A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF RURAL WOMEN'S CHILDBIRTH PREFERENCES

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Abstract

Women's agency and reproductive control have direct bearing on the outcome of their pregnancy as well as their future childbearing experiences. The present study is mainly concerned with the process of knowledge construction with regards to decision-making, in the context of childbirth planning. The study drew on cultural discourses to understand the societal and familial context which reinforces traditional home birthing. The study used anthropological approach and mainly relied on in-depth and narrative interviews that were conducted with 60 married women of childbearing age who went through the process of childbirth. Phenomenological ethnography is the methodology that used in-depth face to face interviews to collect narratives of experiential knowledge of the pregnancies and agency. Field findings indicate that significant determinants for these childbearing women included the desire for a natural childbirth experience, apprehensions regarding obstetric interventions by medical doctors, provision of emotional support, comfort and assistance provided by female relatives and traditional birth attendants and also the influence of their husbands who prefer their partners giving birth at home. In addition, another prominent finding of this study is the role of authoritative knowledge and shared experiences of older women that may deprive many young women from accessing maternal care survies at hospitals. The study concludes to enable rural women to make well informed decisions about their babies and bodies to improve the utilization of reproductive health care services in Pakistan.

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