

Heiti á speciali

Posttraumatic Stress Following Childbirth

ABSTRACT

Over the last two decades there has been a growing interest in posttraumatic stress as a result of childbirth. This thesis aims to understand the etiology of posttraumatic stress following childbirth (PTSD FC) as a way of potentially preventing the development of PTSD FC, and thereby avoiding the detrimental effect that this might have on women. To enhance the understanding of the development of PTSD FC, the thesis investigates the risk factors involved in the development of PTSD FC. This approach is based on the perspective of developmental psychopathology. Risk terminology and frameworks for understanding and studying risk are presented, and used in the analysis of the results.

In addition to the investigation of what studies have found in terms of risk factors for both general PTSD and PTSD FC (i.e. prior to 2010), a systematic search was performed for recently published studies (i.e. 2010 – current). This search aimed to identify studies, which investigated both the prevalence and risk factors for PTSD FC. Seventeen studies were selected for a critical review. Among the identified risk factors were prenatal vulnerabilities (e.g. depression and anxiety), subjective perinatal factors (e.g. negative perceptions of support), objective perinatal factors (e.g. obstetric complications), and some postnatal factors (e.g. lack of support). Prevalence rates for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD FC) were found to range between 0.8% and 18.8%. However, researchers seem to agree that the prevalence rate of PTSD FC is 3.17%.

It was argued that knowledge derived from the risk research might have important clinical implications. Methodological issues relating to risk research and clinical implications were discussed, and recommendations for future studies were made throughout the thesis.