The Relationship between Childbirth Experience and Psychological Functioning in the Postpartum Period

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDBIRTH EXPERIENCE AND
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POSTPARTUM PERIOD

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDBIRTH EXPERIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONING IN THE POSTPARTUM PERIOD

by

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THESIS

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Abstract
The purpose of this research is to examine the relationships between the mother's perception of the birth experience, symptoms of the post-traumatic stress, and symptoms of postpartum depression. Sixty-seven participants ranging from 17 to 40 years of age completed a self-report questionnaire containing items from three instruments including the Perception of Birth Scale, the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale, and the Davidson Trauma Scale. The findings reveal a more negative perception of the birth experience is significantly related to a greater frequency and/or severity of post-traumatic stress and postpartum depression symptoms following childbirth. These findings support the conclusion that an extremely negative or traumatic perception of the birth experience may act as a trigger for symptoms of post-traumatic stress as well as predispose the birthing woman to increased symptoms of postpartum depression. Recommendations for both mental and medical health practitioners include active exploration of the perceived birth experience during the postpartum phase of the mother's medical care.