

Förstagångsfäders upplevelser av föräldrautbildning, förlossning och första året som far

AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

som för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen vid Sahlgrenska akademien vid Göteborgs universitet kommer att offentlig försvaras i sal 2119, Arvid Wallgrens Backe 2, Hus 2, fredagen den 11 februari 2011 kl 9.00

av

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Avhandlingen baseras på följande delarbete:

- I. Premberg A, Lundgren I.
Fathers' experiences of childbirth education.
Journal of Perinatal Education 2010;15:21-28.
- II. Premberg Å, Carlsson G, Hellström A-L, Berg M.
First-time fathers' experiences of childbirth - A phenomenological study.
Midwifery 2010; Oct 16: Epub ahead of print.
- III. Premberg Å, Hellström A-L, Berg M.
Experiences of the first year as father.
Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences 2008;22:56-63.
- IV. Premberg Å, Taft C, Hellström A-L, Berg M.
Father for the first time – Development and validation of a questionnaire to assess fathers' experiences of childbirth.
Manus

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FIRST-TIME FATHERS' EXPERIENCES DURING CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION, LABOUR AND DELIVERY, AND DURING THEIR FIRST YEAR AS FATHERS

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Abstract:

In many western societies, fathers have traditionally assumed the role of breadwinner in the family, leaving responsibilities for parenting to the mother. It was not until the late 20th century that their role as participating and caring fathers evolved, and fathers began to be involved in childbirth and childbirth education. Childbirth education had previously been designed only for the mothers-to-be and was adapted to incorporate the needs of the fathers. The benefit of fathers in the delivery room is important; their participation enhances the future mothers' well-being and the fathers' attachment to the child. Recent studies have revealed that fathers experience their participation as positive and exciting, but demanding and requiring support. Since first-time fathers are known to be especially vulnerable, more research focusing on first-time fathers is needed to further investigate their experiences during childbirth education, labour and delivery, and during their first year as fathers, both to identify the fathers' own needs of support as well as to identify fathers whose needs of support have not been met. The aim of the thesis was to explore first-time fathers' experiences of childbirth education, childbirth and the first year as father. Studies I–III describe fathers' experiences of childbirth education (I), childbirth (II) and the first year as a father (III). Study IV reports on the development and validation of an instrument for assessing fathers' experiences and needs during labour and birth.

Method: In studies I–III descriptive phenomenological interview studies with first-time fathers were carried out. In study IV a questionnaire was developed and validated with exploratory factor analysis, multitrait scaling analysis and known group's analysis.

Findings: Study I: The fathers' experiences' of childbirth education can be described as 'childbirth education takes a secondary role while simultaneously creating preparedness for birth and fatherhood'. Study II: The first-time fathers' experiences' of childbirth was that it is an interwoven process pendulating between euphoria and agony. Study III: The fathers' experiences of the first year as father is to place the baby in the centre without giving up one's self. Study IV: Factor analysis yielded four factors comprising 22 items accounting 48.6% of the variance. The domains found were Worry, Information, Emotional support and Acceptance.

Conclusion and implications: In order to provide support it is necessary to develop childbirth education so it better suits both parents. Designing groups for prospective fathers to strengthen their role in the transition to parenthood could be important. First-time fathers' experience of the woman's pain, fear of the unknown and the gendered preconceptions of masculine hegemony can be difficult to bear for the father-to-be. To maintain and strengthen childbirth as a mutually shared experience for the couple, the father needs to be recognised and supported both as supporter and as parent-to-be. Midwives and other caregivers have to acknowledge the father as a valued participant with exclusive knowledge of the woman's needs, but also to be aware of fathers' needs and the impact of gender aspects. Critical during the first year of fatherhood is that the fathers maintain his own integrity and develop an independent relationship with the child. The assessment instrument adequately taps important aspects of first-time fathers' experiences of childbirth and may be a useful and sensitive tool for assessing their experiences and needs at labour wards and may be used to help identify fathers in need of extra support and counselling following negative birth experiences.

Key words: childbirth, experience, fathers, gender, lifeworld, paternal attitudes, phenomenology, support, questionnaire

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