The Critical Role of Fathers to Reduce Stillbirth in India

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Disclosures and Acknowledgements

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Purpose

» To explore how men and women experience stillbirth in India and their respective needs

~ To inform locally sustainable interventions
Background

» MDG 4 cannot be achieved without reducing stillbirths
» Globally 3.3 million stillbirths per year\(^1\)
  ~ India has the highest number of stillbirths in the world\(^2\)
Stillbirths in India

» National average stillbirth rate (SBR) $4-8$
  ~ $27/1000$ live births

» Estimates of variance in SBR rate
  ~ from 20 to 66 by region

» Certain subpopulations 75-78

» SBR in Chhattisgarh 64

» SBR as high as 103/1000 in some communities

» Usually third trimester SB
  ~ Most potentially avoidable
Stillbirths risks in India

» Medical and sociocultural factors
  ~ Lifelong malnutrition
  ~ Girls/women receive less food; food of less quality
  ~ Young mothers (due to early marriage)
  ~ Advanced maternal age
  ~ Lack of reproductive health choice and resources
  ~ Son preference
  ~ Maternal socioeconomic disadvantage
  ~ Short birth intervals
  ~ Lack of antenatal care
  ~ Lack of skilled birth attendants
Perinatal Grief

» Acute perinatal grief
   ~ Significant psychosocial burden on women’s health

» Complicated grief > 6 months
   ~ Impairment of social, occupational, other functioning

» Sequelae
   ~ Depression
   ~ Anxiety
   ~ Somatic symptoms
   ~ Decreased functioning
   ~ Domestic violence
   ~ Stigma, abandonment or isolation

7,8
Confluence of Risk factors

Medical

Stillbirth

Socio-cultural

Quest for sons

Previous stillbirth

9-11
Fathers’ experiences

Western Context:¹²
» Psychological symptoms
  ~ Increased with more time before next pregnancy
  ~ Pressure to be strong

Indian Context:¹³
~ Son preference
~ Fertility expectations
Mixed-Methods, 2 parallel studies:

~ Evaluation of a short mindfulness-based pilot intervention for women
  • $N = 22$
  • 5-week intervention
  • 6-week and 12-month follow-up assessments

~ Formative work exploring men’s SB experiences
  • 5 key informant interviews
  • 23 structured interviews

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Overview of Results

Women
~ History of 1 – 3 stillbirth
~ Reductions:
  • Anxiety, depression
  • Perinatal grief
~ Increases:
  • Mindfulness
  • Resilience
~ Still using skills at 1 year
~ Reported benefits:
  • Increased calmness
  • Sense of peace
  • Positive energy

Men
~ Medical/reproductive decision power and burden
~ Lack of knowledge, readiness
~ Fertility issues/solutions
~ With history of stillbirth
  • > anxiety/depression
  • Perceived less support
  • More egalitarian attitude
  • More abusive
  • Grieving seen as ‘normal’
  • Frustration
~ Supportive of MBI for women
Qualitative themes among men

Reproductive rights determined by men:
- #’s of children
- Obtaining prenatal care
- Facility birth or home delivery
- Timing of attempt to conceive again after stillbirth

Family obligations expected of men
- Caring for elderly parents
- Financial solvency, shelter
- Enforcing family piety
Husband of a woman with SB history

“I alone had to decide. Everybody was telling (me) make a decision. Last time we went to the private doctor and even after so much money we spent the baby was born dead. This time we went to the government hospital. . . it was also stillborn. I think my wife is not alright yet but everyone is telling to have another baby.”
Items of perpetration endorsed by all men ($N = 28$)

More than 20 times in the last 3 months

- Verbal abuse
- Destruction of property or threat to hit
- Pushed/shoved/slapped
- Minor to moderate injury inflicted
- Severe physical abuse

- Stillbirth
- No stillbirth
### Predictors of mental health among men with a history of stillbirth experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>8.79</td>
<td>2.54, 15.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time since stillbirth</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-0.002, 0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender of stillborn</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.24*</td>
<td>0.006, 0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where stillbirth occurred</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.77, 0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife had antenatal care</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>-0.06, 0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth attendant</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>0.04, 0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of stillbirths</td>
<td>-1.49</td>
<td>-1.16*</td>
<td>-1.85, -0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>-0.99</td>
<td>-0.30*</td>
<td>-0.52, -0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude Towards Women</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>-0.07, 0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Provision of Support</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>-0.13, 0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuser</td>
<td>-1.20</td>
<td>-0.70*</td>
<td>-1.00, -0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional abuser</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.35, 0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life satisfaction</td>
<td>-0.72</td>
<td>-0.13*</td>
<td>-0.22, -0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive religious coping</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>-0.49, 0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative religious coping</td>
<td>-0.56</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>-0.55, 0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *p < 0.05*
Significant Predictors of mental health among men with history of stillbirth

- Gender of baby (male)
- Skilled birth attendant (no)
- Number of stillbirths (more)
- Ethnicity (lower caste)
- Physical abuser (no)
- Life satisfaction (low)
Comparing men and women

Perspectives on Women’s Autonomy

- Not allowed to market: Women > Men
- Allowed to market: Men > Women
- Not allowed to visit kin: Women >> Men
- Allowed to visit kin with permission: Men > Women
- Allowed to visit kin without permission: Men > Women
Conclusion

» MBI for women effective in reducing perinatal grief
» Men often unaware of need or intervention offered
» Fathers of stillborns have unmet needs
  ~ Some positive outcomes:
    • Gained insight
    • Personal growth
    • Developed empathy
  ~ Support needed

» Opportunities
  ~ Community engagement
  ~ Education
  ~ Community-based intervention
“When women thrive, all of society benefits and succeeding generations are given a better start in life.”
~ Kofi Annan
References


