiences in this field, through life stories that will allow us to interact with the inhabitants of the Cocotog community, especially with the women of Quito-Cara, in an effort to understand human nature and their natural environment (Ger, 2017).

Research developed from the knowledge, customs and practices of the Quito - Cara women of the Cocotog community with the aim of recovering ancestral knowledge and seeking to establish a harmonious, more inclusive and humane feminine dimension, based on a revaluation of the rights of culturally diverse people. people. from the moment of conception, the process of birth in a free position until recovery (Ger, 2017).

In observing the objectives set out in the research, information is extracted from primary sources through life stories. For the analysis and implementation of Chapter IV, the objective is to delve into the knowledge, customs and practices of pregnancy, childbirth and childbirth among women of the Quito-Cara culture, which is nourished by the experiences of life stories narrated by two midwives and a woman who has experienced pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum in the cultural context in question (Ger, 2017).

Life histories allow us to analyse the cultural characteristics and the medical and reproductive practices of our ancestors with all that surrounds them (medicine, knowledge, secrets and something else)

and finally to compare what we find with the written theoretical elements (Ger, 2017).

Some of the changes experienced from generation to generation have been verified. In the course of this study, we complied with informed consent, respecting ethical considerations, that the real names of the study subjects would not be used in the narrative of this chapter, and only fictitious names will be used for this analysis (Ger, 2017).

The puerperium is defined as the period of time after childbirth in which a number of physiological and anatomical changes occur in the maternal woman induced or given by pregnancy, which is why its duration is indefinite or imprecise, however, an average of four to six weeks after childbirth is estimated (Creencias Y Costumbres Sobre Cuidados Del Puerperio De Mujeres Ashaninkas Atendidas En El Puesto De Salud Puente Ipoki, Satipo, 2021).

In stages, the puerperium can be divided into three periods (Octavio, 2017):

- Immediate puerperium: Present in the first 24 hours after delivery.
- Early puerperium: This period manifests itself in the first week after delivery.
- Late Puerperium: This period includes the necessary time in which the involution of those organs necessary for gestation, such as the genital organs, is completed, including the return to normality of the maternal woman.

The return or involution of the maternal systems and organs that were affected or underwent in one way or another that transformation during pregnancy and childbirth, present modifications which condition them to a large extent in their pre-gestational states.

The highest pregnancy rates in the world are found in the sub-regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, and it should be noted that it is estimated that the majority of these pregnancies are teenage pregnancies. It is estimated that around 46 births per 1000 are to adolescents, according to the global pregnancy rate (PAHO, 2019).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), childbirth and the postpartum period are the times when women are most vulnerable due to physiological changes in the mother and need comprehensive

health care and rehabilitation by grandparents (World Health Organization, 2019).

Common cultural practices include girding, feeding on chicken and sheep broth, intimate hygiene and communal bathing with medicinal herbs, Thursday walks, ear muffs, handkerchiefs, etc., are still in place in Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia and Chile.

"The postpartum period is an important period that comes right after vaginal delivery or caesarean section, a period of 5 to 6 weeks during which the organs of the anatomical part of the female reproductive system return to their original normal state, i.e., their state before pregnancy.

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During this period, women adapt to postpartum changes, seeking support from the family and social environment, especially when they experience some discomfort, which they want to alleviate through the way they carry out the inherited activities under their care (FdW, 2020).

- Warning signs during the postpartum period
- Dyspnoea
- Fever: $T^{\circ} > 38^{\circ} \text{C}$
- Unretracted uterus
- Tears in the cervix or at perineal level

Belt: Should be comfortable and flexible, not rigid. The lump should not be too tight at the beginning, as exercise improves muscle tone. In the case of a caesarean section, bandaging the wound is not recommended and sweating should be reduced.

Humans have close meanings to all aspects of reality; regardless of their origin, what defines a woman's life after childbirth is the cause and explanation of countless everyday behaviours. According to the concept, the postpartum period is considered a period when the mother's health is fragile and must be isolated. This means that during these days, altered temperature rises or drops, or stimulating exposure to the sun and hard work should be avoided, as this can lead to uterine prolapse and bleeding in the woman.

The woman also believes in the mal susto or evil eye, which is why she always closes the door and does not let visitors in, even though this is a mysterious and terrible disease that cruelly unbalances people and suddenly, above all, is the mental and pathological state disease of the indigenous people. It is believed that the soul of the woman has left the body, there are various inconveniences such as loss of appetite, pallor, general weakness, weight loss, low body temperature at the onset of the disease, but it gradually increases with time.

"Many communities in this country and other Latin American countries use medicinal plants to improve the ailments of the population, moreover many of the communities live distant from health posts" (Elizabeth, 2021).

One of the most common traditions in many Latin American countries is that the child does not wear yellow as a symbol of health and happiness. However, in many other places this colour is avoided to quickly determine if a baby has jaundice. In many other places, an infant is considered a little angel sent by God from heaven. She is clean and pure, so she has to be dressed in perfect white for the first few days. Sometimes one tradition is linked to another: taking the children to the hospital chapel before leaving or stopping at the church on the way home. This is done to present the new member of the family to God and ask for his protection.

Among other traditions that are applied regionally (Bocanegra, 2019):

- Agüita de poleo To bring out the baby's cold.
- Bathing with herbs to bring out the cold.
- Agua de ruda y ajo para sacar el frío (Water of rue and garlic to bring out the cold).

Those foods that are considered hot and cold are considered as food prohibitions. There are certain foods which increase the condition of warmth in which pregnant women find themselves, these foods are conditioned to the excess of condiments, chili, salt, fatty or heavy (Ana & Nahelcheo, 2019).

There are communities such as the Cocotog community, an indigenous community located in the province of Quito, in which this community presents particularities regarding their diet.

"For the body only the care so that there is no pain and recover sooner and for the milk only take oats and soups especially more liquids for milk production and drink anise water so that the baby does not have colic and not have iras because all this passes into the milk" (Lisseth & Cristina, 2017).

Among other beliefs, breastfeeding is one of the main priorities for the health of both the mother and the newborn, which is why there are a number of traditional beliefs and practices such as:

"For milk you have to drink coladita de machica, sancocho de pescado, don't wear a bra so there is more milk" (Lisseth & Cristina, 2017).

On the other hand, society as a whole recognises the value of the new role acquired by the woman who has just had her baby, through rituals and gifts. These authors suggest the need to incorporate an anthropological perspective, thus including cultural patterns in the study of the postpartum stage (Esther, 2017).

Materials and Methods

In order to strictly comply with the objectives set out in this study, a research method based on a bibliographical review or exploratory description was used, with a qualitative approach, in which; In order to gather information, an exhaustive search was carried out for the most relevant concepts on traditional practices and beliefs about postpartum women in the regions of Ecuador, with emphasis on identifying the different dogmas and customs that apply to postpartum women in the regions of Ecuador, and based on contributions from other authors in academic works such as theses, scientific articles, books and websites, the necessary information was gathered to demonstrate the background, risks, causes and other factors associated with traditional beliefs about postpartum women. Additionally, to complement the integral development of the project we proceeded to investigate topics that really stand out to complement the research on the topic to socialise, with the main objective of compiling and analysing the most relevant information that gives way to the development of the context, thereby allowing us to carry out the respective analysis of the same, knowing the current reality with respect to these different beliefs and traditions that are gradually becoming known not only in Ecuador but in others as they are interesting and really prodigious.

Inclusion criteria:

- Articles published in the last 5 years.
- Population: Regions of Ecuador.

Exclusion criteria:

- Exclude books on the subject.
- Unreal or fictitious information from the population.

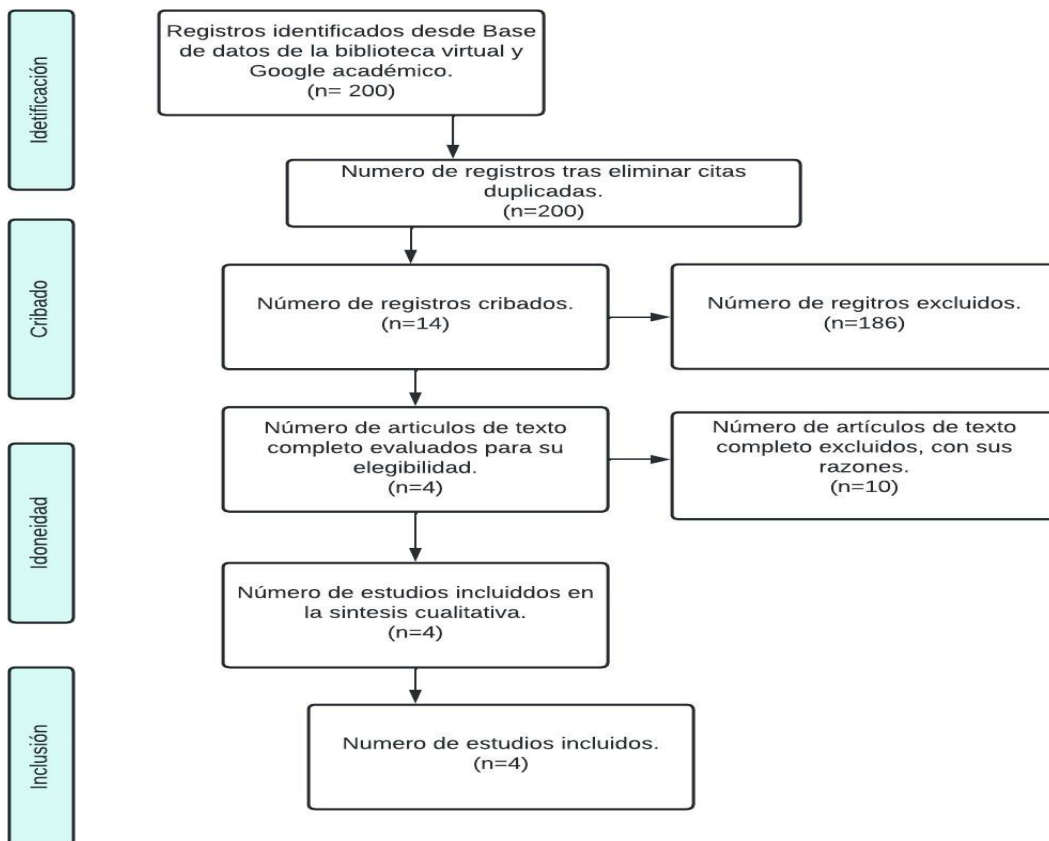


Table 1. *Specific Objective 1: To analyse the main traditional practices in postpartum women in the regions of Ecuador.*

Authors	Regions of Ecuador	Traditional practices and beliefs
Bardales Baltodano Sthefanie	Andean Region or Highlands.	-Consumption of medicinal plants.
Prado Quilambaqui Jhfre	Andean Region or Highlands.	-Food based on grains and legumes.
Soraya Martines Nancy et.al	Coastal Region.	-Food based on grains and tubers.
Armando Medina Juli o Mayca	Oriente or Amazon region	-Evil eye fright.

Results

The study focused on analysing the beliefs, knowledge, customs and practices of postpartum women in the regions of Ecuador, with the aim of informing the different communities about the main knowledge applied to postpartum women, based on the revaluation of the customs and rights of culturally diverse people.

In order to analyse the main objective of the research, it was decided to collect bibliographical information from primary sources by

reviewing various scientific articles. In order to produce the results, the objective was focused on understanding and analysing in depth the main traditional practices of postpartum women in the different regions of Ecuador, based on a bibliographical review that complemented the scientific research.

Coast or Littoral Region:

Nutrition: The coastal region is characterised by a very unbalanced diet, due to the rhythm of life, however, in some parts of the region there is a particularity of eating 3 fruits a day, whether they are acidic, sweet or citric. It is very common to eat oranges and tangerines after pregnancy, as it is believed that the pregnant woman should recover the normality of her immune system.

In addition, many women eat vegetables such as spinach, chard, kale, broccoli, as they are rich in iron, which women consider necessary after childbirth.

Postpartum girdle: In some communities and cultures, girdling after childbirth is a very common tradition, which is intended to help all the muscles that have been stretched, return to normal, especially most women girdle with other women who specialise in this, as it requires strength and technique.

Red bracelet on the newborn: A very common belief in the region is the use of a red bracelet on newborns, this has the purpose of protecting them from bad vibes, envy, that strange people around them, as it is believed that at the time of birth of a child is something pure, and that their first months of life should be protected and sheltered.

It is generally used when the newborn is taken out of the house, to prevent strangers from scaring the child's eyes.

Encaderamiento: The coastal region is characterised by having one of the most unique beliefs which is focused on the postpartum woman, it consists of returning the mother's hips, by means of a woman specialised in this area, who must have the strength and sufficient capacity to be able to return the hips to their natural state, as it is believed that after childbirth they lose their shape and damage the woman's figure.

Andean Region or Highlands:

Mal susto de ojo: Andean peoples and communities have beliefs in relation to the mal susto de ojo, or as it is commonly known as "ojeo", due to which it is common to deny access to visitors, relatives or strangers, especially women who are pregnant or postpartum, because it is believed to be a mental or pathological illness. There are a number of beliefs that indicate that the woman's soul is believed to leave the body, resulting in loss of appetite, pallor, general weakness, weight loss, low body temperature, however, this gradually increases with the passage of time.

The traditional practice to cure the evil eye scare is the use of a hen's egg, which is passed around the whole body of the pregnant woman, tracing crosses in each sector, in order to clean every impurity it carries. Then this egg is deposited in a glass containing half of water, in this way the different irregularities that are known as "candles of ojeo" can be appreciated, which indicates that the pregnant woman or the puérpera was with the bad scare of the eye.

Medicinal plants: One of the most common traditions among the Andean population is the use of medicinal plants such as rue, eucalyptus and montes agrios, on different occasions, because it is believed that the use of these plants has a positive influence on the structures of the skin.

The use of medicinal plants is by means of a bath with these boiled plants, and then left to rest for about thirty minutes, so that the curative properties adhere to the water, allowing a pure cleansing to be obtained.

It is commonly used by pregnant and postpartum women in rural areas far from the city, due to the limited mobility and especially the inadequate use of medicines by the population.

"Many communities in this country and other Latin American countries use medicinal plants to improve the ailments of the population, moreover many of the communities live distant from health posts" (Elizabeth, 2021).

Food: In the Andean region a very balanced diet is carried out in terms of grains and legumes, in general it is usually very normal and common in rural sectors is due to the great ease of obtaining all these types of food.

Pregnant and puerperal women eat a wide variety of fruit, milk, eggs and vegetables, due to their high nutritional and energetic value. In addition, their use is very varied, as they are used to make all kinds of colada, whether it be bean colada, machica colada, or barley rice colada.

One of the beliefs is the feeding of morocho, especially in pregnant women, as it is believed that this favours the child to be born with a high body mass index or "chubby" as it is commonly known.

The use of grains is elementary in the diet of a puérpera, among them are: beans, peas, beans, beans, chickpeas, lentils. Some of the most commonly used legumes are lettuce, turnip greens, spinach, which favour correct bone maturation in newborns.

To add other types of vegetables, carrots and beetroot are used for salads, which help to provide strength and energy so that the baby is born healthy and well.

Swaddling the baby to sleep: This is commonly known as "fajar", because the newborn is swaddled during the first months of life, as it is believed that the child needs to be swaddled to simulate that it is still inside the mother's belly, simulating her warmth and her narrow space. A wide variety of the population claims that with this, most babies sleep peacefully, as they tend to be frightened and wake up in the middle of the night if they are not swaddled.

Mal susto: In some Amazonian communities, the native women have a certain belief to protect the identity of the newborn, because it can be creditor of something that is denominated as "mal susto", this is very common since, in general they usually see the newborns in a particular way to the others, in some communities they prevent the visit of relatives and even visitors for an approximate of 10 days after the childbirth.

In addition, they are also careful to avoid seeing animals such as pigs and dogs.

It is recurrent that after 6 months postpartum, children are sung to because it is considered that at that age they activate their hearing capacity, however, it is also believed that the only person who can hold the newborn is the father.

In some scientific articles, it is also considered that in a certain part of the eastern population the egg is used as part of healing when the newborn has been suffering from fever, vomiting and diarrhoea for days, because it may originate from a bad scare.

Feeding: The diet of postpartum women or pregnant women consists basically of green plantains and other foods made from cassava, supplemented with seeds, tubers, fruits and in some populations with snails, honey and reptiles.

A strict diet is followed in terms of their wellbeing, because it brings with it a number of problems, not only affecting maternal health, but also that of the newborn child, including its care.

One of the most common beliefs is that a pregnant woman or a pregnant woman should not eat papaya because her child may develop the same shape as the papaya.

In addition to these, it is believed that she should not eat venison because her child may become restless in its development, and in pregnant women it may cause belly pain.

It is very common to hear native women say that puerperal women should not eat monkey guts or viscera, because their child will develop permanent diarrhoea.

Among some exotic animals that are forbidden for postpartum women are snakes, hens, sparrow hawks, deer and tiger's foot, because they can cause bronchitis and tachypnoea, and because they cannot take the newborn out before 10 days after giving birth.

The main themes addressed for the analysis and interpretation of the results were the different characteristics of the beliefs, practices and customs of the regions of Ecuador that are applied to puerperal women or during the puerperal period, since the regions are closely related in some customs and practices in the community.

It can be concluded that, in relation to women, childbirth is a very exciting process in their lives, which they claim improves their affective-emotional world in a drastic way, as they say they feel the greatest emotion, where they include their family. With respect to their customs and traditional practices, they vary a lot according to the region, however, they have in common the concept that appropriately involves the body, mind and spirit of each pregnant woman, this

influences a lot in an adequate development of their evolution process, since each belief and each practice has been carried for many years and has been a symbol that characterises each region and each Ecuadorian culture.

In Chile, a study headed by Dr. Ana María Alarcón, called "Etapas de Desarrollo de niños mapuche desde la propia cultura" (Stages of development of Mapuche children from their own culture), studied milestones and intracultural patterns focused on the development of children from 0 to 4 years of age, demonstrating the presence of a very complex cultural care system for both the mother and the newborn. This study showed that there is a set of cultural and social norms which define what is not and what is allowed in relation to the pregnant woman, highlighting strict food diets, cohibition of participation in a certain number of social events and above all the prohibition of encounters with spiritual or cultural beings that could harm the integrity of the woman and the newborn.

Conclusions

Based on the objective and the results obtained in this research, the following conclusions are drawn:

The puerperium is a period of vulnerability for both the mother and the newborn, and beliefs vary according to each region. The mother should eat a correct diet during this stage, however, this varies according to each Ecuadorian region. The diet should be based on grains, beans, lentils, oats, creams, vegetables and animals which provide the necessary and adequate food for the correct development of the mother, however, not all animals are beneficial, and unpalatable meats such as reptiles and some exotic mammals should be avoided.

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