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**KEY WORDS :CHILD BIRTH PREPARATION/ PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION TRAINING / STRESS / PAIN COPING / PREGNANT WOMEN**

**SOMSIRI NONTARSAWATSRI :THE EFFECTS OF CHILD BIRTH PREPARATION, PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION TRAINING TOWARDS STRESS AND PAIN COPING IN PREGNANT WOMEN. THESIS ADVISORS : SOMCHIT PADUMANONA, Dr.P.H., CHANYA SIENGSANOH, M.P.H., PREMWADEE KARUHADEJ, Ed.D. 146 p. ISBN 974-662-992-1**

Pregnancy and childbirth are natural processes which may disrupt physiological and psychological well being of pregnant women. Anxiety and stress often increase the perception of pain during childbirth. Several studies indicate that childbirth preparation and progressive muscle relaxation training help pregnant women to decrease stress and cope with labour pain effectively.

The purpose of this study was to investigate to the effects of childbirth preparation and progressive muscle relaxation training on stress and pain coping during pregnancy. A quasi – experimental design was used in this study. Fifty-four primigravidas, who attended prenatal clinic and were later admitted to labour and delivery unit in Central Hospital, were the samples. They were selected by purposive sampling technique and were equally assigned into the control group and the experimental group. Each group consisted of 27 subjects. Childbirth preparation and progressive muscle relaxation training were taught to the experimental group during the prenatal period by the researcher. In contrast, the control group received only routine care procedures. Data of both groups was collected twice by questionnaires about stress, one month apart during antenatal visits. Pain coping behaviors of the two groups were observed during childbirth. Data were analyzed by using t – test .

The results of this study were as follow. At the end of the experiment, it was found that the stress was significantly decreased in the experimental group and increased in the control group (P – value = 0.018, 0.001). The stress scores of experimental group were significantly lower than those of the control group (P - value < 0.001). The pain coping behavior in the experimental group was significantly higher than that in the control group ( P - value < 0.001).

As a result of this study, it is recommended that nurses in antenatal clinics should implement the method of progressive muscle relaxation training and childbirth preparation to all third trimester pregnant women. A handbook on childbirth preparation and progressive muscle relaxation training would be very helpful so that the parturiency can cope effectively with labour process. Such routine practice would decrease stress and subsequently help women to cope with the pain of childbirth.