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The crisis experience among first-time mothers: Preparedness to parenthood and personal coping strategies

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Background: Upon giving birth, various emotional problems may appear that can cause difficulties and distress for the new mother and her family. The crisis experience is defined as a condition of psychological imbalance in which one's usual coping mechanisms fail to the point of incapacitation. Consequently, one may experience despair, helplessness, stress and fear. The crisis experience is not a psychopathological phenomenon, and can be a part of a normal adaptation to the transition to parenthood. It can be accompanied by post-partum depression or post-partum anxiety, but not necessarily. The post-partum crisis experience can lead to emotional distress and requires further investigation and conceptualization.

Objective: Aim of this study is to evaluate to what extent do first time postpartum women experience crisis after having given birth for the first time and with what correlating personal factors.

Method: This was a prospective cohort study. Eligible women had a singleton pregnancy and delivered a healthy newborn at term. Five sets of questionnaires (perceived difficulty of the labor, cognitive emotion regulation, and conservation of resources, parental perceived competence, and the crisis experience questionnaire) were sent to the participants six weeks postpartum.

Results: A total of 188 completed questionnaires were considered for the final analysis. 45% of the participants reported a moderate to severe crisis experience on a scale of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high), the overall crisis mean was 2.82 (S.D. 0.92). Lack of preparedness to parenthood, coping by self-blame, blaming others and/or rumination together with perception of resource loss emerged as independent variables that were significantly associated with the crisis experience severity.

Conclusion: Emotional and practical preparedness to parenthood classes can help reducing the normal stresses of the transition to parenthood, and the severity of post-partum crisis experience. This study also contributed to understanding and conceptualization of the post-partum crisis experience.

Biography

Yeela Tomsis has completed her PhD at Haifa University. She is a Lecturer and Researcher at Nursing School, Zefat Academic College.

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