

15:30 - 17:00

Pregnancy and childbirth expectations: an exploratory content analysis

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Existing research on subjective experiences and expectations of childbirth is mainly quantitative. This study aims to obtain a more complete and comprehensive view of women's pregnancy experiences, expectations of childbirth and the way they cope with the childbirth scenario. We conducted 37 semi-structured interviews with pregnant women in the 10th-41st week of pregnancy. Regardless of the large age range (19-40), most of the women were first time mothers (59.5%). All of them were in a stable relationship with the future father (mostly married 69.4%) and with a high school or university degree (88.8%). Questions included on the interview script follow previous research findings. Recorded interviews were transcript, coded and analyzed with Alceste software. The initial analysis identified 37 units and 497 elementary context units (ECU) with 25 words each. Descending hierarchical classification preserved 73% ECU/4 classes: Expectations of childbirth, mother-baby relationship, relational context and health care. We can infer that, for this group of women sensorial sensations are decisive for mother-baby bond, there's a fear of childbirth pain, an anxiety of the unknown situation, and the consequent desire for a natural and stress-free childbirth. Considering childbirth preparation programs, we stress the importance of including, not only information regarding pregnancy/childbirth, but also support from the medical staff. Partner supports is empathized as a critical need (social, emotional and everyday task support). Future studies shouldn't overlook the importance of the role that health personnel and partners support play in the way woman cope with childbirth.