

Abstract

This thesis explores the experiences of mothers following perinatal loss and their possible experience of perinatal palliative care. The theoretical part of the thesis focuses on explaining the concept of perinatal loss, its different types, stillbirth and care in the maternity ward. It further elaborates on selected psychological aspects of loss, especially contact with the child after birth and grieving. It suggests possible factors that influence subsequent coping with the experience and introduces the concept of post-traumatic growth. The aim of the research section was to gain a better understanding of mothers' experiences following perinatal loss and to capture their experience of care in the maternity unit. Data collection took the form of semi-structured interviews with five mothers who had experienced perinatal loss. The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis method was used to analyse the data and four main themes were identified: Contact with the baby, Contact with others, Coping and The meaning of memories. Each of the superordinate themes contained 2-4 subthemes. The results show that perinatal loss is a painful experience for women and coping is a long-term process. Experiences of mothers can be influenced to some extent by appropriately focused medical care and a sensitive attitude of those around. Contact with the baby after birth, the creation of tangible memories, respectful communication from health professionals, support from others, or the use of psychological support, all prove beneficial.

Key words: perinatal loss; stillbirth; perinatal palliative care; grief; interpretative phenomenological analysis