

Father's Involvement During Pregnancy

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Abstract. While many studies explore the significance of paternal involvement during pregnancy, however, the limited knowledge around the topic particularly in Indonesia has been recognized. The involvement can be defined as an abstraction of the behavior of an object that consists. This behavior includes father's engagement during pregnancy process, and takes responsibility for the pregnancy. Furthermore, communicates with the mother regardless of the couple relationship status for the benefit of the coming infant, is also part of fathers involvement during pregnancy. The recent fact of paternal involvement during pregnancy is giving impact to reduce the maternal stress and the increased the positive maternal behavior. Another impact also reduces the risk of preterm birth, low birth weight, and fetal growth restriction. The aim of this article to present clear understanding the significance of paternal involvement during pregnancy and also the impact to the maternal mental health during pregnancy and afterwards. Since the healthcare provider playing an important role at health promotion and provide the legitimacy in the antenatal care, it is proposed that the information of father's involvement during pregnancy can be improve by giving the appropriate counseling and information for the father.

INTRODUCTION

The two targets for assessing MDGs 5 are reducing the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) by three quarters between 1990 and 2015, and achieving universal access to reproductive health by 2015[1]. Then, it continued on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDs) is SDGs 3: good health and wellbeing, preventable child deaths are down by more than half, and maternal mortality is down by almost as much and SDGs 5: gender equality, aim to build on these achievements to ensure that there is an end to discrimination against women and girls everywhere. It's a basic human right [2]. In Indonesia, the number of maternal mortality rate (MMR) increased significantly between 228/100.000 live birth in 2000 to 356/100.000 live birth in 2012^[1]. Even though the number of infant mortality rate experienced fell, however, the number is still high [1]. These number are represent of the health reproductive of woman and child, the high number of either maternal or infant mortality rate, the more their health reproductive right violated. Absolutely this fact will contradict with the goal of sustainable development. Health reproductive according to the International Cooperation Population and Development (ICPD) defined as a complete physical, mental and social aspects that is not only free of disease or infirmity related to the reproductive system, its functions and processes but also health from all perspective.

Pregnancy is the nurture process of woman's life cycle that present from love relationship between man and woman in their marital consequence. Recently, maternal mental wellbeing during pregnancy has become international issues. World Health Organizatон (WHO) records the percentage of maternal mental illness during pregnancy around 15, 6 % in the worlwide, while it has about 19, and 8 % of maternal illness after giving birth. These numbers was even higher rather than those numbers in the developing countries (approximately 10% during pregnancy, and 13% after giving birth) [3]. This emotional wellbeing occurs either during pregnancy or after giving birth influenced by social support particularly from partner or husband. Therefore, supporting mothers' emotional wellbeing during the prenatal period is now recognized to be as important as the traditional focus on the physical health of the mother and child. Increasing evidence about early brain development and the way in which infants develop emotional and behavioral wellbeing within the context of their early relationships, has highlighted the particular importance of building a bond with the unborn baby, and sensitive early care giving. However, father playing an important role throughout this case.

In Indonesia, not many studies have been conducted about how paternal involvement affects pregnancy and infant outcomes. Eventough the standard procedure to invite fathers in order to actively taking part during antenatal care, but it seems still uneeffective and provide the gap. Otherwise, in the West, the evidence of fathers' involvement during pregnancy has been recognized to have an impact on pregnancy and infant outcomes. When fathers are involved during pregnancy, maternal negative health behaviors diminish and risk of preterm birth, low birth weight and fetal growth restriction is significantly reduced. In addition, father's involvement has also been associated with infant mortality up to one year after birth [5].

There are many thing could happen during pregnancy due to the pregnancy is the part of natural process of transition. This transition called "transition to parenthood" which particularly focuses explicitly on the emotional and social changes that take place during pregnancy and the immediate postnatal period, and recognizes that this is a stressful time that involves both men and women making significant psychological changes, and adapting to new roles. The relationships of many couples may be severely challenged during this period, and sometimes break down after the birth of a baby [4]. Many studies have shown that prenatal expectations play an important role in the transition to becoming a mother. Such expectations allow individuals to be guided by a sense of understanding and control over events in their lives, but when these expectations are inaccurate they can lead to significant difficulties in adapting to actual. Consequently, it will lead to the maternal stress during pregnancy and afterwards [6-8]. Mothers' expectation to their pregnancy was support from relatives, in this case, partner include in. During pregnancy, mother particularly expect to their partner's present and accessible to the mother. That is mean partner should engaged in the pregnancy process and takes the responsibility of the pregnancy and communicate with the mother regardless of the dyad status for the benefit for the coming infant [9,10]. The picture bellow describes the model for father's involvement during pregnancy.

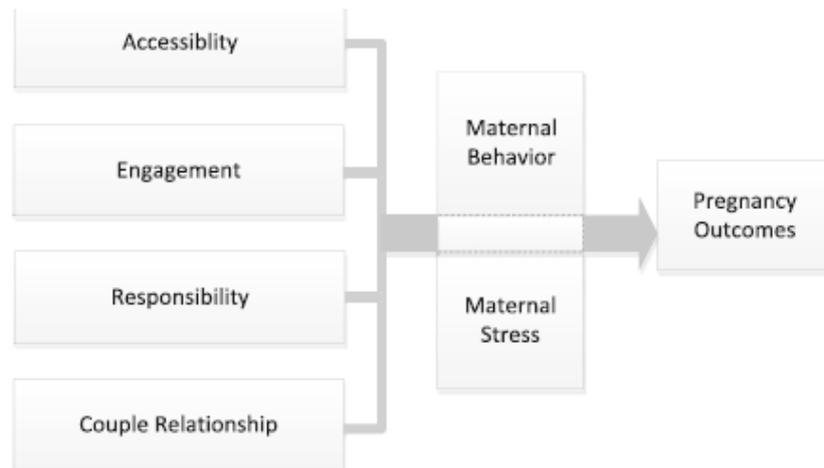


FIGURE 1: Model of father involvement during pregnancy [5]

As can be seen from the figure 1, the terms present, accessible and available to describe one level of male involvement during pregnancy, which aply encapsulates the concept of Accessibility referred to by researchers in the field of childhood development [23-25]. During childhood, accessibility refers to the father being physically present and available to supervise the child, but not actively participating in the same activities as the child. For instance the father may be at the playground observing the child, but not playing with the child [23, 25]. In a similar vane, our study participants felt that the father's physical presence both in the home (ideally) and at prenatal activities is associated with achieving the perception of parental "togetherness" in the pregnancy process.

The second component of the framework for father's involvement during pregnancy is engagement. In infancy, engagement is the direct interaction of the father with the child, playing with him, reading books to the child etc. [23-25]. In pregnancy however, this interaction is directed towards the mother and requires active participation in prenatal activities (e.g. reading prenatal care books and asking questions at prenatal care visits). Analogous to paternal involvement in child rearing, in pregnancy the interaction between Accessibility and Engagement is a rhetorical relationship. As the father avails himself to the mother by being physically present, the expectation for him to also be an active participant or actively engaged in the prenatal process becomes evident. Lamb's framework suggests that accessibility without the ensuing components of engagement and responsibility constitutes an incomplete structure to paternal involvement that will deprive the child of critical support needed for healthy development and emotional well being [23, 32]. Pregnancy parallels this as it has been indicated that the lack of male involvement is strongly correlated with higher infant morbidity and

mortality [6, 33, 34], reinforcing the need for effective strategies that seek to increase men's involvement prenatally. However, as our study confirms, the degree of involvement is proportional to the quality of the relationship with the mother and the parent's desire for the pregnancy [9, 27, 34, and 35].

Responsibility embodies the multifaceted roles that fathers/male partners play in financially supporting the child from birth [23, 25]. However, prenatally, this responsibility towards the coming child is directed towards the mother carrying the child and extends beyond finances. In our study the concept of Responsibility was manifested in the father assuming the roles of caregiver, provider, nurturer and protector. Community members recognized that men's involvement is a protective factor that helps to ease maternal stress and to encourage positive maternal behaviors. This has been demonstrated in the literature on pregnancy outcomes. Women whose partners were involved in their pregnancy were more likely to receive prenatal care [9, 34], and less likely to give birth to low birth weight and premature infants [33,34] and to promote positive maternal behaviors [9]. Although fathers' involvement has been deemed difficult to measure, there is consensus that women with more support from their partners tend to have healthier babies. Similar to Accessibility and Engagement, Responsibility is embedded in the context of the parental relationship since discordance in the parental rapport can impinge on the father's willingness or ability to act responsibly. Whether measured through proxies such as paternal information on birth certificates, maternal report of paternal activities (support, presence at pregnancy-related health appointments), or marital/partnership status, findings point to the important contributions fathers can make to improving birth outcomes [1-4,6-9]. Researchers have proposed that the mechanisms through which PI affects birth outcomes are primarily linked to the impact fathers can have on influencing maternal behaviors and reducing maternal stress through emotional, logistical and financial support [6]. For example, pregnant women with involved partners have been found to be more likely to receive early prenatal care and to reduce cigarette smoking [9, 10]. Other studies have suggested that support from fathers serves to alleviate the burden of stress [3] and improves maternal wellbeing, both pathways to improved birth outcomes [11,12].

As mentioned earlier, father's involvement can affect to the mother's psychology during pregnancy. Maternal-fetal attachment, however, psychological condition that reflected by mother's engagement with their unborn baby. A range of factors can influence the capacity of mothers-to-be to engage with their developing baby, including whether the baby was planned and/or wanted. The level and nature of the mother's engagement is indicated by the mental representations (i.e. mental images) about the developing baby that take place between the fourth and seventh months of gestation. These mental representations are shaped not only by the biological changes taking place but also by a range of psychic and social factors such as the mother's memories of her own early relationships, her family traditions, her hopes, her partner's support, her fears and her fantasies. In the other hand, strong maternal-fetal attachment which is reflected by high score of maternal-fetal attachment scale and it has been associated with constructive health practices during pregnancy, and will encourage the mothers to always protect their fetal from harm, expressing their love since the babies are unborn, until their babies grow up [27-29].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

How father's involvement can impact to the birth outcome?

The explanation of the significance of father's involvement during pregnancy has been established in the introduction. In this section, the writer will discuss the result concern father's involvement during pregnancy on one study [10] and makes some discussion on the barrier of father's involvement during pregnancy. This case then lead to the important question; how father's involvement during pregnancy can impact to the pregnancy outcome? How the mechanism?. To giving the clear justification of this process, we can see from the figure 2.

The figure 2 describes the mechanism and pathways of biology process inside the body of women who experienced the mental wellbeing disorder during pregnancy. As the father absence of engagement, and accessibility (see figure 1: model of father's involvement) during pregnancy, the mother's body will release maternal cortisol. This cortisol will simulate the releasing of Catecholamine which affect on the maternal appetite or reduces substrate (nutrition) to the fetus. Consequense, it will increase the number of preterm birth, and low birth weight also will rise. Father may positively influence birth come by Helping mothers to adopt positive pregnancy behavior (regular and adequate prenatal care visits) or to avoid negative pregnancy behaviors (smoking or alcohol and drug use). For example, pregnant women with involved partners have been found to be more likely to receive early and more regular prenatal care and to reduce cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption [15].In the other hand, the absence of father's support during pregnancy, will stimulate the estrogen precursor, directly it will impact to the fetal stress response and he will release fetal cortisol as well, then it will also influence the birth outcome. However, supporting improve birth outcomes [21,23] by supporting mothers in ways that reduce maternal stress [22], which adversely affects length of gestation and

fetal growth for example, fathers may provide reduce maternal stress by providing emotional, logistical and financial support [6] or improve maternal well-being [21, 23]. The study has shown the significance of father's involvement during pregnancy, however, these parts will also discuss on the barrier to apply the role of father's during pregnancy. There are some factors that affected fathers to apply their role during pregnancy.

Mechanisms & Pathways

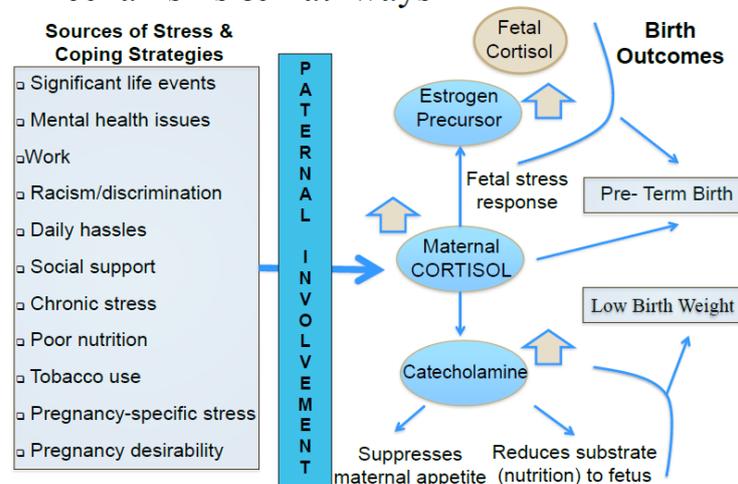


FIGURE 2: Mechanism and Pathways of father's involvement to the birth outcome [5]

First factor is intrapersonal barrier; that can be caused by several factors such as lack of father figure or role model in their own life, residence or geographic location away from mother carrying his child, socio-economic issues faced by father (e.g., current/past incarceration, unemployment, and multiple child support responsibilities). Fear of responsibility as the father because of little knowledge of legal right as a father also one of the reason why father failed to establish their role during pregnancy [1, 2]. Second factor is interpersonal barriers which is sensitive and complex issues relating to the mother-father relationship (e.g., relationship status, fact that the "father" may not be the biological father). Then, dealing with another "father" (either the biological father or the "resident" father) also can lead to the father's obstacle on the involving during pregnancy. Third factor is community or neighborhood, for instance; cultural variations in perceptions of fatherhood and fathers, socio-economic factors (high rates of unemployment & incarceration), and social factors (high rates of single motherhood). The third factor is institutional barriers such as focused on maternal care, therefore, fathers not expected to be involved in care, and lack of awareness of importance of involving fathers in the process and also lack of training on how to engage fathers in the prenatal care process. The last factor is policy level barrier such as existing laws and initiatives and lack of funding for fatherhood programs. The existing laws such as focus on the mother and child, often penalize families with present fathers, do not promote informal paternal involvement, discourage fathers and mothers from reporting paternity, and do not help to eliminate economic barriers to paternal involvement

CONCLUSION

The Paternal involvement is as crucial prenatally as it has been shown to be postnatally for infants. Fathers are to be accessible and engaged during the pregnancy and begin to demonstrate responsibility towards the coming child by helping the mother. Because all of the involvement is through the mother carrying the child, the relationship between the two parents is of utmost importance and determines the level of involvement. Of note, is that while in the postnatal phase, the financial ability of the father is of paramount importance [13, 14], the financial support appears to be much less emphasized during pregnancy when compared with emotional and physical support. In addition, individual, family, community, societal and policy factors play a role in barring or diminishing the involvement of fathers during pregnancy.

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