

Identifying Web-Based Training and Pregnancy School Experiences of Father Candidates: A Phenomenological Study

Baba Adaylarının Web Tabanlı Eğitim ve Gebe Okulu Deneyimlerinin Belirlenmesi: Fenomenolojik Bir Çalışma

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the web-based training and pregnancy school experiences of first-time father candidates. The research was carried out qualitatively. Content analysis was used in this study. The COREQ checklist was applied. It was done in a hospital in the west of Turkey. In-depth interviews with father candidates who received training on a web-based platform (n=15) and in pregnancy school (n=15) were used in data collection. Four themes were identified: I) The web-based training experience; II) Information received in the web-based trainings; III) The pregnancy school training experience; and IV) Information received in the pregnancy school trainings. It was identified that web-based training and pregnancy school experiences had positive influences on the postpartum experiences of father candidates. It was identified that web-based training and pregnancy school experiences had positive influences on postpartum experiences of father candidates. Positive feedbacks were received from the father candidates in both groups. It was found that father candidates in both groups gained information and awareness through trainings. Their adaptation to the postpartum period can be facilitated through the practice of web-based trainings by integrating them into pregnancy school trainings.

Keywords: Experience, father, midwifery, prenatal education, web-based education

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı, ilk kez baba olacak adayların web tabanlı eğitim ve gebelik okulu deneyimlerini belirlemektir. Araştırma nitel olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çalışmada içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. COREQ kontrol listesi uygulandı. Türkiye'nin batısındaki bir hastanede yapıldı. Veri toplamada web tabanlı (n=15) ve gebe okulunda (n=15) eğitim almış baba adaylarıyla derinlemesine görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Dört tema belirlenmiştir: I) Web tabanlı eğitim deneyimi, II) Web tabanlı eğitimlerde alınan bilgiler, III) Gebe okulu eğitim deneyimi ve IV) Gebe okulu eğitimlerinde alınan bilgiler. Web tabanlı eğitim ve gebe okulu deneyimlerinin baba adaylarının doğum sonrası deneyimlerini olumlu yönde etkilediği tespit edilmiştir. Web tabanlı eğitim ve gebe okulu deneyimlerinin baba adaylarının doğum sonrası deneyimlerini olumlu yönde etkilediği tespit edilmiştir. Her iki gruptaki baba adaylarından da olumlu dönütler alındı. Her iki gruptaki baba adaylarının eğitimler yoluyla bilgi ve farkındalık kazandığı saptanmıştır. Gebe okulu eğitimlerine web tabanlı eğitimlerin entegre edilmesi doğum sonrası döneme uyumları kolaylaştırılabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Baba, deneyim, doğum öncesi eğitim, ebelik, web tabanlı eğitim

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1. Introduction

First-time fathers especially face several challenges in prenatal and postpartum period, although having a baby is a very special event for families. In related studies, it was seen that affective disorders like despair, exclusion, anxiety, and depression were the most common problems in supporting their wives and participating in infant care (Darwin et al., 2017; Nash, 2018; Benzies & Magill-Evans, 2015; Baldwin et al., 2018). Most fathers have difficulty in finding sources to meet their information requirements about the processes of pregnancy, labor, and their subsequent their transition to fatherhood (Shorey et al., 2019). Sioma-Markowska et al. (2016) found that more than half of the fathers who participated in the labor were not informed or trained in prenatal period. Suto et al. (2017) conducted a systematic review and saw that prenatal and postpartum period had an effect on psychological health of fathers and this also affected family health. Therefore, they expressed that father candidates should be supported. Lima-Pereira et al. (2012) stated that most of the mother and father candidates used the internet as primary information source and that midwives should direct individuals towards high-quality websites.

It was seen that fathers had the behavior of searching for information from various sources in prenatal and postpartum periods and they received information mostly from their individual use of the internet or planned and structured training sessions (Hamilton et al., 2016; Fletcher et al., 2008; Fletcher et al., 2017). Pregnancy school, consultancy, and information classes, which consisted of prenatal training groups, were other sources from which they met their information requirements. These trainings had positive effects on fathers and families (Nash, 2018; Warriner et al., 2018; Fletcher et al., 2017).

The current research is the first study investigating views, perceptions, and experiences of first-time fathers towards pregnancy school and web-based training. It is an original study in that sense. This study aims to identify the father candidates' views and expectations about two trainings (web-based training and pregnancy school). Depending on this aim, it sought answers for these questions: What are the web-based training experiences of first time fathers? What are the pregnancy school experiences of first time fathers?

2. Method

The current research was carried out in phenomenological research design which is a type of qualitative research. The COREQ checklist was used in the organization of this article (Tong et al., 2007). Experiences of fathers were evaluated in this research.

2.1. Aim of Study

The aim of research was to identify experiences of the first-time fathers regarding web-based training and face to face (pregnancy school) programs.

2.2. Research Questions

Depending on the research aim, it sought answers for the questions below:

- What are the web-based training experiences of first-time fathers?
- What are the pregnancy school experiences of first-time fathers?

2.3. Population and Sample of the Research

Partners of pregnant women who applied to a state hospital in western Turkey for follow-up between June 15-November 15, 2019, formed the population of this research. Purposive sampling method was used. Father candidates in web-based training group were chosen from among the partners of pregnant women who applied to maternity policlinics of the hospital for follow-up and father candidates in pregnancy school were identified from among those who joined the pregnancy school organized in the hospital. At the beginning of the research, 36 participants were met. Five participants did not attend to the web-based trainings. One of the participants who joined pregnancy school did not accept to hold the interview. The sample was identified in accordance with saturation point (repetition) of the responses in data collection process (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The number of participants was 15 in the training structured on the web and 15 in pregnancy school, which made 30 participants in total. The fathers who received web-based and pregnancy school training were interviewed. Their ages ranged between 25-39. They resided in the city center. Most of them stated that the trainings met their expectations considerably. Majority of them reported that they persuaded other fathers to join these trainings (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive features of the participants (n=30)

Participant Codes	Age	Education	Income Perceptions	Training Expectation
Web-Dad1	32	University	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Web-Dad2	30	High school	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Web-Dad3	27	University	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Web-Dad4	37	University	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Web-Dad5	28	High school	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Web-Dad6	26	High school	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Web-Dad7	31	University	Balanced	Positive
Web-Dad8	30	High school	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Web-Dad9	26	High school	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Web-Dad10	38	University	Balanced	Positive
Web-Dad11	37	Secondary school	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Web-Dad12	32	University	Balanced	Positive
Web-Dad13	27	Secondary school	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Web-Dad14	33	High school	Higher	Positive
Web-Dad15	24	Secondary school	Lower	Positive +purpose
Group-Dad1	26	University	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Group-Dad2	29	High school	Balanced	Positive
Group-Dad3	32	University	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Group-Dad4	34	University	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Group-Dad5	29	High school	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Group-Dad6	28	High school	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Group-Dad7	25	Secondary school	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Group-Dad8	24	University	Higher	Positive +purpose
Group-Dad9	30	University	Balanced	Positive
Group-Dad10	26	High school	Balanced	Positive +purpose

Table 1. Descriptive features of the participants (n=30) (continued)

Participant Codes	Age	Education	Income Perceptions	Training Expectation
Group-Dad11	25	High school	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Group-Dad12	30	University	Balanced	Positive
Group-Dad13	28	High school	Higher	Positive +purpose
Group-Dad14	31	University	Balanced	Positive +purpose
Group-Dad15s	26	University	Balanced	Positive +purpose

Web-Dad= Fathers trained on the web, Group-Dad= Fathers trained in prenatal education groups

The father candidates who were included in the study were older than 18 and would have the experience of fatherhood for the first time, were at least primary school graduates, expected only one baby, did not have any high risks in their wives' pregnancy, could use the website through computer or mobile phone for the web-based group, participated in training sessions organized in the hospital for pregnancy school group, and were voluntary and willing to participate in the research. Those who did not participate in the whole web-based training and pregnancy school programs and did not want to participate in process of the research were excluded from the study (Figure 1).

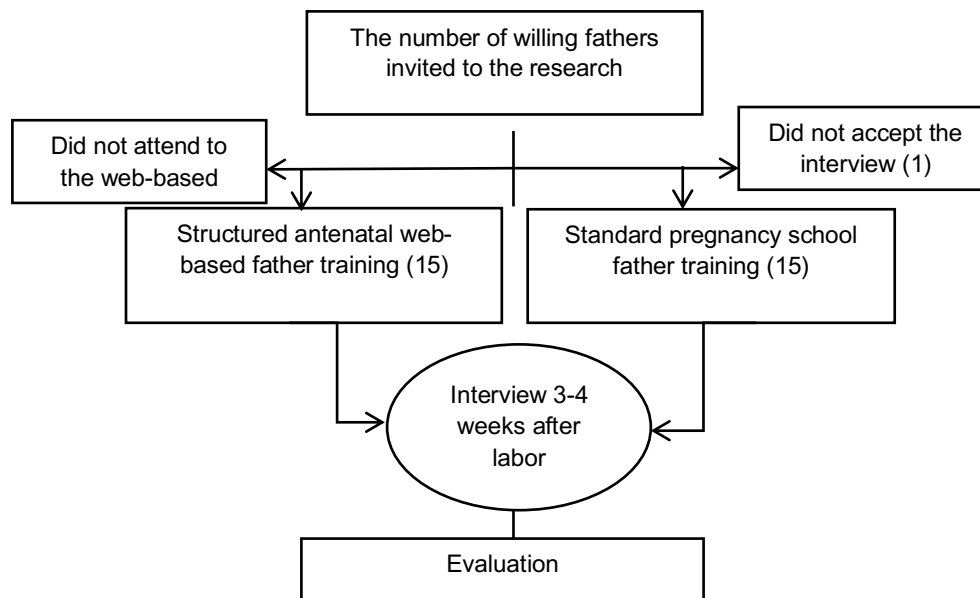


Figure 1. The process of conducting research.

2.4. Data Collection and Data Collection Tools

Information form and structured interview form, which contained information about socio-demographic features and training experience, were developed by the researchers. Interview questions were organized by receiving expert opinion after scanning the literature. The 8 questions in each form in the structured interview form were decreased to 7 after expert corrections and content validity was gained. Pilot study was done with 10 father candidates before the data collection process. The statements which were not understandable were edited.

2.4.1. Information Form: It is an information form which had 7 questions about socio-demographic features of the father candidates.

2.4.2. Structured Interview Form: It had 7 questions and was prepared by the researchers to collect data about perceptions and experiences of father candidates regarding the web-based training or pregnancy school. The questions included: Could you tell us a little about your history of participating in web-based trainings? What was your expectation? What are your suggestions? What were the education methods and education subjects you received from the web base/pregnant school? Could you tell us about your attainments regarding the knowledge and skills you intended to gain during the training? What were the effects of the trainings you received on your family, partner, and you? According to you, what are the importance, advantages, and disadvantages of web base/pregnant school education? Would you recommend these trainings to other father candidates? Why or why not?

2.5. Ethical Considerations

Approval was received from Aydın Adnan Menderes University Faculty of Medicine Non-invasive Researches Ethics Committee with the date of 22.02.2018 and E.11888 number. Participants were informed about the research. Written and verbal informed consent were gained from all the father candidates before the research. Participants voluntarily signed the consent form.

2.6. Application of Research

The research was conducted through two separate processes as two groups of father candidates receiving web-based training and standard pregnancy school training group.

2.6.1. Web-Based Training Process

The participant father candidates were informed and given password to reach the web-based platform and their access was ensured. This website' content was a web-based program which was prepared by the researchers. It included three books and four videos which supported infant care and adaptation of father candidates to labor and postpartum period. The father candidates used the website through the password given to them via internet.

2.6.2. Pregnancy School Training Process

Pregnancy school program was instituted with "Pregnancy School, Pregnant Women Information Class, Antenatal Preparation and Consultation Centers Circular" dated 25.09.2014 and numbered 2014/28 by the Ministry of Health in Turkey. The training program covered the issues of pregnancy, labor, information about postpartum period and the newborn, and what must be done in risky situations, parenthood process, fear of labor and attachment. Father candidates participated in the trainings with their partners in group.

2.7. Limitations of the Research

When focus group discussions are repeated, participants can express different views. Cultural diversity can affect beliefs regarding health. Had this study been replicated in a different country, different views might have emerged. In other words, the results obtained from this research cannot be generalized.

2.8. Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis and coding processes were conducted simultaneously. Constant comparative analysis was done in data analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Analysis was done in open coding and decoding. The processes of coding and decoding were done by the researchers independently of each other. Coding transactions of deciphered texts were combined. Thus, themes and related sub-themes emerged (Morrow et al., 2015). Reporting of the study was done according to the COREQ criteria (Tong et al. 2007).

3. Results

In this study, four themes were identified. The themes were presented in Figure 2.

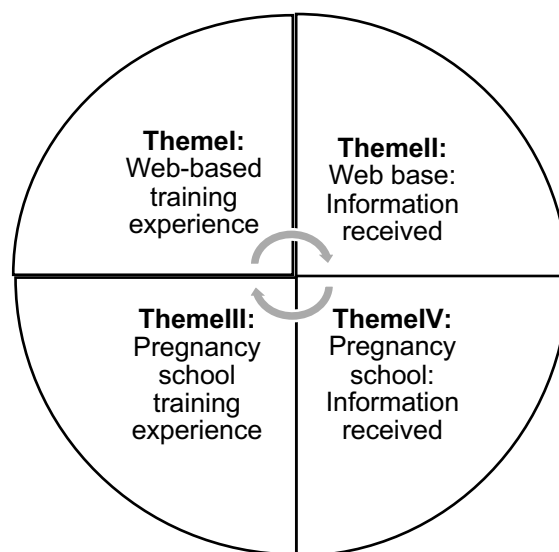


Figure 2. Themes and sub-themes about training experiences.

3.1. Theme 1. The web-based training experience

Majority of the fathers made positive expressions regarding the web-based trainings which they received. Most of these expressions were related to advantages of the webpage (inclusion of comprehensible information, convenience of reaching information, saving time, opportunity of reaching information again later, availability of correct, reliable and helpful information on the webpage, convenience of flexible training hours due to workload and time limitation etc.). They advised other fathers to participate in such trainings.

'The training subjects had detailed, helpful and comprehensible information. The webpage was useful.'^{w1'}

'I reached helpful, comprehensible, and correct information easily. I found the answers to some questions which I previously could not find. I recommended this website to other fathers.'^{w13'}

'I entered the website whenever and wherever I wished. I had the opportunity of revising the subjects and I could resume the sessions. It can be helpful for fathers who have workload and cannot join any other training.'^{w4'}

'The training subjects had detailed and helpful information. Other fathers should join these trainings, especially fathers with busy shifts should use this website.'^{W-7'}

Most of the fathers receiving web-based training stated that they had lower anxiety, stress, and despair about the obscurity of the process of becoming father. It was identified that some fathers had positive experiences about the feelings of confidence, self-confidence, and efficiency.

'There is nobody from whom especially fathers working intensively can get training. I am confused. I do not know where to consult.'^{W-3'}

'My wife participated in pregnancy school. I could not accompany her. I felt bad for this reason. I felt as if I had been out of the family. However, my self-confidence increased through this web-based platform at least.'^{W-10'}

3.2. Theme 2. Information received in the web-based trainings

The participants stated that they gained information about the issues like the development process of a healthy baby, routine baby care, burping the baby, crying reasons of the baby, vaccines, parenthood, postnatal adaptation, and supporting their partners.

'I received information about the development process of a baby. I learned how to communicate with the baby and which games could be played with the baby in this development process.'^{W-12'}

'I gained much satisfactory information about the health status of the baby, vaccines, intense cries of the baby, baby care, and the postnatal process.'^{W-15'}

'I advise this webpage to father candidates. It can be helpful in becoming a father. I learned what I did not know.'^{W-11'}

3.3. Theme 3. The pregnancy school training experience

Most of the father candidates had positive expressions about their training experiences in pregnancy school sessions. They mostly stated that they recommended the trainings they received in the pregnancy school to other fathers.

'We received satisfactory and helpful information about the labor process.'^{G-11'}

'We gained correct information from right sources. I suggest these trainings to other fathers. Because helpful, planned and comprehensible information was presented to me.'^{G-1'}

Majority of the fathers in pregnancy school expressed that their fear decreased in the process of becoming father, had more sense of self-confidence and felt themselves privileged. Additionally, some of them revealed that their sense of exclusion decreased and they became happy since they would participate in care as a part of the family.

'I got information about the labor process. I noticed that my wife's fear of labor decreased. I gained self-confidence during the training. I feel myself privileged.'^{G-11'}

'I felt that my self-confidence and efficiency increased towards the end of the trainings.'^{G-8'}

'We were considering cesarean due to my wife's fear of labor. I feared as well. There were many things that I did not know. We noticed what were waiting for us in the labor process and they were not so scaring.'^{G-3'}

'The best was that I would participate in the care as a part of the family and I am pleased since I will do something for my family.'^{G-7'}

Some father candidates stated that they found the environment in pregnancy school intimate and the pregnancy school trainings were affective on intra-family communication.

'My communication with my wife evolved positively. I could understand her expectations and psychological status better. Her trust in me increased. G-7'

'It was nice. There was an intimate environment. I got motivated in becoming father. My wife was also pleased with my efforts. G-4'

3.4. Theme 4. Information received in the pregnancy school trainings

The father candidates expressed that they gained information about pregnancy, labor and postpartum process, risky conditions, baby care, breastfeeding techniques and parenthood during pregnancy school sessions.

'I learned that fathers should be more sensitive and interested towards their babies, and they should transmit their affection more. G-9'

'I learned positive approaches about understanding the psychology of mother and how to support her in puerperium. G-10'

'I learned many things about baby care and becoming father. G-4'

'First aid issues were especially interesting. Learning how to take a foreign body out of the windpipe of the baby felt me better. G-8'

4. Discussion

Four sub-themes of the research were discussed in line with the literature. Research findings showed that some fathers had positive experiences and opinions regarding the trainings provided them. According to several studies, labor education courses, individual antenatal education, group prenatal education, childbirth classes and online prenatal education were the most common institutional education programs from which fathers receive training (Li et al., 2009; Roch et al., 2018; Gagnon & Sandall, 2007; Fletcher et al., 2008; Lima-Pereira et al., 2012). Evidences indicated that these practices were effective on father candidates as well as mother candidates (Bergström et al., 2009; Gagnon & Sandall, 2007; Hamilton et al., 2016; Li et al., 2009; Roch et al., 2018). These research results are in consistent with the experiences of fathers receiving trainings through web-based designs and antenatal preparation courses.

In our study, it is seen that the participants who applied to prenatal education classes are mostly young and have a high education level. In similar studies, it is understood that young and high-educational individuals are interested in prenatal education classes (Gagnon & Sandall, 2007; Hamilton et al., 2016). According to these results, different experiences can be obtained in studies to be carried out by encouraging prospective fathers with different demographic characteristics to prenatal education classes.

In this research, it was identified that father candidates mentioned about positive experiences regarding the two training methods, and these experiences were mainly about the decrease in senses of anxiety, stress and despair and the increase in senses of self-confidence and self-efficiency. Bergström et al. (2009) identified that web-based trainings decreased stress about obscurity in fathers. In another study, despair senses and stress levels of fathers decreased through prenatal trainings (Da Costa et al., 2017).

These results support the positive effects of web-based and pregnancy school trainings on father candidates.

In our research, some father candidates in two training groups stated that their sense of exclusion decreased and they felt themselves as a part of the family as a result of the training which they received. According to the research results of Nash (2018), informing and supporting fathers before labor made them more willing in joining care. In the research of Lima-Pereira et al. (2012), it was identified that the males who joined antenatal training used web-based designs as source of information. In line with these results, it can be thought that trainings on the web and pregnancy school encouraged father candidates to participate in care.

The father candidates, who preferred receiving web-based training, chose to use the internet as a source of information due to heavy workload. It was seen that they found web-based training reliable, practical and useful. In a web-based study, which included fathers who were well-educated and had a profession, trainings which could increase father-infant interaction were practiced. Most of the fathers expressed that these trainings met their expectations (Fletcher et al., 2008). In another study, it was found that mothers and fathers in different geographical distances used internet-based peer support programs actively despite time constraint (Niela-Vilén et al., 2014). These results are in consistence with the experiences of father candidates receiving interactive training. It can be inferred that web-based trainings are practical and helpful for fathers having difficulty in time management.

In this research, the father candidates using the webpage talked about the advantages like availability of helpful information, flexible training hours, repeating the information and easy access to training materials and reliable information. In a study where fathers were provided with informative support, most of the fathers gave positive feedback (Fletcher et al., 2017). In other web-based studies, fathers similarly stated that reaching information about web-based father trainings and social support was easy (White et al., 2018). Thus, web-based antenatal trainings can present father candidates various advantages.

In the current research, some father candidates receiving web-based training wanted to communicate with other father candidates to get information about their experiences during postpartum period. In the research carries out by Teague and Shatte (2018), it was identified that fathers used web-based software and social media in the process of transition to fatherhood, and they used a range of social support techniques by sharing the difficulties they experienced and expressions of feeling. In another study, fathers coming together with parent support groups via e-meeting portal stated that they were pleased with the share of positive experiences in that platform (Nyström & Ohrling, 2008). These results suggest that web-based software is a platform where fathers seek social support.

The father candidates expressed that the information which they received from were mostly about child development, baby care, partner support, becoming father and postpartum adaptation, which was similar to the information of those in pregnancy school. In systematic research, the training interventions applied to parents of premature babies were investigated. It was identified that the trainings were mainly about parenthood, baby care, kangaroo care, and health and development of baby (Puthussery et al., 2018). This result suggests that fathers can gain information related to their special cases through web base or pregnancy school.

The father candidates had positive experiences about the trainings in pregnancy school. It was revealed that the trainings decreased their senses of fear, stress and despair. Several studies identified that fathers joining antenatal training programs gained positive experiences toward the information which they received and their negative feelings decreased (Bergström et al., 2009; Suto et al., 2017; Gagnon & Sandal, 2007; Li et al., 2009; Parry et al., 2019). According to these results, it can be said that practices of pregnancy school are helpful and convenient training methods for fathers.

In the current study, father candidates in both training groups advised these trainings to other father candidates. In previous studies, web-based trainings and antenatal group trainings were suggested because of their positive results. It was thought that fathers should be trained in antenatal period like women and the trainings should be organized according to culture-specific preferences of individuals (May & Fletcher, 2013; Nash, 2018; Deave & Johnson, 2008; Da Costa et al., 2017; Hamilton et al., 2016; Baldwin et al., 2018). In line with this, supporting fathers in Turkey by integrating the two training programs antenatal training process with a holistic approach can increase potential postpartum benefits. Finally, the spark study has some limitations. If this study is repeated in different cultures and larger samples, different results may occur. In addition, different experiences may arise in environments where web-based and prenatal education classes are integrated.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it was seen that most of the father candidates were pleased with the trainings on the web-base and in pregnancy school. They mostly suggested these trainings to other father candidates. The common result which can be derived from the findings is that worries of the father candidates in both training groups decreased as a result of the trainings which they received, they felt themselves more efficient in terms of supporting their partners and baby care and gained self-confidence. Therefore, positive behaviors and information which are planned to be gained by father candidates can be presented them through trainings in which web-base and pregnancy school programs are integrated. Future studies blended with web-based and face-to-face training should investigate fathers' adjustment to the postpartum period and its effects.

Authors Contributions

Topic selection: SŞ, FÇC; Design: SŞ, FÇC; Planning: SŞ, FÇC; Data collection and analysis: SŞ, FÇC; Article writing: SŞ, FÇC; Critical review: SŞ, FÇC.

Conflict of Interest

None. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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