

Creating a Class Plan to Strengthen Marital Relationships During Pregnancy in Japan

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Abstract

Background

Child-rearing support programs in Japan have focused on supporting families (especially mothers) after their children are born. Maternal and child healthcare services during pregnancy mainly target mothers and their children. Although programs for fathers (such as parent–teacher classes) are gradually being implemented, support for fathers will become more important in the future.

Objectives

We reviewed studies conducted in Japan on support for fathers during pregnancy (especially those focusing on the content of classes) and examined the content and methods of classroom approaches for fathers. Then, the content of the exercises related to the Becoming Parents Program was examined. The BPP, which was developed in Washington D.C., is an experiential program that focuses on strengthening the couple’s partnership, particularly in the transition to fatherhood. Focusing on the father–partner relationship itself, this study aimed to examine the kind of support methods and content would be best for planning a class during pregnancy in Japan and developing a class plan.

Methods

We searched the nursing literature for studies on classes or classes for expectant fathers that included educational content on fathers during pregnancy. Thirteen domestic studies were included in the literature review. Next, 16 exercises from the BPP book were analyzed for content.

Results

Expectant fathers sought specific information on support for their spouses. The 16 exercises in the BPP book entitled “The Speaker-Listener Technique and Problem Solving” were found to be fundamental skills. A proposed class for expectant parents incorporating the basics of BPP was designed.

Conclusions

Although there are differences in social backgrounds, cultures, and family backgrounds between Japan and other countries, we believe that the basic skills can be commonly used. In Japan, it is necessary to consider holding classes for parents to strengthen their marital relationship during pregnancy.

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Keywords: gestational age, couple relationship, father, class

1. Introduction

In Japanese society, the number of nuclear families and the birth rate are declining. The environment in which children are raised has changed from that of previous societies, and there are not always family members close by to support the parents raising the children. Nuclear families living in urban areas tend to be isolated. Meanwhile, the problem of child abuse in Japan is becoming more serious. According to the Report on Verification of Child Abuse Deaths (Children and Families Agency, 2022), the number of abuse deaths in infancy is the largest among all deaths, accounting for approximately half of all deaths. The background factors of child

maltreatment are diverse and complex. Emphasis has been placed on strengthening support for parents who need help from the time of conception. Future supporters need to take a comprehensive view of the family and provide assessment and support that includes the perspective of the father's mental health.

In Japan, when a woman gets pregnant, she submits a pregnancy notification to the local government. Upon submission, a maternal and child health handbook is issued to the pregnant woman, and services are initiated. From pregnancy to infancy, a series of services are systematically provided throughout pregnancy, childbirth, and child-rearing based on the Maternal and Child Health Care Plan put together by the local government (Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare, 2022).

According to a survey of municipalities nationwide conducted in 2021, many municipalities provided childcare support to fathers at the time of the Maternal and Child Health Handbook and as part of parenting classes. However, only 6.5% of the municipalities responded that they provided childcare support mainly to fathers rather than mothers, even though they were aware of the need for father support (Takagi et al., 2023). In maternal and child healthcare services during pregnancy, the main target is still the mother and child. Although programs targeting fathers (such as parent-teacher classes) are gradually being implemented, support for fathers themselves will become more important in the future.

In this study, we reviewed research on support for fathers during pregnancy in Japan (particularly regarding the content of classrooms) and examined the content and methods of classroom approaches for fathers. We then reviewed the content of exercises developed in Washington D.C., U.S.A., for the Becoming Parents Program. Focusing on the father-partner relationship itself, we examined what kind of support methods and content would be best for planning a class during pregnancy in Japan, to develop a class plan.

2. Methods

2.1 Literature Search Method

Domestic literature on studies of classes or classes for expectant fathers was searched for on the Medical Journal Web (released in April 2022) using the keywords ("pregnancy" or "gestational age") and ("father" or "husband") and ("classroom" or "class"). There was no restriction on the year of publication, and original articles and conference proceedings were excluded. We searched the nursing literature for articles without perinatal abnormalities, illnesses, or disabilities of parents or children that included educational content for fathers during pregnancy. In addition, manual searches were conducted to search for studies on classroom education for expectant fathers.

The international literature was searched by combining the keywords "Becoming," "Parents," "Program," and "Pregnancy" in PubMed for reference, and the literature on BPP was also searched for references but not included in this study.

A total of 13 domestic references were included in the literature review.

2.2 BPP Overview

The Becoming Parents Program (<http://www.becomingparents.com/program/classes/>) (hereinafter referred to as BPP) classes are designed for couples who are expecting or have just had a baby. The program is appropriate for all couples, regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation. Expectant mothers and their partners gain skills to strengthen and prepare their relationships for parenthood. Others attend workshops led by nurses to help them understand their babies. The content of the program is tailored to promote optimal development of the infant, maintain self, and learn what it takes to stay strong as a couple. The book on which this program is based is *Becoming Parents: How to Strengthen Your Marriage as Your Family Grows* (Pamela, Scott, & Howard, 2001), which is featured on the website and is available for purchase by anyone. This book is billed as a survival guide for marital relationships and raising children. It provides scientific knowledge and survival skills to help couples nurture their relationship, take care of themselves, and cope with the many impacts of parenthood on their lives. Each chapter ends with exercises to help the reader master key concepts and skills.

The authors failed to visit Washington D.C., U.S.A., during the study period because it coincided with the coronavirus epidemic. Instead, this book was translated and analyzed with a focus on the exercises.

Ethical Considerations

We used only published literature in this study (we contacted the authors of the BPP to inform them of our challenge). This study was approved by the Sapporo Medical University's Ethics Committee (Approval No. 4-1-1).

Mainly, in the domestic literature, we analyzed the content of support for fatherhood classes in the field of nursing in Japan, and in the BPP book, we analyzed the content of strengthening the partnership of the couple during pregnancy.

2.3 Literature Review Process

When conducting this review, we went through the domestic literature and the exercises in the BPP book.

2.3.1 Domestic Literature (Table1)

The most common research methods were quantitative research (7 studies) and qualitative research (6 studies). Four were semi-structured interviews, one was an Internet survey, and all the others were self-administered questionnaires. Seven of the studies involved only fathers, five involved both parents, and one involved only mothers. A literature review was conducted on 13 of the programs described in the program content. We excluded educational videos on shaken baby syndrome during pregnancy and other types of education specific to particular phenomena, as well as those examining knowledge-enhancing effects. Those with no mention of classes or classrooms during pregnancy were also excluded.

2.3.2 Book on the BPP

The book consists of 16 chapters, with exercises at the end of each chapter. The exercises were carefully read and analyzed to clarify when they were to be performed and which skills were used.

Table 1. List of target documents

No	Purpose of the study	Year of publication	Methodology	Subject	Overview of classroom-related content
1	To clarify fathers' participation in health guidance and the content of health guidance that fathers seek from health care providers	2022	Internet survey	396 fathers with children under 1 year old	Eight of the 13 health guidance items were related to postpartum couples, such as the number of those who wanted to be pregnant, abnormalities that are likely to occur in postpartum women and how to cope with them, and postpartum communication between couples.
2	To clarify the needs of fathers during pregnancy	2022	Semi-structured interview	21 fathers with children under 10 months	In the early stages of pregnancy, husbands need to provide time for communication with their wives to attend to their physical and mental changes, and to support them by utilizing opportunities such as parent-teacher classes, etc. In the middle and end stages of pregnancy, it is necessary to create opportunities for a common understanding of postpartum life.
3	To develop a program of antenatal care classes for twin families to connect them with the community from the time of conception	2021	Self-administered questionnaire	17 parents of twins who attended the class	Husbands expressed satisfaction with the program, which provided them with an image of the actions they should take as fathers through experiences such as being pregnant and lectures explaining the scientific basis for the program.
4	To develop a program to support good marital relations during the transition to parenthood, and to examine its effectiveness.	2021	Intervention research	Japanese couple expecting their first child	The program was developed as a 120-minute prenatal class that provided a role model that anticipated the future while encouraging interaction and communication within the couple.
5	To clarify how husbands of first-time mothers prepare for parenthood.	2020	Semi-structured interview	5 husbands of first-time mothers	The father's role was explored throughout pregnancy. The couple was reconstructing their roles within the context of their relationship.

6	To clarify the readiness status and self-acceptance of becoming a parent.	2020	Semi-structured interview	7 male spouses of pregnant women	While the first-time fathers were happy to find out that their wives were pregnant, they were also found to feel confused about how to cope with their new role as fathers.
7	To clarify the readiness status of first-time fathers' husbands	2020	Semi-structured interview	5 couples of first-time mothers who participated in the parents' class	Husbands in the later stages of pregnancy were aware of their fatherhood role, anticipating the actual child-rearing period in which they would be involved, despite their confusion. In addition, husbands were conscious of their obligation to support the family financially and were willing to take an active role in childbirth and childcare with their wives.
8	To conduct a trial of "couple empathy sessions" from the pregnancy stage to prevent postpartum depression	2019	Intervention research	20 couples who participated in the parents' class	Discussing the couple's child-rearing awareness and values during the empathy session led to mutual understanding between the members of the couple.
9	To identify necessary support for fathers during their wives' pregnancy, delivery, and childcare.	2018	Self-administered questionnaire with no names	145 fathers with one-week-old children	Approximately 61.9% of the fathers responded that they wanted to know about the contents during pregnancy, with fetal growth, support during delivery, and children's illnesses topping the list.
10	To clarify the differences in husbands' support behavior toward their wives during pregnancy and their interest in the fetus between midwifery center and hospital checkups, as well as the factors related to these differences.	2018	Self-administered questionnaire with no names	328 husbands of pregnant women within 1 week of childbirth	In terms of factors related to husbands' supportive behaviors toward their wives during pregnancy and their interest in the fetus, higher marital affection scores indicated that husbands were more supportive of their wives ($p=.197$ to 291 , $p<.05$) and more interested in the fetus ($p=.276$ to $.313$, $p<.01$).
11	To clarify the relationship between subjective well-being and the wife's thoughts about and involvement with the child experienced during pregnancy.	2016	Self-administered questionnaire with no names	774 fathers and mothers using day care centers	Providing information to fathers on how to support mothers' expectations is useful
12	To clarify the factors contributing to the anxiety of husbands during the pregnancy and delivery period of their wives.	2013	Self-administered questionnaire with no names	Fathers of children who underwent a four-month checkup	Husbands wanted to know "how to cope with pregnancy abnormalities" and "what they can do to help" during pregnancy.
13	To obtain suggestions for future government initiatives for parent-teacher classes, including those for fathers.	2009	Self-administered questionnaire	20 mothers who are expecting their first child	Mothers gained common information and awareness as a couple through their child-rearing experience by participating in hands-on parenting classes and understood the "importance of communication" from the "difference in awareness between fathers and mothers" when interacting with senior fathers and mothers.

3. Results

3.1 Domestic Literature

In identifying the support needed by spouses to fathers during pregnancy, delivery, and childcare (Nakamura, Tomiyasu, Tanabe, et al., 2018), fathers responded that they had the content they desired during pregnancy (they wanted to know about fetal growth, support during delivery, and child illness). In the factors associated with

husbands' supportive behavior toward their spouses during pregnancy and their interest in the fetus (Ogaya, 2018), the higher the marital affection score, the more support husbands provided for their spouses and the more interest they showed in the fetus. In clarifying the association between thoughts and involvement with the child experienced during pregnancy and subjective well-being (Tuma, Hayashida, Hashimoto, *et al.*, 2016), it was noted that providing information about the mother's expected support methods for the father was useful.

In clarifying the factors contributing to husbands' anxiety during their wives' pregnancy and delivery (Nakanishi, 2013), what husbands wanted to know during pregnancy included "how to cope with abnormalities during pregnancy" and "what they can do to help."

In clarifying the content of health guidance that fathers seek from health care providers (Yamaguchi, Fujita, Sato, *et al.*, 2022), many of them desired most of the items of health guidance during pregnancy, and expected items related to postpartum couples (such as abnormalities that are likely to occur in postpartum women and how to deal with them, postpartum communication between the couple, etc.). The respondents expected items related to postpartum couples (such as abnormalities that are likely to occur in postpartum women and how to cope with them) and postpartum couple communication. In a study performed to clarify the needs of fathers during pregnancy (Fujioka, Hara, Kanegae, *et al.*, 2022), it was found that in the early stages of pregnancy, husbands should provide time for communication with their spouses to attend to their physical and mental changes and support them by using opportunities such as parent-teacher classes. In the middle and terminal stages of pregnancy, husbands should provide a place to share a common understanding of life after birth. During these stages of pregnancy, it is necessary to create opportunities for a common understanding of life after childbirth.

In addition, in the state of readiness of husbands of first-time mothers (Sanka, Matsui, Nagayama, 2020), husbands were aware of their fatherhood role in anticipation of the actual child-rearing period in which they would be involved, despite their confusion in the latter stages of pregnancy. In addition, husbands were conscious of supporting their families financially and were willing to take an active role in childbirth and childcare toward their spouses. In a previous study (Fujii, Ishida, Ooishi, *et al.* 2021) performed to examine a program of childbirth preparation classes for twin families that would connect them with the community from the gestation period, the husbands were satisfied with the program, which provided them with an image of the actions they should take as fathers through experiences such as being pregnant and lectures that explained the scientific basis for the program. The husbands were satisfied with the program, which provided them with an image of what they should do as fathers by explaining their experiences, such as pregnancy, and lectures explaining scientific evidence. In clarifying how husbands of first-time mothers portray preparatory behaviors related to child-rearing (Nishiura, Inui, Igarashi, 2020), they searched for their fatherhood role throughout the pregnancy period. The couples were reconstructing their roles within the context of their relationship. In clarifying their readiness status and how they self-accepted imminent parenthood (Decker, 2020), the first-time fathers felt happy when they found out that their spouses were pregnant; however, they also confirmed their confusion about how to cope with their new role as fathers.

An interventional study was conducted to develop a program to support good marital relations during the transition to parenthood and to examine its effectiveness (Mikami, Imura, 2021). The program, which was a 120-minute prenatal class, was developed to encourage interaction and communication within the couple while providing model presentations that predict the future. In a trial of "couple empathy sessions" (Watanabe, Ishii, Ishida, *et al.*, 2019) during pregnancy for the prevention of postpartum depression, the empathy sessions led to mutual understanding between the partners of each couple by discussing their parenting awareness and values. In a study on the efforts of parents' classes including fathers in government (Yamada, Nagasaka, 2009), mothers participated in parents' classes with hands-on child-rearing experiences. Through their child-rearing experiences, couples obtained common information and recognition, and the interaction with senior fathers and mothers led to a "difference in the father and mother." They understood the "importance of communication" from the "difference in awareness."

3.2 Literature on BPP

(1) Organization of content related to the exercises

The BPP book consists of four parts and 16 chapters, with exercises being listed at the end of each chapter. Within the 16 chapters, the following contents are presented: 1) Four Key Patterns That Can Harm a Relationship, 2) Communicating Safely and Clearly: The Speaker-Listener Technique, 3) Problem-Solving, 4) Ground Rules for Handling Conflict, 5) The Difference Between Issues and Events, 6) Unmet Expectations and What to Do About Them, 7) The Importance of Core Values and Beliefs, 8) Commitment: The Glue That Holds Relationships Together, 9) Forgiveness and the Preservation or Restoration of Intimacy, 10) Preserving and

Protecting Friendship, 11) Preserving and Protecting Fun Together, 12) Hello Baby, Goodbye Sex? Protecting and Enhancing Your Sex Life, 13) Managing Fatigue, 14) Managing Stress, 15) WARNING: Do Not Try Parenting by Yourselves, 16) Roles and Tasks: Who Does What?

The second half of Exercises 10–16 are specific techniques to maintain and strengthen the relationship with one’s partner and lead a healthy life. After analyzing the exercises and analyzing which skills were recommended for use at what time of the year, it was found that 13), 15), and 16) were explicitly mentioned for use during pregnancy, while the other items were mentioned for use after birth and at any time of the year (the parenting period).

(2) Structure of the exercise content (Figure 1)

The content of the exercise was perused, and a structure chart was developed. The parts that dealt with deeper core issues were as follows: unmet expectations and how to address them, knowing core values and beliefs, making commitments, and maintaining and restoring forgiveness and intimacy. This is the part that we will handle more deeply and carefully. Despite its being hidden in the background, it is the heart of the matter.

First, the content of the subject’s understanding to maintain and strengthen the relationship is based on an understanding of the patterns that worsen the relationship and the basic rules for dealing with conflicts. This is the basis for everything and is a fundamental concept at any time. There are also skills that need to be mastered by the subject: speaker-listener techniques and problem-solving techniques. While mastering these two skills, the subject is also strengthening his/her relationship with his/her partner and living a healthy life by maintaining the necessary friendships, strengthening the positive aspects such as having fun together, and learning coping behaviors to deal with fatigue, stress, etc.

Based on the above literature review, a trial program proposal was developed. Four couples were recruited for the trial, and the contents of the proposed program were scrutinized while the program was implemented for two courses.

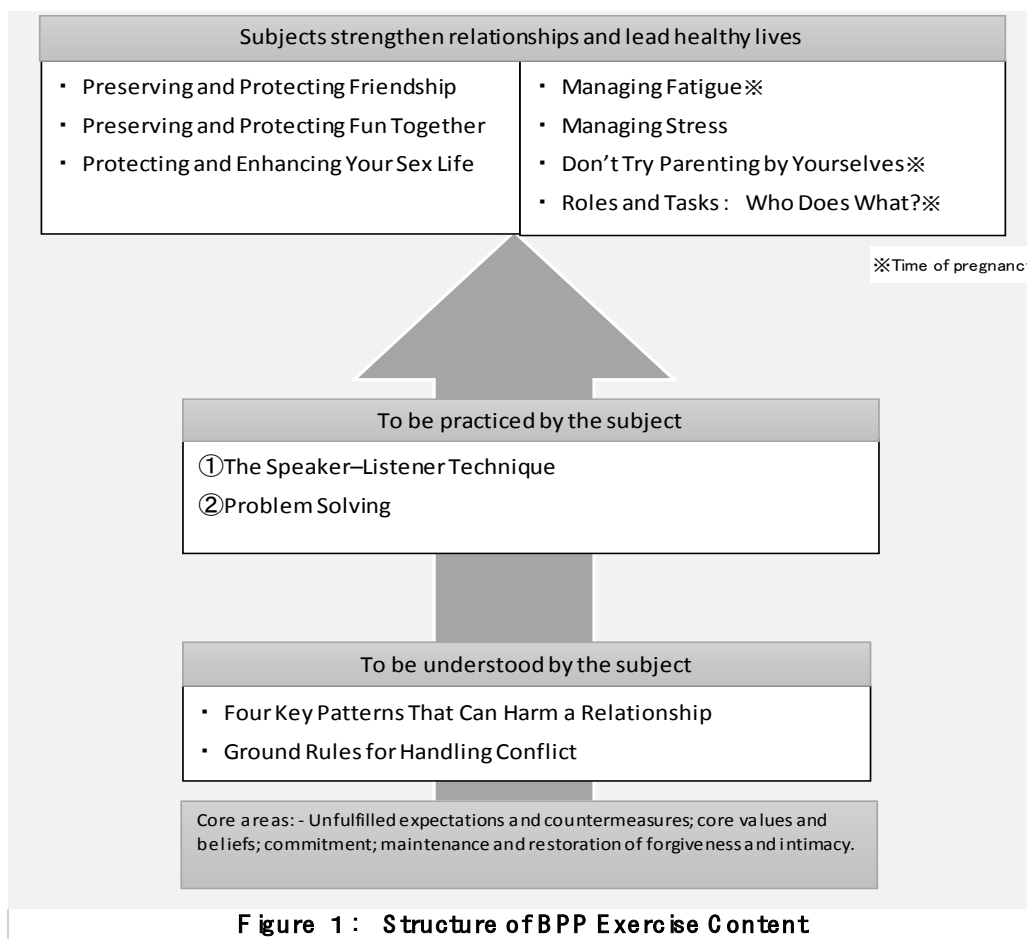


Table 2. Overview of proposed pregnancy class plans

Class Name	For a Healthy Pregnancy and Beyond - Learn about Better Partnerships
Subjects	About 10 couples (mid- to late-term pregnant women and their partners)
Implementer	Research group
Method of implementation	Online (ZOOM)
Schedule	One three-session course (two hours per session)
Method of publicity	Flyer (Ref. 4-1): Distributed at the counter of the section in charge of maternal and child health in the local government, etc.
Goals and Contents	<p>Purpose of the Program: This program is a health guidance program aimed at strengthening the partnership of couples during pregnancy. Although it does not immediately improve the couple's communication skills, the program aims to review and strengthen the couple's relationship by learning the basics of couple communication and techniques of the problem-solving process before welcoming a child.</p> <p>Session 1: "Basics of Marital Communication"</p> <p>Goal: To learn the basics of communication methods in married couples and be able to put them into practice</p> <p>Contents 1. understanding of danger signs in marital relationships</p> <p>2. Practice exercises of the Speaker-Listener Technique</p> <p>Session 2: "Problem-Solving Techniques in Couples"</p> <p>Objective: To be able to learn and practice how to deal with problems that arise in a couple</p> <p>1. Understand the importance of discussing the problem before solving it, and identify the problem 2.</p> <p>2. Choose one of the identified problems and practice problem-solving exercises</p> <p>Session 3: "Coping with Fatigue for a Healthy Family Life"</p> <p>Objective: To be able to practice discussion on coping with fatigue with the couple in anticipation of the postpartum period</p> <p>Content 1. understand the ground rules to avoid creating conflicts 2.</p> <p>2. Review current sleep and develop a plan to improve parents' sleep</p> <p>*Work sheets (to be mailed) will be used in all sessions</p>
Effectiveness Analysis	Pre- and post-program implementation surveys
Ethical Considerations	<p>This survey will be conducted with the approval of the University's Ethics Committee.</p> <p>Since the program includes content that affects the marital relationship, the program will be implemented while refraining from dealing with serious marital problems, especially in the early stages of the program, so that the program will not aggravate the marital relationship.</p> <p>After the couples have become familiar with the classroom and the techniques, the facilitator, the researcher, will always pay attention to what the couples say and do, and mediate between the couples if there are any signs of trouble.</p> <p>Explain that it is not necessary to touch on topics that one of members of a given couple does not want to discuss, as each family may have its own issues, such as differences in values.</p>

Set ground rules so that the target couple does not hurt each other.
Allow the subject to leave in the middle of the program if there is a program they do not wish to participate in.
· Please refrain from recording or videotaping. Be considerate of each other's privacy.
· You are welcome to promote the content of the class to others and encourage them to participate.

4. Considerations

Parenting education during pregnancy in the United States has long targeted mothers; however, since the 1970s, various efforts have been made to incorporate fathers into such education. The development of transitional parenting research has led to a growing awareness of the need for preventive interventions for all parents, and preventive parent education and support from the gestational age have been the focus of attention. Among parent education programs in the U.S., BPP, which was developed in Washington D.C., is a hands-on program for expectant couples that focuses on strengthening the couple's partnership, particularly in the transition to fatherhood.

Child-rearing support programs in Japan have focused on supporting families (especially mothers) after their children are born. In perinatal research from the perspective of child abuse prevention, support programs targeting mothers have been addressed. The NP (Nobody's Perfect, 2021) developed in Canada and the Triple P (Positive Parenting Program, 2021) developed in Australia have been put into practice in various parts of Japan. These programs, which are parenting programs that begin after childbirth, are mainly targeted at mothers. No parenting support program specifically targeting the gestation period has been developed so far. We believe that it is critical to plan a participatory class for parents during the pregnancy period in Japan.

4.1 Proposal for a Class to Be Held During Pregnancy

According to the results of the present domestic study, we were able to understand the background of fathers who want to support their partners during pregnancy but do not know exactly how to do so and are anxious and perplexed about it.

During pregnancy, fathers want specific information on how to support their spouses. To strengthen the marital relationship, it is important to communicate and to have mutual understanding in the couple. Fathers are reconstructing their new roles with some confusion regarding how to take up these new roles. This is groundbreaking because it is being conducted in an intervention study of a support program to improve the marital relationship. In a previous study, 120-minute classes were conducted while encouraging communication, and the effectiveness of the content was confirmed.

In Japan, research on prenatal and postpartum depression in fathers has begun (Takehara, Suto, & Kato., 2020). The mental health of fathers and mothers is an important perspective from the gestation period. To improve the mental health of fathers during pregnancy, it is necessary to clarify their needs and consider support methods.

The importance of communication between the members of the couple throughout the gestation period to discuss their respective roles and reconstruct the roles within the couple's relationship was also clear in the Japanese literature, and it is a common and important perspective in BPP. In Japan, the number of dual-earner households is increasing (The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training. 2022). With an increasing number of families having both working mothers and fathers, balancing work and child-rearing is a difficult task. Considering the realistic amount of time and frequency of class participation while working, the classes were set at three 120-minute sessions per class.

Due to the volume of content and cultural background, it is difficult to implement the American BPP as it is in Japan. Some topics are not appropriate for Japanese people who are not accustomed to talking about them; therefore, we designed a proposed class for expectant parents that incorporates the basics of BPP. We developed a plan that incorporated a participatory and work-based approach to teaching basic and important skills, the importance of being able to use those skills, and the use of those skills for healthy living (Table 2). Because of the coronavirus epidemic, we decided to use the ZOOM online conferencing system because face-to-face meetings would have been difficult. The parts of the plan that dealt with the deeper core issues were deemed too difficult to handle in a class with many participants; therefore, they were avoided.

The name of the class was "To stay healthy from the pregnancy period – Why do you not learn about better partnership?" Information was disseminated in the form of flyers at the counter of the maternal and child health department of the local government. The target population was approximately 10 couples, consisting of a woman in the second trimester of pregnancy and her partner. Since five members of our research group were in charge of conducting the survey, we considered that each person would be in charge of two couples from the viewpoint of manpower. We are faculty members of a nursing college, and our licensees are public health nurses.

The purpose of the class was to provide a health guidance program aimed at strengthening the partnership of expectant couples. Although it was not intended to immediately improve the couple's communication skills, the goal was to review and strengthen the couple's relationship by learning basic communication and problem-solving techniques before welcoming a child into the world. The goals and contents of each of the three classes were then considered. Until now, in Japan, the contents of mothers' and parents' classes have been mostly about providing information on basic pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare, and exchanges between senior mothers and fathers are also planned (Nishiyama, Watai., 2018).

In a previous study of fathers' competency structuring and support programs necessary during pregnancy with an emphasis on child abuse prevention (Ueda et al., 2015–2018), the authors found that fathers' competencies necessary during pregnancy were the recognition of the father's role, acquisition of knowledge and behaviors, improvement of empathy, fostering marital relationships, and building relationships with people around them. The results revealed that the competencies required for fathers during pregnancy were: awareness of the father's role, acquisition of knowledge and behavior, increased empathy, fostering marital relationships, and building relationships with others. As a result, the improvement of empathy and the fostering of marital relationships were the core components. We considered it important to provide support for fathers during pregnancy that not only communicates child-rearing behavior as a conventional expectation of the mother's support role and encourages parental roles but also works on the core parts of the relationship.

In terms of class planning, we thought that methods that incorporate work and participatory programs were important. When trying to create an original program, it is important to determine the goal of the class and create a positive vision (Toda, 2013). When incorporating work, the topic of the work and the topic that uses the participants' wisdom are important, and it is necessary to devise a way to enable the participants to participate proactively and enjoyably. The fact that each session of this class was conducted with couples discussing together and that time was set aside to carry out something that had not been consciously discussed in the past and to interact with an expert third party was a valuable opportunity for the participants in this class. We believe that having partners discuss and perform exercises with each other in the work is an innovative method.

4.2 Limitations and Challenges of the Study

In this study, we actually planned a BPP site visit but changed the plan to consider a book. The proposed plan is considered as group guidance at the level of health guidance and not an educational program. In Japan, there is currently no established educational program for parents-to-be. We believe that the present class constitutes one form of parent education during the gestational period and a way to support fathers in increasing the competencies they need during the gestational period. This study clarified what expectant fathers actually want, which has not been focused on until now. Also, examining support programs from multiple perspectives can contribute to the development and dissemination of measures to support expectant parents in the future. In Japan, there are only a few studies on support for fathers during pregnancy, with only a few reports of practical implementation by municipalities and NPOs. These studies focus mainly on knowledge about child-rearing and what is learned as the child grows up. In the U.S., parenting education during pregnancy has long been targeted at mothers; however, nowadays, various efforts are being made to incorporate fathers. In Japan, fathers should be included in support programs, and the program content should not only include knowledge and skills for parenthood but also programs that encourage fathers to build relationships with other parents and their own families and to become sensitive parents. First, it is necessary to review and examine the environment and support system that facilitate the participation of fathers. Therefore, it is necessary to consider easy classes for fathers to participate in.

5. Conclusion

A review of thematic literature reveals that fathers during pregnancy seek specific information on support for their spouses. Communication and mutual understanding between the members of the couple are important for strengthening the marital relationship. Fathers are reconstructing their new roles with some confusion regarding how to respond to their new roles. Therefore, when considering support for fathers during pregnancy, BPP exercises can be useful as they aim to strengthen the marital relationship and lead a healthy life by using two

basic skills. Although there are differences in social backgrounds, cultures, and family backgrounds between Japan and other countries, we believe that the basic skills can be used in common. In Japan, it is necessary to consider holding classes for parents to strengthen their marital relationship during pregnancy.

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