

Fear of childbirth
and minority stress
in pregnant
lesbian, bisexual,
transgender and
queer people

Anna Malmquist

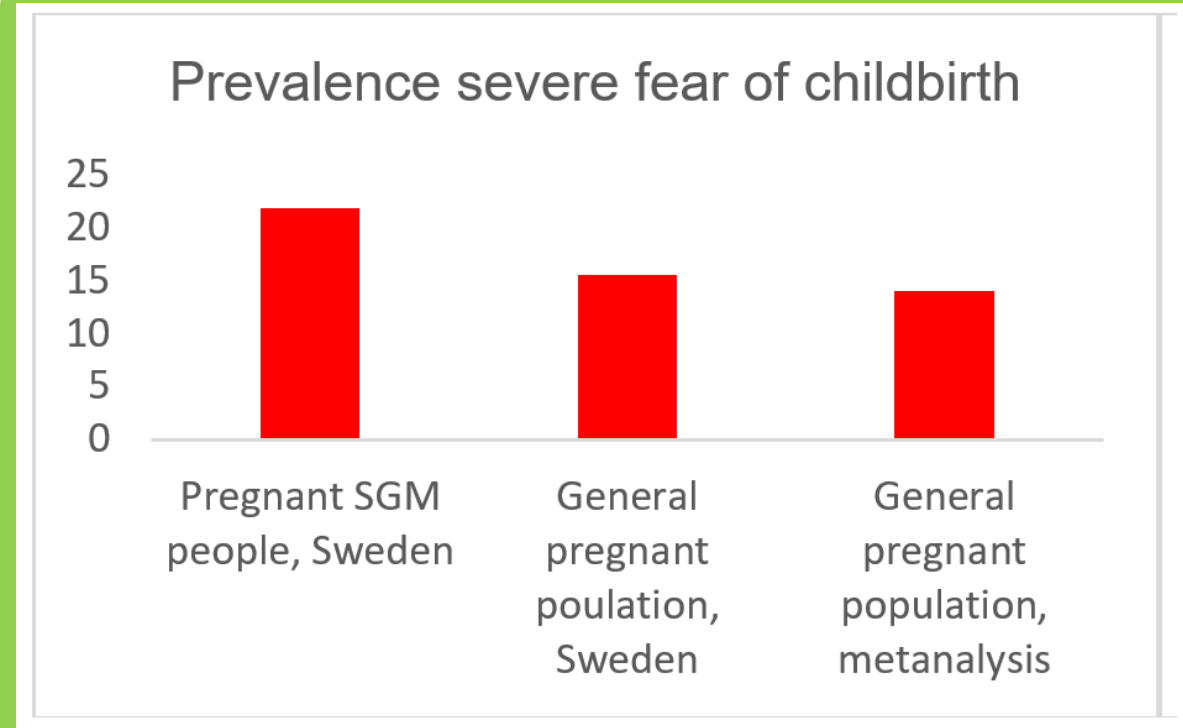
Ph D, associate
professor in social
psychology
Linköping University,
Sweden

Research aims

1. What is the prevalence of FOC among pregnant LGBTQ people and their partners?
2. How is FOC experienced among LGBTQ people?

Prevalence of fear of childbirth

- An increased prevalence among pregnant LGBTQ people, but not among partners
- FOC was highly associated with general mental illness



What do they fear?

- Similar fears as heterosexual women
- Pain, being injured, loss of control etc.

I think I might have a low pain threshold, so it like gets to a point where I, I don't think I will handle it, I think I'm going to faint, I think I'm going to die of pain, so, umm, I know I am like also [afraid] of how my body would react to so much pain, because there's a risk I'll just give up or just, I don't want to, I don't want to be part of this, umm. And the times in my life I've like experienced pain, so I know that my reaction is very much like, ok now I would rather die. (Emilie, pregnant)

Minority stress adds a layer to fear of childbirth

- Fear of encountering hetero- or cisnormative treatment
- Hypervigilance
- Internalised homo- or transphobia

I have very much experience of healthcare, where, even if, or, if people know I'm trans, they take the opportunity to use the wrong gender pronoun, [...] and refer to me as "she", all of a sudden, [...] it's a very vulnerable situation like, when you're giving birth, and it feels like, people take the opportunity. And it feels like you can't do much about it, you can't like get upset and just "No, then we're not going to do this!", because, like, if you've got a baby in your tummy it has to come out sooner or later, so you can't like just get angry and leave.

(Jonathan, transgender man who had no children)

Affects on the choice of birth giving partner

- Desiring pregnancy despite FOC
- Letting the non-afraid partner do the birth giving
- Negotiating who is least vulnerable

Well, the biggest reason [for me not to give birth] is that I've always had phobic fear of childbirth and haven't had the desire or any longing to get pregnant, so I was hugely relieved that she wanted to do it.

(Jeanette, non-birth mother)

Partner's birth giving as a trauma

- Primary FOC, comparable to secondary FOC
- Important that both partners experiences of the delivery gain attention, also after obstetrically uncomplicated births

We had, like, sort of decided that we would each have one child. Then I became uncertain, for a really long time. Really really long, maybe, well more than a year . . . maybe that “You have to have the next one”, sort of too, “Or we won’t have any more”, yes we couldn’t make up our minds, and Caroline didn’t know if she wanted to do it again, she was like “No”, so finally it was as if we started to decide not to do it, and then I panicked and said “No! We want another!” and then . . . also that I actually, I mean, somehow I wanted to experience it. (Ester, first time pregnant with the couple’s second child)

Negotiating maternity, femininity and cisgender norms

- "Mother earth" and "natural femininity" feels odd and uncomfortable
- The own gender identity or gender expression does not match feminine norms on pregnancy and child birth

Even if I'm, like, not trans or nonbinary, I can imagine that it [the pregnancy] will, definitely, be quite an, umm, physical and maybe dysphoric experience for me. I'm like used to being a very androgynous body, um, and always have been.
(Emilie, early pregnancy with first child)

References

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Thank you
for listening!

anna.malmquist@liu.se