

Critique of a Study on Women's Experiences of Fear of Childbirth

Kelly F. Fugate¹

College of Nursing, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City TN 37614, USA

Abstract

The study by Nillson and Lundgren (2007) on the phenomenon of fear of childbirth was critiqued. The study set out to characterize women's feelings when consumed with the fear of childbirth. The strengths of the study were a clear literature review and purpose, the use of some elements of qualitative rigor and themes that were supported by findings. The weaknesses were that the use of a convenience sample (limited external validity or transferability), a question about whether saturation was reached, limited rigor, and diffuse conclusion.

Critique of the Introduction

This qualitative research study is based on quantitative studies about childbirth fear. The studies that were presented in this article differ in their opinions across regions, but tend to be alike in the same areas. Previous research has concluded that counseling of the pregnant woman before childbirth has decreased her fear of the event. Currently there is not any standardized treatment for fear of childbirth. The review of literature shows the causes, effects, and treatments of childbirth fear, but there is not any known research of the women's thoughts of their fear of childbirth. The study's purpose for this research is to identify women's

experiences of fear of childbirth. The purpose statement is open, exploratory, and unbiased. Timeliness was addressed and the objective of this study is logically the next step. There is good flow throughout the introduction section. The opening of the study is technically written but easily read. The introduction to this qualitative study is strong and of high quality.

Critique of the Methodology

Sampling

Saturation was not met in this study. There are eight participants, good for a qualitative study; however, there was no explanation for why there were eight participants, as opposed to any other number. Also, an explanation of the determinants of the length of each interview would have been helpful. The participation rate was high because eight out of the nine qualified candidates participated in the research. External validity is low

¹Corresponding Study: Kelly F. Fugate, VA Medical Center, P.O. Box 4000, Mountain Home TN 37684, USA.
Email: zkaf14@goldmail.etsu.edu.

outside of the facility where the participants were seeking care due to convenience sampling. The transferability of the findings of this study is low due to a lack of information about the participants and setting. The information provided by the descriptions fell short of being rich.

Research Design

The criterion of auditability was met in the study; however it could have been somewhat better. The study did record all of the interviews, but did not provide notes from all of the interviews. The transcripts would allow readers to determine that the interviews were unassuming of the thoughts and ideas of the contributors, if needed. Due to the fact that there was only one interviewer, interviewer corroboration, peer debriefing, and confirmability were not used. There is not persistent observation in this study because some interviews lasted only 35 minutes (the length of the interviews were not detailed). The study findings were not shown to the participants for their agreement, so member checking was not used. In a typical qualitative study, there is at least one participant that does not have the same opinion as everyone else. However, in this research, the study lumps all contributors together as if their experiences were all the same. Thus, there was no negative case analysis. By combining all of the participant's feelings, the study was based on the philosophy of positivism.

The rigor of the study was adequate, but could have been improved by the addition of the other methods described above. The methods section was written well with a good flow of thought. The overall quality of the methodology section is medium.

Critique of the Results and Discussion

The results section of the study is nicely structured, although many parts of the section do not flow together smoothly. The study interprets the participant's thoughts and creates a common theme from them. The themes are backed up with quotes from the participants of the study. The ratio of the number of themes and findings to actual quotes is in good proportion. The study did draw a couple of conclusions that had no basis in the quotes provided; it appeared out of the blue. Of course, with no transcript of the audio recording, the reader cannot assess if the theme is justified.

In the discussion section of this study, all of the past research in this field of study is summarized. The authors explained how their findings were

similar or identical to that of other studies; however, the study did not show how their findings differed. This made it appear that the findings of the study added little to what was already known. The discussion section did not describe the relation between this qualitative study and any of the quantitative studies that are cited. Some apparently new findings found with this study were discussed at the very end of the discussion section, almost like an after thought.

There was a slight disconnect between the results and the discussion section. Self-esteem was extensively in the discussion section, but not mentioned previously in the study. This part of the discussion section was weakened by a few opinions interjected into this section, with no supporting findings, and without clearly delineating them as opinions.

A more extensive listing of the limitations would have been helpful to the reader. Although there were a number of limitations in this study, as there are in most all studies, the only limitation that was mentioned concerned external validity. The study stated that this study should not be expected to relate to every woman with childbirth fear. The article could have easily added a paragraph, at least, of limitations. No recommendations for implementing this information into practice were provided. Given the interesting and well-grounded themes that were produced, this would have been most helpful to those in practice.

Overall, the results section is rated high and the discussion section is rated low to medium. The main factors in this rating are the apparent interjection of opinion as fact and the switch to the topic of self-esteem, when there was little or no mention of this as a topic for the research or in the interviews.

Critique of the Conclusion

The conclusion is well written and flows together effortlessly; however it is only rated as medium in quality. First, the conclusion section was tangentially related to the findings of the study. Many new ideas appeared in the conclusion section. Two new limitations to the study are discussed here, seemingly out of place; moreover, but it is still a relatively short list, similar to that in the discussion section. The conclusion strives to show importance of the subject matter for the improvement or prevention of childbirth fear, and in turn, raising awareness. The importance is not apparent or convincing because specific

recommendations to those in practice are missing, and it is difficult for the reader to provide them by visualizing some recommendations based on the findings. The conclusion ends on a note of defeat when the suggestion is made that the same study be conducted, but without so many limitations. The reader naturally wonders why this was not done to begin with in this study.

Summary

The study set out to attain women's feelings when consumed with the fear of childbirth. A convenience sample of eight participants was selected to participate in the study. The rigor of the study was mixed, but did contain many elements to ensure the credibility of the findings. A strength of the study are the descriptions and the common themes that all of the women communicated to the

interview. Discussion of the old and new findings led to the weak conclusion that more research is needed in different areas of the world. Overall the quality and dependability of this research study is medium.

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REFERENCES

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