

Original Research Article

Impact of childbirth preparation sessions towards the willingness and ability of husbands to accompany their wives during childbirth in the delivery room


Kavitha Gautham^{1*}, Jayashree Jayakrishnan², Vijayasarithi Ramanathan³

¹Medical Director, Bloom Life Hospital, Taramani Link Road, Velachery, Chennai, India

²Physiotherapist in women's health, Bloom Life Hospital, Taramani Link Road, Velachery, Chennai, India

³Lecturer, The University of Sydney, Australia

*Corresponding author email: research@bloomhealthcare.in

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Most Fathers-to-be within Indian setting find it difficult to cooperate with their spouse's labour and encounter a great deal of stress during the journey of Childbirth. The study objective is to assess the impact of Childbirth preparation sessions (CPS) in a private maternity centre at Chennai towards shaping the willingness and attitudes of fathers-to be regarding their willingness and ability to accompany their wives during childbirth in the delivery room and to compare the attitudes with those fathers who did not attend the Childbirth preparation sessions.

Materials and methods: A pilot study was conducted between October 2022 to January 2023 at a tertiary maternity hospital in a metropolitan city (Chennai) with a convenient sample of fathers-to-be who attended (Group 1, n=30) CPS and those who did not attend (Group 2, n =30). A questionnaire was given to fathers who had less than 2 year old child to analyze the difference in willingness and ability to go to the labour room among those who attended child birth preparation sessions and those who did not.

Results: All men were well educated Indians and the mean age of men who attended childbirth preparation sessions were 33 years and most of them were fathers-to-be for the first time. The results

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showed that fathers-to-be who attended the childbirth preparation sessions were more likely to express willingness to attend labour room. Though majority of men (51 men out of 60) were willing to go to the labour room, only 47 men were able to go to the labour room out of which 28 had attended the CPS. There was a high significance in their ability to go to the labour room among those who attended the CPS (P-value - 0.010).

Conclusions: The preliminary results of this pilot study indicated that a well-structured and delivered CPS could not only enhance the shared role of fathers-to-be in the critical childbirth journey but also provide them with adequate psychosocial support.

Key words

Indian fathers, Childbirth, Delivery room, Husbands, Willingness.

Introduction

The pregnancy outcomes, maternal health behaviors, risk of preterm birth, low birth weight, fetal growth restriction and infant mortality have been related with male partner's involvement in pregnancy and childbirth [1]. Epidemiological and physiological evidence prove that the presence of male partner during pregnancy reduces maternal stress and provides emotional, logistical and financial support. Partner support mediated the effects of mothers' interpersonal security and relationship satisfaction on maternal and infant outcomes [2]. Also men's involvement in their future parenting as responsible fathers can start at early stage and may also lead to cessation of risk behaviors such as smoking [3]. Several literature review support the idea that the father's involvement during pregnancy and delivery can positively influence health outcomes for family. It is therefore pivotal for the maternal and child healthcare services to develop new strategies of reaching out to men and to enable them to involve in labour and childbirth moments of their spouses [4]. Therefore taking into consideration the significance of fatherhood, CPS has been implemented in a tertiary birthing centre at Chennai. Through this research an effort has been taken to evaluate childbirth preparation classes and their impact on men's willingness and involvement in Childbirth in comparison with those who did not attend the sessions.

Materials and methods

The present pilot study was conducted at Bloom Life Hospital with a convenient sample of

fathers-to-be who did not attend (Group 1, n=30) CPS and those who attended (Group 2, n=30). The participants were men who willingly volunteered to participate in the study were provided with a questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale for rating their willingness and ability to accompany their wives during labour and childbirth. The inclusion criteria consisted of both first-time fathers as well as second or more-time fathers having a child of age from one month to two years. The exclusion criteria consisted of men who have less than one month old child or above two years and those who refuse to give consent for the study. The data was collected using manual and google forms and analyzed using SPSS software using Chi square test.

Expected outcome

Fathers who attended childbirth preparation sessions were expected to have more knowledge, awareness and involvement in labour, delivery and post-natal psychosocial issues and cope well with demanding lifestyle changes.

Childbirth preparation session (CPS)

The CPS intervention at the tertiary maternity care hospital at Chennai consisted of the following elements into routine antenatal care at 20th week for both couples with an exclusive session for men during the 30th week. The sessions consisted of modules such as understanding pre-labour signs, birthing team approach, ways to comfort a partner during childbirth, pain management medications and its

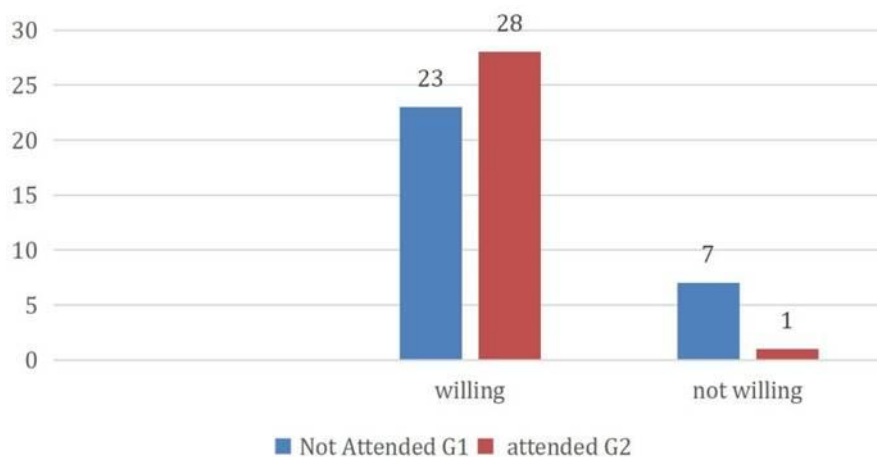
impacts, importance of birth companion presence, mode of delivery with the birthing team, post partum issues, importance of skin to skin contact, Kangaroo father care and Golden hour of breast feeding, etc.

Results and Discussion

In this Pilot study, out of 60 respondents, 49 were first time fathers and 11 were second (or more) time fathers. The mean Age of the respondents was 32 years and the mean age of their spouses was 29 years with mean age difference between the partners was 3 years. 22 among 60

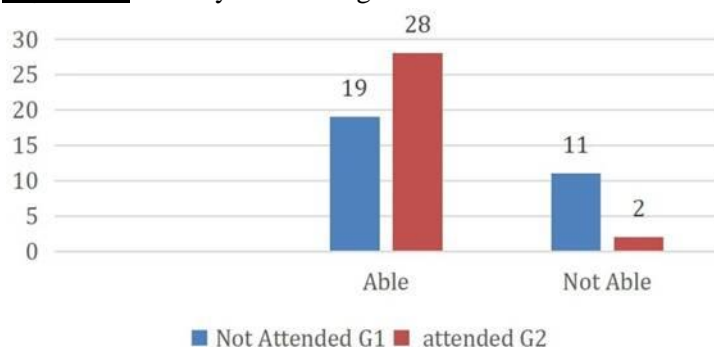
respondents were of more than 5 marital years. 17 were between 3-5 years and 16 were from 1-3 of marital years. A vast majority of them (N=52) had planned pregnancy. Most of them said that they choose to prepare for fatherhood through websites and social media (N=22), family and friends (N=16). All of them were well educated and more than 30% of them belonged to IT profession. The involvement of men during labour and post-natal period has been elaborated as follows. Willingness of men to go to the labour room was as per **Figure – 1**. Ability of men to go to the labour room was as per **Figure – 2**.

Figure – 1: Willingness of men to go to the labour room.



Pearson’s Chi square test Exact Sig. (2-sided)–0.052

Figure – 2: Ability of men to go to the labour room.



Pearson’s Chi square test Exact Sig. (2-sided)–0.010($P < 0.05$)

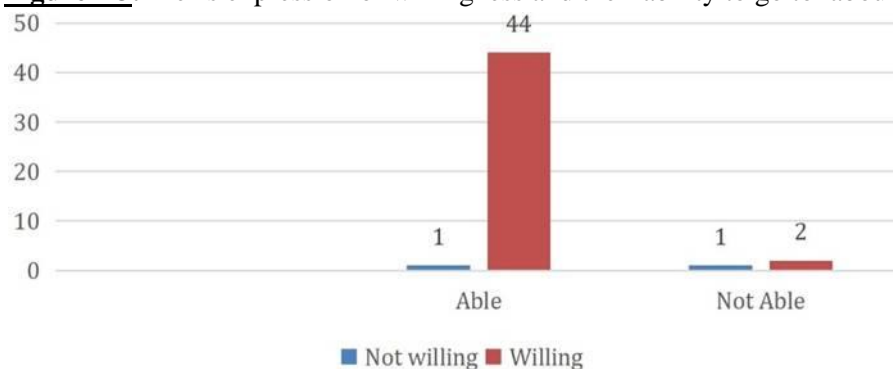
In a country like India, pregnancy, childbirth and care of the newborn usually involves gender perceptions. The involvement of husbands during labour and childbirth is usually overlooked or neglected in South Asian countries. Very few

hospitals in India encourage husbands to be involved in the labour room. But more commonly the labour room is usually accompanied by the wife’s mother, mother-in-law or the husband’s sister [5]. The present study showed that most

men were willing to learn about their expected roles during childbirth and were eager to support their partners/ wives/ spouses during childbirth. 51 men out of 60 were willing to go to the labour room and there was significant difference

between Group-1 and Group-2 (P value=0.05). Literature reveals that the degree of the husband's involvement witnessing the pain of childbirth could also facilitate future family planning [5].

Figure – 3: Men's expression of willingness and their ability to go to labour room.



In our study, though 51 out of 60 men were willing to go to the labour room, only 47 men were able to go to the labour room out of which 28 had attended the CPS. There was a high significance in their ability to go to the labour room among those who attended the CPS (P-value - 0.010). Traditionally in the Indian setting, labour and delivery are being considered as special events to be generally attended and supported by other women. Nowadays continuous support during labour has often become the exception rather than the routine worldwide [6]. An ideal father is described as an accessible team player and responsible caregiver. The ideal father expects and wants to be engaged about the pregnancy and the coming child, wants to learn more about the process, wants to be involved and wants to be supported by the health system to accomplish his roles [3]. In South Asian contexts, research has found that men possess little knowledge and experience regarding maternal health [7]. A lack of knowledge regarding complications and danger signs during pregnancy and delivery has been frustrating for husbands and has prevented their involvement [8]. The World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines recommend a companion of the woman's choice during labour and childbirth, to improve labour

outcomes and women's satisfaction with services [9].

Moreover **Figure - 3** portrays an emphasis on the theory of planned behavior. In this aspect, those who have expressed their willingness were actually able to be present throughout the Labour. Their intend to behave is the strongest predictor of actual behavior. This shows that CPS could play a dynamic role in the theory of planned behavior and can influence the subjective norm (an individual's perception about the particular behavior, which is influenced by the judgment of significant others) and perceived behavioral control (Self efficacy).

Research has demonstrated that women benefit from and value the presence of a support person during labour, to provide psychological, physical, emotional, informational and practical support [10]. This support person may help to communicate her preferences to a health worker, and also provides encouragement, reassurance, and physical comfort. A support person may also help to communicate to the woman about her progress through labour, suggest coping techniques, and support her decision-making reducing her stress. Though companions chosen by a woman from her own network, such as

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spouses are frequently available to assume the role, often without extra cost to families or health systems they usually have little experience in providing labour support and are often themselves in need of support when their loved one is in labour and birth [10].

Conclusion

The results reveal that CPS can increase the effectiveness of labour support provided by spouses enabling them for continuous support and to provide maternal satisfaction. CPS can also influence the individual's decision making and planned behavior to cope up with the labour pain and to encounter a great deal of stress during labour and childbirth.

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