

How to Cite:

Wulandari, L., Makiyah, S. N. N., & Hidayat, A. (2022). First time experience of being a father. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S8), 4636–4644.
<https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS8.13260>

First time experience of being a father

Lukmi Wulandari

Universitas 'Aisyiyah Yogyakarta

Corresponding author email: lukmiwuland12@gmail.com

Sri Nabawiyati Nurul Makiyah

Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta

Asri Hidayat

Universitas 'Aisyiyah Yogyakarta

Abstract--Background: Men have various emotional challenge during transition period of being a father, but they do not care since they feel worried that it will disturb the professional support to their partner, or it will disturb their partner. There is a scarcity of information about the men's experience about their mental perinatal health, and the understanding about the best way to resolve father's mental health and psychological well-being. Method: the method used in this research is scoping review. Scoping review aims to map the documents that is the basic of research and the source of evidence that is available. The scoping review in this research was made by the support of PEOS framework. In the searching of evidence, the researcher used 3 databases such as PubMed, Science Direct and Wiley. The article selection based on Prism Flowchart and Critical Appraisal. Result: based on the article selected, it obtains 8 articles which included in Developed Countries. It consists of 1 article of mixed method research design, 5 article of qualitative research design and 2 article of quantitative research design. And the sub theme obtained are the experience of being a father, stress and depression to be a new father, the anxiety to be a new father and the lack of support from the health worker. Conclusion: most of study have explored new fathers having the anxiety, stress and depression as well as the lack of encouragement from health worker that is centered on mothers.

Keywords---new fathers, paternal, fatherhood, anxiety, depression, stress, experience.

Introduction

According to Leach et al (2016), stress felt by fathers amounted to 10.4 percent during one year after childbirth with a peak time between three and six months after childbirth. Meanwhile, according to Dacosta et al (2017), the incidence of stress in fathers during the one-year period after childbirth increase 1.2 percent to 25.5 percent. The incidence rate of fathers first experiencing stress is 14 percent, followed by anxiety data of 11 percent and depressive symptoms of 11 percent (Macdonald et al., 2021). The prevalence of mental health in fathers is much higher than that currently reported (Psouni et al., 2017). Depression in men is difficult to detect, unclear and has little incidence (Hammarlund et al., 2015).

The research conducted by Darwin et al (2017) found that men have various emotional challenges during the transition period being a father, but they do not care since they feel worried that it will disturb their professional support for their partner, or it will disturb their partner. To encourage men's mental health and well-being during their transition period of being father, it is necessary to understand more their experience and special need during this period (Baldwin & Bick, 2018).

Method of scoping review

In this research, the literature review used the scoping review method. The use of this method is appropriate with the practice, education, policies and research problems that is relevant with health practitioners that allow the assessment of scientific evidence and as the steps of research development (Peterson et al., 2017) The steps used in identifying scoping review question are made by the support of PEOS framework.

Table 1 Framework

Population	Exposure	Outcome	Study
Fathers who have children for the first time	First time experience of being a father	perceived stress as well as the experience of being a first-time father	All research designs are relevant with the purpose of this research.

Based on the framework, a research question that can be concluded "How is the experience of being a father for the first time and the stress that the father feels?"

1) After identifying the scoping review questions, the next step is identifying relevant articles where researcher conducted inclusion criteria, such as published from 2012-2022, articles published using English or Indonesian, review articles (systematic review or literature review), qualitative and quantifiable research articles, articles discussing about the experience of being a father who has a child for the first time, articles that discuss about stress felt by fathers who have a child for the first time. Meanwhile, for the exclusion criteria, include opinion articles, articles that cannot be accessed with full text, and manuscript thesis / thesis / KTI.

After determining keywords which is appropriate with the framework then searching the database through 3 databases, such as PubMed, science direct and Wiley. In the process of selection of articles, researcher used a flowchart prism. Prism Flowchart is the process of carefully and systematically assessing of the results of literature searches to obtain relevant articles. The articles used were obtained from three databases such as PubMed = 86, Science direct = 147 and Wiley = 303, Total = 536. Duplicated and deleted articles (n = 15), screened articles (n = 521), irrelevant articles (n = 493), articles with full text are rated as feasibility (n= 28), excluded studies: (n= 19) i.e., not relevant subject/outcome.

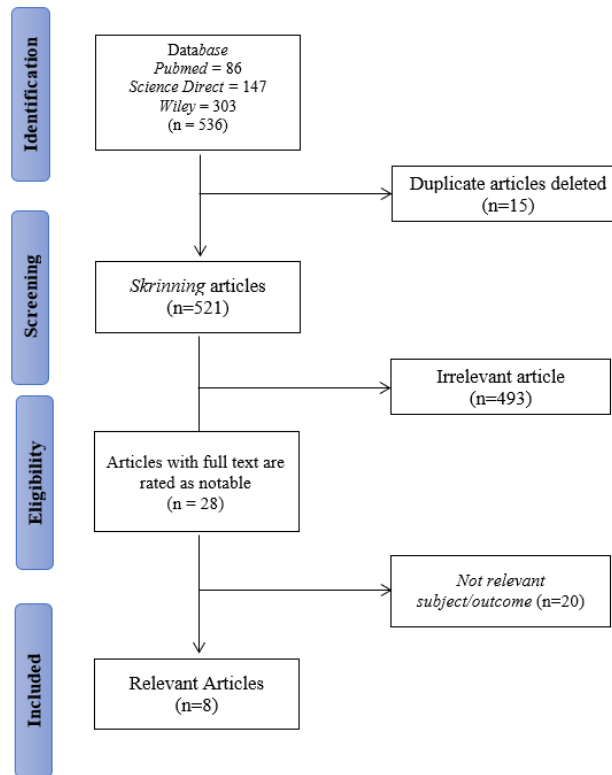


Figure 1. Prisma Flowcharts

After filtering the articles, 8 articles are obtained which will then be assessed by using Critical Appraisal, a tool used to assess the quality of articles using mixed methods appraisal tools (MMAT)

Table 2.2 Data Charting

No	Author/Year/Title	Country	Aim	Types of Research	Data Collection	Participant/ Sample size	Result	Grade
1.	(Baldwin <i>et al.</i> , 2021)/ <i>A mixed-methods feasibility study of an intervention to improve men's mental health and wellbeing during their transition to fatherhood.</i>	London	The objective of this research is to know being a father for the first time and to assess their mental health and well-being.	<i>A mixed methods prospective observational cohort study.</i>	Data collection used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews over the phone.	86 participants.	The man who became a father for the first time want to obtain information about how to anticipate himself to be a new father. Fathers think they must be involved during the pregnancy process, postpartum and must get information about how to become a new father, the changes experienced to take care of his wife and baby.	A
2.	(Hambidge <i>et al.</i> , 2021)/ <i>"What kind of man gets depressed after having a baby?" Fathers' experiences of mental health during the perinatal period.</i>	London	The study explores the support that fathers receive for their own mental health during the perinatal period. Qualitative questionnaires were shared on social media networks and filled out by twenty-nine fathers.	<i>Qualitative study.</i>	Data collection used questionnaires.	29 respondent.	In this study, fathers considered that health workers in terms of perinatal health prioritized mothers over husbands. Fathers believe that their risk of mental health problems in the perinatal period is influenced by external factors including the lack of support for the father's mental health and the difficulty of transitioning to become a new father.	A
3.	(Johansson & Benderix, 2020)/ <i>Mothers' and fathers' lived experiences of postpartum depression and parental stress after childbirth : a qualitative study.</i>	Sweden	This study aims to find out the life experiences of mothers and fathers from postpartum depression and parental stress after giving birth.	<i>Qualitative study</i>	Data collection used interviews .	10 mothers and 5 fathers	Father revealed that they experienced stress, but they did not want to express their stress, besides that some fathers avoid stress by working and ignored their role in the family.	A
4.	(Johansson & Nordstr, 2021)/ <i>Depressive symptoms, parental stress, and attachment style in mothers and fathers two and a half years</i>	Sweden	This study aims to determine the prevalence of depressive symptoms and whether	<i>Quantitative study.</i>	<i>The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS), The Swedish</i>	174 mothers and 148 fathers	Stress experienced by parents is the main cause of depressive symptoms, while in fathers who are busy with their work, stress symptoms arise due to their work. New	A

						after childbirth: Are fathers as affected as mothers?.	parental stress and attachment style affect depression in mothers and fathers two and a half years after the birth of the child.		<i>Parenthood Stress Questionnaire</i> (SPSQ).	fathers who have too much work in the office can experience that closely related depressive symptoms causing the difficulties as a new father to be able to take care of his children and wife.	
5.	(Forbes <i>et al.</i> , 2021)/ <i>Fathers' involvement in perinatal healthcare in Australia: experiences and reflections of Ethiopian-Australian men and women.</i>	Australia	The aim is to understand the experiences, attitudes, and beliefs about fathers' inclusion in perinatal health care, from the growing Ethiopian family community that has recently settled in Australia.	<i>Qualitative study.</i>	Data collection used semi-structured interviews .	7 mothers and 6 fathers	The lack of education during the perinatal period can affect the knowledge as a new father about how to care for the child and his role as a father. In this study, it was also explained that health workers did not receive training about how to deal with stress and depression in new fathers, as an alternative, to get support as a role in new fathers, i.e., to be facilitated by using telephone and zoom methods for complaint services if they need help from health workers in caring for children in between their busy lives.	A			
6	(Darwin <i>et al.</i> , 2017)/ <i>Fathers' views and experiences of their own mental health during pregnancy and the first postnatal year: a qualitative interview study of men participating in the UK Born and Bred in Yorkshire (BaBY) cohort.</i>	London	The study examines the father's views and direct experiences of fathers' perinatal mental health.	<i>Qualitative study.</i>	Data collection used questionnaires and in-depth interviews .	9 respondent.	Most fathers often feel fatigue, lack of concentration, and irritability. Despite feeling unnoticed by the maternity service, fathers emphasize the need of support and protect their partner as centres of success as a father.	A			
7	(Baldwin <i>et al.</i> , 2019)/ <i>A qualitative exploratory study of UK first-time fathers' experiences, mental health and wellbeing needs during their transition to fatherhood.</i>	London	To develop an understanding of the experiences of men becoming a father for the first time, their mental health and well-being	<i>Qualitative study.</i>	Data collection used questionnaires and in-depth interviews .	21 fathers.	The fathers interviewed paid attention to their own mental and physical health, both their partner as a wife due to their responsibilities as leaders at home. Father felt unnoticed by health professionals and	A			

			needs.				unable to access the appropriate information.	
8	(Macdonald <i>et al.</i> , 2021)/ <i>Cohort profile: the Men and Parenting Pathways (MAPP) Study: a longitudinal Australian cohort study of men's mental health and well-being at the normative age for firsttime fatherhood.</i>	Australia	To investigate prospective mental health of men and well-being in the normative age for the transition to the father.	<i>Quantitative study.</i>	Data collection used online surveys.	664 participants.	The results showed that the lack of father's presence and desire to get information related to readiness as a new father influenced increasing the risk of stress due to not being ready to become a new father.	A

Result and Discussion

The Experience of Being a New Father

Some men explain that they are not prepared at all, they feel concerns about the health and well-being of their partners and babies. The experience of childbirth and birth for father is very stressful, especially since he does not know what to do. The lack of sleep, skipping meals and having to balance work with family life are reported as triggers of fatigue and stress. Fathers find that it is very difficult to balance work and home life (Baldwin *et al.*, 2019). The new father felt unnoticed by health professionals and unable to access the information. Research (Whitelock, 2016) identified a lack of training around fathers' mental health; lack of self-confidence; fear of their own safety; and the lack of policies to screen fathers' mental health as barriers that prevent health visitors from assessing the mental health and well-being of new fathers.

The psychological pressure felt by fathers can also affect bad relationships, financial burdens, and poor quality of work (Leach *et al.*, 2016). Increased stress has an impact on other mental health issues for fathers. Poor mental health of the father is a significant factor that contributes to the difficulties of the relationship. Mental health problems also includes emotional, social and behavioral problems in their children (Baldwin *et al.*, 2021). The father needs to be prioritized during the perinatal period, and the health professional should aware that fathers also needs the supports, to developing mental health problems in both parents . This case can be facilitated by increasing capacity and awareness among health professionals and service systems (Hambidge *et al.*, 2021).

The anxiety of Being New Father

Throughout the history of children development in the world, the role of the father is one of the important factors in supporting the children's growth and development process. Most of fathers experience the anxiety during the perinatal period or transition into a new father which adversely affects themselves, their partner, and their baby (Macdonald *et al.*, 2021). Generalized anxiety disorder occurs in men during the perinatal period. Both partners should be included in discussions and interventions focused on obstetric care as well as the mental

health of parents during the perinatal period (Leach et al., 2016).

Stress and Depression of Being New father

Stressful and depressive conditions can occur in the short term as a result of the situation. If stress and depression are not addressed immediately, it can be fatal which lasts in the long term. The inability to manage stress and depression properly can lead to acts of violence in the child which results in the formation of the child's personality, as well as the emergence of feelings of failure to become a new father. Postpartum depression in fathers often occurs in 4-25 percent of new fathers during the first 12 months after birth, but due to lack of awareness and recognition of symptoms, the prevalence rate at the level of depression ranges from 24 to 25 percent for men with partners who experience maternal postpartum depression within 12 months after birth (Hambidge et al., 2021). The appearance of depressive symptoms in the father due to the presence of a linkage with postpartum depression of the mother. A study from Johansson & Nordstr (2021), explained that fathers and mothers can experience depression due to changes in mood due to the transition period to parents which can affect the mental health and development of children in the family.

The lack of Encouragement from Health Worker

Until now the information and support by health workers for mental health only focused on the mother. However, a father also needs to be cared for his mental health to receive support for himself during the perinatal period (Forbes et al., 2021). The lack of support and the barriers reported to find support, combined with the feeling of exclusion by health professionals have caused fathers to experience a conflict between expectations and the reality of fatherhood during the perinatal period. One of interpretations of the results of the study (Johansson & Nordstr, 2021) is to change the role of fathers to be more involved in childcare with more responsibility so that they can reduce the symptoms of father depression later in life.

Conclusion

Based on the literature obtained by the scoping review technique, it was found that most studies have explored new fathers who experience anxiety, stress to depressive symptoms and still lack of support from health workers who are still mother-centered. However, research related to new fathers is still very limited so that the information obtained is also still less, so it needs to be developed and further researched. Based on the findings, the authors recommend that health workers should pay attention and meet the needs of fathers by providing father-focused support in the perinatal period. It is expected that this research will be able to become a learning material about the experience of being a father for the first time. Researcher can then explore this problem more deeply to identify problems that occur in new fathers as well as barriers to change in health care providers.

References

- Baldwin, S., & Bick, D. (2018). Mental health of first time fathers - it's time to put evidence into practice. In *JBIR database of systematic reviews and implementation reports* (Vol. 16, Issue 11, pp. 2064–2065). <https://doi.org/10.11124/JBISRIR-2017-003983>
- Baldwin, S., Malone, M., Murrells, T., Sandall, J., & Bick, D. (2021). *A mixed-methods feasibility study of an intervention to improve men's mental health and wellbeing during their transition to fatherhood*. 1–20.
- Baldwin, S., Malone, M., Sandall, J., & Bick, D. (2019). A qualitative exploratory study of UK first-time fathers' experiences, mental health and wellbeing needs during their transition to fatherhood. *BMJ Open*, 9(9), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2019-030792>
- Da Costa, D., Zekowitz, P., Dasgupta, K., Sewitch, M., Lowensteyn, I., Cruz, R., Hennegan, K., & Khalifé, S. (2017). Dads Get Sad Too: Depressive Symptoms and Associated Factors in Expectant First-Time Fathers. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 11(5), 1376–1384. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988315606963>
- Darwin, Z., Galdas, P., Hinchliff, S., Littlewood, E., McMillan, D., McGowan, L., & Gilbody, S. (2017). Fathers' views and experiences of their own mental health during pregnancy and the first postnatal year: A qualitative interview study of men participating in the UK Born and Bred in Yorkshire (BaBY) cohort. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 17(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-017-1229-4>
- Forbes, F., Wynter, K., Zeleke, B. M., & Fisher, J. (2021). *Fathers' involvement in perinatal healthcare in Australia: experiences and reflections of Ethiopian-Australian men and women*. 1–13.
- Hambidge, S., Cowell, A., Arden-close, E., & Mayers, A. (2021). “What kind of man gets depressed after having a baby?” *Fathers' experiences of mental health during the perinatal period*. 7, 1–10.
- Hammarlund, K., Andersson, E., Tenenbaum, H., & Sundler, A. J. (2015). We are also interested in how fathers feel: a qualitative exploration of child health center nurses' recognition of postnatal depression in fathers. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 15, 290. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-015-0726-6>
- Johansson, M., & Benderix, Y. (2020). Mothers' and fathers' lived experiences of postpartum depression and parental stress after childbirth: a qualitative study. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482631.2020.1722564>
- Johansson, M., & Nordstr, T. (2021). *Depressive symptoms, parental stress, and attachment style in mothers and fathers two and a half years after childbirth: Are fathers as affected as mothers?* <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367493520942050>
- Leach, L. S., Poyser, C., Cooklin, A. R., & Giallo, R. (2016a). Prevalence and course of anxiety disorders (and symptom levels) in men across the perinatal period: A systematic review. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 190, 675–686. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2015.09.063>
- Leach, L. S., Poyser, C., Cooklin, A. R., & Giallo, R. (2016b). Prevalence and course of anxiety disorders (and symptom levels) in men across the perinatal period: A systematic review. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 190, 675–686. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2015.09.063>
- Macdonald, J. A., Francis, L. M., Skouteris, H., Youssef, G. J., Graeme, L. G.,

- Williams, J., Fletcher, R. J., Knight, T., Milgrom, J., Di Manno, L., Olsson, C. A., & Greenwood, C. J. (2021). Cohort profile: The Men and Parenting Pathways (MAPP) Study: A longitudinal Australian cohort study of men's mental health and well-being at the normative age for first-time fatherhood. *BMJ Open*, *11*(7), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-047909>
- Peterson, J., Pearce, P. F., Ferguson, L. A., & Langford, C. A. (2017). Understanding scoping reviews: Definition, purpose, and process. *Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners*, *29*(1), 12–16. <https://doi.org/10.1002/2327-6924.12380>
- Psouni, E., Agebjörn, J., & Linder, H. (2017). Symptoms of depression in Swedish fathers in the postnatal period and development of a screening tool. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, *58*(6), 485–496. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.12396>
- Whitelock, A. (2016). Why do health visitors screen mothers and not fathers for depression in the postnatal period? *Journal of Health Visiting*, *4*, 312–321. <https://doi.org/10.12968/johv.2016.4.6.312>