

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring Nurturing Care Practices and Early Socio-Cognitive Development in an Afro-Colombian Community: Evidence From San Basilio de Palenque

Karol Gutiérrez-Ruiz¹  | Yanin Santoya Montes²

¹Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar (Colombia), Cartagena, Colombia | ²Universidad Simón Bolívar, Barranquilla, Colombia

Correspondence: Karol Gutiérrez-Ruiz (kgutierrez@utb.edu.co)

Received: 14 July 2025 | **Revised:** 28 April 2026 | **Accepted:** 30 April 2026

Handling Editor: Bosiljka Milosavljevic

Keywords: afrodescendant communities | culturally responsive caregiving | early childhood | nurturing care | socio-cognitive development

ABSTRACT

The first 1000 days of life represent a sensitive period for socio-cognitive development, during which culturally embedded caregiving plays a foundational role. However, evidence from Afrodescendant rural populations remains scarce. This exploratory cross-sectional descriptive–correlational study examined associations between caregiver-reported caregiving practices and early socio-cognitive indicators in 26 children (9–36 months; $M = 19.27$, $SD = 7.63$) and their caregivers in San Basilio de Palenque, a culturally distinctive Afro-Colombian community. Caregiving practices were assessed using the Care Practices Scale, which captures the reported frequency and consistency of everyday routines and was interpreted within a nurturing care framework rather than as a direct measure of caregiving quality. Children's early socio-cognitive indicators were assessed with the Early Socio-Cognitive Development Checklist. Associations were examined using age- and sex-adjusted partial Pearson correlations, with Benjamini–Hochberg false discovery rate control applied to a pre-specified family of primary indicators. Caregivers reported high emotional warmth and frequent engagement in structured routines despite socioeconomic adversity. Several age- and sex-adjusted associations reached conventional significance (two-tailed $p < 0.05$), but none remained statistically significant after false discovery rate control ($q = 0.05$). Nominal patterns (prior to correction) clustered around joint-attention–related behaviors and receptive language and tended to co-occur with routine-based practices (e.g., hygiene) and relational guidance, suggesting culturally plausible hypotheses about how nurturing care may be scaffolded through everyday, interactionally dense routines. Findings are exploratory and should be interpreted cautiously. Overall, this study underscores the need for larger, multimethod, longitudinal research to test culturally grounded pathways of nurturing care in underrepresented Afrodescendant rural caregiving ecologies.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/infa.70090?domain=author&token=SKBQAMQEFB7QNWCBRXJ>