“Effectiveness of Parent preparedness programme on father’s knowledge and involvement including selected childbirth outcomes among parents of first born children in selected hospitals in Kerala”

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ABSTRACT

Recently, there has been an increasing recognition of the role of the fathers in childbirth. With more women entering the workforce, there had been a trend in redefining the gender roles in a family including housework and childcare. Even though becoming a father can be one of the most significant events in the life of a man, most men feel their wife’s pregnancy period very stressful and quite often are unprepared for the fatherhood. Men need support and guidance to make a positive start as new fathers. Husbands play an important and vital role in the decision making process regarding pregnant women’s health but they do not feel properly prepared for parenthood. The ICPD has stressed men’s shared responsibility for women’s health.

Aim of the Study:

The aim of the study was to evaluate the ‘Effectiveness of Parent Preparedness Programme on Fathers’ Knowledge and Involvement Including Selected Childbirth Outcomes among Parents of First Born Children in Selected Hospitals in Kerala,’ so that the findings can be utilized by Health Care Professionals [HCPs] to formulate policies to encourage participation of fathers in childbirth care.

Materials and Methods:

One hundred [100] first time expectant couples were recruited as the study participants with 50 each in the experiment and control groups. The study was conducted in the maternity settings of two of the government hospitals in Kerala. The Parent Preparedness Programme [PPP] was administered to the couples in the experimental group during pregnancy between 28-36 weeks. Data were collected using standardized tools such as First Time Father Experience Questionnaire (FTFQ) to assess the experience of first time fathers, Childbirth Experience Questionnaire (CBEQ) measuring mothers’ experience of childbirth experience, Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) assessing stress experienced by fathers, and the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) assessing the possibility for postnatal depression. The data were analyzed using descriptive [Frequency distribution, Mean, Standard deviation] and inferential statistical methods [independent ‘t’ test, F-test, Chi-square and, Pearson’s correlation coefficient].
Results:
F test analysis revealed that the fathers in the groups were identical with regard to age, education, occupation, income, religion, type of family and duration of marriage. However, the groups differed in terms of source of information and attendance at ANC. Mothers in the two groups were different with respect to resourcing information.

Knowledge of first time fathers was measured on a post-test basis using a semi structured interview schedule. The findings of the study revealed that the overall knowledge of expectant fathers on childbirth care is significantly higher (0.001) among expectant fathers in the experimental group who attended the childbirth preparation classes (54.7 ± 5.3) compared to fathers in the control group who did not (20.4 ± 7.9). The difference in knowledge was significant at 0.01 level. The knowledge of fathers on key aspects also was found appreciably higher among fathers in the experiment group. The overall involvement of fathers was significantly higher (p<0.001) in the experimental group, compared to control group. The involvement was maximum in newborn and future care, compared to pregnancy, labour & delivery, and postpartum aspects. The fatherhood experience was measured by FTFQ in terms of worry, information, emotional support, and acceptance. The findings indicated that the fathers in the experimental group felt less worried, better informed and accepted in the medical system compared to the control group of fathers (p<0.001). However, no significant difference was noted with respect to emotional support between the groups. The scores of perceived stress was lower in the experimental group compared to the control group with a significant difference (p<0.001). Own capacity, professional support, perceived safety and participation were domains of childbirth experience compared. The findings revealed that the women in the experimental group experienced more positive experience in all four domains with a significant difference (p<0.001) compared to the control group. The findings also indicated that 14% of women in the control group had sores above 13, suggestive of possible depression against none in the experimental group. Analysis also revealed that knowledge of fathers in the experimental group was strongly associated with age. Fathers below 30 years were found to have better knowledge compared to older fathers (p<0.05). Correlation analysis showed that enhanced knowledge is positively related to fathers’ involvement (p<0.001), first time father experience (p<0.001) and positive childbirth experience among mothers (p<0.001). Negative correlation was observed between knowledge and fathers’ perceived stress (p<0.001) and possibility of postpartum depression among mothers (p<0.001). Involvement of fathers also showed positive correlation to first time fathers’ experience and childbirth experience of mothers. However, no correlation was observed between perceived stress and First Time Father Experience (p=0.219). Postpartum depression showed strong negative relationship with knowledge of fathers, father involvement (p<0.001), maternal childbirth experience (p<0.001), and no significant relationship with perceived stress among fathers (p=0.037).

Conclusion:
This study evaluated the effectiveness of Parent preparedness Programmed on knowledge and involvement of first time fathers in childbirth care and psychological wellbeing of both the parents. The findings indicate that enhancement of knowledge among fathers have positive effects on fathers’ involvement and psychological wellbeing of parents.

**Keywords:** Parent Preparedness Programme (PPP), Effectiveness, Fathers, Involvement of fathers, Psychological wellbeing of parents, Parents of First Born Children.