Transition to parenthood during the transition to modernity in Jordan: New parents' views on family and healthcare support systems

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Aims and Objectives
This study aims to explore new parents' experiences of family support during their transition to parenthood.

Background
Family support is widely considered a crucial factor in contributing toward positive outcomes for parents during transition to parenthood. However, inter-generational and socio-cultural differences among family members in understandings and practices of childcare can be a source of tension between new parents and family members. Few studies have examined the role of family support in the context of rapid social change taking place in Middle Eastern countries. This study aims to address this gap by examining the parenting experiences of young Jordanian couples within the family context they are embedded in.

Research Design and Methods
A qualitative study was conducted in Jordan involving sixty semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Twenty mothers, twenty fathers, and twenty family members identified as support providers were interviewed.

Results
The key theme, "it's too much" emerged from interviews to describe the nature of family support experienced by new parents from marriage to pregnancy and until after the arrival of their first child. The study found varied interpretations of traditional child-care practices among older and younger generation of family members, leading to family conflict. This study also found that the lack of credible information from the health system compelled them to accept the only available information for them from their parents, often times with much resistance and reluctance. This created a situation of stress and anxiety among young parents and undermined the potential for healthy parenting experience. This study also found that not all social support during early days of parenthood led to beneficial health outcomes to mother and child. "Social visiting" by family members to hospital and home, was particularly found to interfere with new parents' pursuit toward privacy and family bonding, immediately following the birth of child.

Conclusion
This study has produced a new understanding of the experience of Jordanian new parents' transition to parenthood. This study particularly sheds light on the current dilemma in which these Jordanian new parents find themselves in, which reflect a clash between traditional and modern values. Although the findings aim to contribute to the body of literature that deals with cultural influences on new parents' experiences in Jordan, the learning could be relevant to the other contexts in the Middle Eastern societies.
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Keywords:
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