

Perception of the childbirth experience: Continuity and changes over the
postpartum period

ABSTRACT

The way mothers reconstruct the childbirth experience during the early postpartum period may interfere in their mood and predisposition to get pregnant again. This study explored continuity and changes in the perception of childbirth experience throughout the first six postpartum months, taking into account different types of delivery. The sample consisted of 68 Portuguese pregnant women, who filled in the Childbirth Experience and Satisfaction Questionnaire 48 h after delivery and in the third and sixth postpartum months. A continuity in the mothers' overall perceptions of childbirth experience use and usefulness of relaxation techniques, social support, health conditions and care provided, and other postpartum events was found over time. Despite that, mothers developed a more positive perception of this experience marked by fewer worries about the infant's health and well-being as well as their own, and by a decrease in the perception of the pain felt. The type of delivery had an impact both on the mothers' perceptions of childbirth experience and on memory changes over time. Results suggest that the construction of a more positive perception of childbirth can be a relevant postpartum developmental task which can help mothers to better adjust to motherhood.

Keywords: memory; childbirth; type of delivery; labour; postpartum