



Explain the needs of parents with infants referring to health centers

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Abstract

Introduction: Family and parents are considered as a valuable elements in providing services to infants. This study aims to elucidate the specific needs of parents with infants.

Methods: This study was conducted with a qualitative approach, utilizing the common content analysis method in Iran. 10 parents with at least one infant child were selected in this study based on purposive sampling. The data collection method was a semi-structured interview. The analysis of the research data was done using the conventional content analysis method.

Results: Based on the analysis of interviews, the needs of parents with infants were explained in 2 main themes: 1) information needs and 2) caring needs.

Conclusion: The findings of the study highlighted the multidimensional nature of parents' needs with infants, encompassing information and caring needs. A deeper understanding of these requirements can inform the development of infant-friendly services at both national and regional levels, ultimately meeting the needs of parents with infants.

Keywords: Parents, Infant, Need, Qualitative study.

Introduction

The family is considered the center and core of care in the family-centered approach (1). In family-centered services, the family is recognized as the primary source of awareness regarding the needs of children which takes into account the strengths, abilities and needs of all family members (2). Since families actively participate in determining specific goals and needs and performing timely interventions, they are considered a valuable element in providing

services to infants. The principles of family-centered care include respect, diversity, power, choice, flexibility, information sharing, support and cooperation. Based on this concept, parents should be involved in all medical care measures for the child inside and outside the hospital (3). The participation of the family not only gives them a greater sense of control in various situations but also helps reduce tension and increases their overall satisfaction. Family-centered care has many benefits for parents and



infants, including gaining skills and a sense of competence in caring for the baby, helping to maintain and maintain family relationships, reducing tension and anxiety, improving communication with health workers, sharing information, receiving support and the empowerment to make crucial caregiving decisions, heightened parental security and reducing behavioral disorders (4). Also, timely family-centered interventions in occupational therapy include understanding the family structure and system, facing their concerns, determining strengths, being aware of individual characteristics, exchanging information, promoting the integration of the child and family in society, and coordinating within the multidisciplinary team. In examining the understanding of the family structure, the nurse must consider the needs and concerns of these parents while delivering services. The family's needs strongly affect the family's functioning and the child's interaction and should be factored into the nurse's initial evaluations (5).

Family needs can be defined as necessities that, when met, increase their sense of sufficiency by eliminating or reducing discomfort and dissatisfaction. Healthcare staff can play an important role in identifying and meeting the needs of parents with infants. However, the health staff may not always accurately fulfill the most essential needs of the families, which can lead to increased fear and anxiety. Unmet needs may become a source of stress for parents (6,7). Considering the importance of the role of parents in the health of children in society, it is crucial to accurately identify their needs. Considering the importance of childhood, especially the two years of infancy as the foundation of lifelong health, providing appropriate care to maintain and enhance health appears essential (8,9). Informed mothers guarantee a healthy life for their children. However, the results of some research indicate

that mothers' needs are not consistently well met (10,11). This situation can lead to many problems for children. Therefore, it seems necessary to determine the needs of parents in order to proactively prevent potential harm. In Iran, studies on parents' needs and priorities have predominantly employed quantitative questionnaires and forms, with limited use of qualitative methods. Qualitative research, known for its ability to explore phenomena with limited prior knowledge and delve into individual aspects of human life, facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the content. Internationally, most research on parents' needs has focused on specialized newborn care departments, with limited attention to society and health centers. Therefore, the present study aims to address this gap by exploring the needs of parents with infants who seek services at health centers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

This article is the result of a qualitative study plan approved under the ethical code RLI.AU.KHUISF.REC.1399.050, which was carried out by the method of content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is a method to analyze qualitative data. It

focuses on the subject and context while highlighting variations, such as similarities within and differences between parts of the text. While qualitative content analysis has been perceived in the past as merely an analytical tool within various qualitative methods, it is now recognized as an autonomous method in its own right (12). It offers opportunities to analyze manifest and descriptive content as well as latent and interpretative content. Considering the importance of an in-depth investigation of the information needs of parents with infants, the participants were 10 parents of infants who were selected through purpose-based sampling from those referring to Isfahan Health Center No. 2. The

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researcher introduced himself, explained the study's objectives, and invited the participants to take part in the research. Sampling continued until data saturation was reached. The data was obtained through "individual semi-structured interviews", each lasting between 45 and 25 minutes. All interviews were conducted in a quiet location chosen by the participants. "The interview guide consisted of a single question: "What are your needs as a parent who has an infant?" Data were simultaneously collected and analyzed using the conventional qualitative content analysis method. First, the researcher listened to the interview recordings several times to gain a general view of the interviews, then the text of the interview was read word by word and line by line to identify and highlight words or phrases containing key concepts. This process resulted in the extraction of 218 initial codes which were later refined to a total of 186 codes. Throughout this continuous process, the codes were reviewed multiple times, from their initial extraction to their final naming. Similar codes were merged and classified, resulting in the generation of category names and subcategories based on the ideas they encompassed. Then, the subcategories extracted from the interviews were compared and if similarities allowed for merging, they were consolidated into main categories, and finally, 2 main themes were explained (13).

To ensure data accuracy and robustness, the researcher employed methods to establish credibility and maintain long-term, in-depth engagement with the subject. Throughout the study, the researcher ensured data accuracy and validity by allocating sufficient time to inform and engage with participants, build trust, continuously review data, conduct member checks by discussing extracted codes with participants, and utilize peer review (external check) by seeking feedback on interview texts and extracted codes from external sources to enhance data

acceptability and study validity. The first researcher conducted all participant interviews and coding. The research process was supervised and audited by two expert professors in the field of qualitative research. The stability of the findings was ensured by promptly writing copies and providing an example of direct quotations (14).

RESULTS:

The demographic characteristics of the participants included 10 parents, who were between the ages of 26 and 38 years and had at least one child. Among them, 2 had a diploma, 1 had an Associate's degree, 6 had a bachelor's degree, and 1 had an MSc degree. Based on the analysis of the interviews, the needs of parents with infants were explained in 2 main themes: "information needs" and "caring needs". (Table1)

1-INFORMATION NEEDS

According to the participants' statements, informational needs were extracted as one of the main dimensions of the needs of parents with infants in two main categories: "infant's nutritional informational needs" and "infant's health informational needs".

"Infant nutritional information needs"

This category consists of three subcategories: "Breastfeeding", "Infant Nutrition" and "Vitamin Supplements". Most of the participants expressed a need for information regarding the importance of breast milk, substitutes for breast milk, medication use while breastfeeding, the amount of milk needed by an infant, milk expression and storage methods, ways to increase breast milk production and contraceptives during breastfeeding. In this regard, participant number 1 stated:

"I need to know what is the importance of breastfeeding, what problems will arise if my baby is not breastfed, and what can replace

breastmilk for my baby, and what medicines should not be taken while breastfeeding, the disadvantages of dry breastfeeding and guidelines regarding how much milk a child should consume and for how long?"

Participant number 3 said:

"My milk secretion is very low, what can I use to replace or for example compensate for this deficiency? If I use powdered milk, which type is suitable for my baby's growth and digestive system without causing any problems? In my opinion, it is necessary for mothers to learn the correct way to hold a baby while breastfeeding."

Most of the participants stated that they need information on their child's nutrition, including when and how to start supplementary feeding, how much to provide, and what ingredients it should contain. Participant number 4 stated:

"When can I start supplemental food and what should these foods consist of, and how can I identify any intolerances or nutritional needs to ensure they are getting enough, or if they still require breast milk?"

Participant number 10 said:

"The training should encompass a comprehensive understanding of child nutrition, covering topics such as how to feed them, how to maintain nutritional hygiene, the requirements for supplementary food, its preparation, and the appropriate foods for each stage of a child's development."

Most of the participants stated a need for information regarding the necessity of vitamin and iron supplements, the potential issues that may arise if these supplements are not used, alternative foods that can substitute for these supplements, and how infants can prevent black teeth after using iron drops.

Participant number 5 stated:

"When we come to healthcare, should the baby be given multivitamins and iron drops, or can they obtain these nutrients from breast milk and solid

foods? Is there any harm in giving these supplements to my child? For instance, do the iron drops discolor the teeth and could they potentially affect the shape of the teeth or heart?"

"The need to have information on infant health"

This category consists of six subcategories: " need for information about the causes of infant crying and teething", " need for information about infant growth", " need for information about infant illnesses and diseases", " need for information about bathing the infant" and "need for information about infant vaccinations".

Most of the participants stated the need to understand the cause of their infant's crying and how to address it. In this context, participant number 2 stated:

"When the baby cries, understanding the cause of their crying and the underlying issue is genuinely helpful for both the father and mother in caring for and meeting the infant's needs."

Participant number 3 stated:

"One of the problems that all mothers face is deciphering what their children want or what might be causing their cries. It would be highly beneficial to have training that helps us understand their needs and behavior based on their crying".

Participant number 6 stated:

"It's valuable for families to be able to recognize the children's behavior when they cries and understand the reasons behind it, whether it's hunger, the need for a bath, discomfort, or any other issue."

Most of the participants stated the need to know when their baby starts teething, the reasons for restlessness or fever during teething, why babies tend to bite everything, and what can be done to address these behaviors.

Participant number 3 stated:

"When my child is teething, what should I do for her, how can I recognize the signs of teething, and when she develops a fever, is this fever a normal

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part of teething, or does she require medication and should it be managed? “

Participant number 4 stated:

"We need to know the signs of teething in our baby, why does she put everything in her mouth when she is teething and wants to bite everything, what is the reason."

Most of the participants stated the need to know whether their infant has grown enough or not, and what their infant's height and weight should be at each stage of their age. Participant number 2 stated:

"What should be the weight of my child at different stages, for example, two months or six months and is there a concern if it falls below or exceeds a certain amount, indicating a potential growth disorder or issue?"

Most of the participants stated the need to know how to recognize when their child is sick and what they to care for them. They also need information on the conditions under which they can provide certain home-based services and care for their infant. Participant number 3 stated:

" Some children develop jaundice when they are born. How can we determine if our child has jaundice, and what is the appropriate treatment? If it can be treated at home, where can we find the device with lights that are placed on the baby's head for treatment? Another concern of mine is the possibility of my child swallowing an object, and in case this happens and it gets stuck in their throat, we need to undergo training on how to prevent suffocation. How can we learn to save them from choking?"

Most of the participants stated the need to know how to bathe their baby and what steps to take for their baby's care after bathing. They are also concerned about how to dress the baby in a way that ensures their safety, given the baby's delicate size. Participant number 7 stated:

“Another need that I think is necessary for mothers to learn how to properly bathe an infant

because they are really weak and improper bathing may harm them, or how to dress them."

Most of the participants stated the need to know when children should be vaccinated and what is the benefit for their children. What problems will arise if the vaccine is missed, and what should be done in case of forgetting a phase of the vaccine or while traveling? Participant number 10 said:

"When should children be vaccinated and what should I do if they develop a fever after vaccination? How can I determine if the medicine given to the child causes an allergic reaction?"

Participant number 8 stated:

"It's good for families to know the vaccination schedule for their children and to get them regularly and ensure they receive vaccines regularly and as per the schedule. They should also know what steps to take when it's time for vaccinations while traveling."

2- CARING NEEDS

The theme of infant care needs consists of two main categories "infant therapeutic needs" and "supporting needs".

"Therapeutic needs of infants"

Participant number 6 stated:

"One of the important needs that should be addressed, in my opinion, is to increase the accuracy of the tests they perform. When I went for my child's thyroid test, I received a call a few days later that the test was wrong and had to be repeated, which made my child very upset and also there should be more accuracy in measuring the height and weight of the child and measuring the head circumference.”

"supporting needs"

Supportive needs include family support, government support and health center support subcategories. Most of the participants emphasized the importance of family members participating and cooperating in child-rearing and household chores to ensure that the burden does

not solely fall on the mother of the family. They also expressed the need to increase government support in the field of increasing maternity leave and providing items such as powdered milk. In this case, most of the participants stated that there is a need for families with infants to be supported by the centers in order to prepare milk powder, and vitamins and receive services in the centers. In this context, participant number 5 stated:

"Families with infants usually bear a lot of expenses. It is really necessary for the government to consider implementing a support program for these families."

DISCUSSION:

Based on the results of the present study, the needs of mothers with infants were explained in 2 main themes, "information needs" and "caring needs". In the same context, the results of the qualitative study by Mumtazan et al. (2019) on the components of parents' information-seeking behavior for children's health revealed that one of the main classes obtained was parents' information needs (15), which is in line with the results of the present study. Also, the results of Delfani et al.'s study (2022) showed that, from the perspective of the parents of hospitalized children, information needs and support needs were the main themes of this qualitative study which confirms the results of our study (9). Also, the results of the study by Haj Bagheri et al. (2017) showed that mothers' knowledge about the care of their babies after discharge is inadequate (16) which confirms the care needs of parents resulting from the present study.

Considering the vital role of maternal awareness in preventing nutritional issues during infant growth and development, it is quite logical to express the need of parents for information about the nutritional needs of infants in various situations such as breast milk, complementary feeding and the use of supplements. Proper

nutrition plays an important role in the growth and development of infants. Infants require essential nutrients such as fats, carbohydrates and liquids and secondary nutrients such as vitamins, minerals and trace elements. Deficiency or excessive consumption of any of these substances causes nutritional disorders in infants (17). The study of Sethi et al. and Tsang et al. showed that educating mothers about infant nutrition increases their awareness in this field and increases the quantity and quality of children's complementary foods, and also increases the height and weight of children (18,19). It is very important for mothers to be aware of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding during the first 6 months of a baby's life, the nutritional advantages and safety of breast milk, and the appropriate timing and method for introducing complementary foods. If maternal awareness in this regard reaches an optimal level, it can significantly contribute to reducing the spread of diseases and malnutrition and anemia caused by iron deficiency in infants (20). In general, the mother's milk alone in the first 6 months of life suffices to meet all the nutritional needs of the infant, eliminating the need for introducing other foods during this period. Complementary feeding should begin at 4-6 months, starting with simpler and smaller foods and gradually increasing their quantity and variety (21). Other needs of parents with infants are informational needs in the field of infant health. Health literacy is not only reading but a complex set of skills. In fact, health literacy refers to the capacity of people to acquire, communicate, process and understand health information (22). Basic knowledge and information are fundamental for most human activities and behaviors, and parents play an important role in shaping this knowledge. Parents, in particular, hold a pivotal role in imparting this knowledge to their children and fostering healthy habits and behaviors (23). constitute a particularly

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important demographic with regards to their health information needs; because this group plays a unique role in ensuring not only their own health but also the well-being of other family members, especially children. In fact, in order for the parents to be able to handle the physical and emotional needs of the child, the needs of the parents must be met. As a result, recognizing the needs of parents, training adaptation skills and their participation in social activities can be effective in improving the condition of parents. Considering that parental support is the most important factor that determines children's reaction to the issue of health and nursing care, parents who are regularly informed of health status by healthcare personnel are less stressed about caregiving (24).

The limitations of this research are primarily associated with the limited scope of the qualitative study. Despite our efforts to include participants with diverse social and cultural backgrounds as well as varying educational levels, it should be noted that the generalizability of the study's findings may be most relevant to similar contexts and units.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this research, parents with infants have many informational needs in the fields of infant health, nutrition and development. Also, the results showed that caring needs are important, as deficiencies in meeting these needs were identified. It is certain that meeting these needs of parents is effective in how to take better care of the infant, and therefore, more mutual collaboration between health care workers and parents is necessary. The obtained results can serve as a foundation for further studies regarding the application of these results. By identifying these factors, managers and policy makers will be empowered to design and implement their management and educational initiatives rooted

scientific findings to provide the necessary conditions to meet the information and care needs of parents with infants across various domains.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest.

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