O R I G I N A L   P A P E R

Discourses of Preconception Health and Care: Perspectives of Rural Women in Zhejiang, China

Fuqin Liu, PhD, RN
Assistant Professor, Texas Woman's University College of Nursing Arts and Sciences
Denton, Texas, USA

Corespondence: Fuqin Liu, Texas Woman's University College of Nursing Arts and Sciences Building, Room 118 1216 Oakland Street, Denton, Texas 76204-5498 Email: fliu@tw.edu

Abstract

Background: Preconception health has become an integral part of global maternal and child health, whereas preconception care has been recognized as the next frontier for improving pregnancy outcomes. The literature shows that the language surrounding the concept of preconception health and care is mainly focused on risk factors and often confined within the biomedicine-oriented risk reduction framework.

Aims: This study aimed to define preconception health and care from reproductive-aged women's perspectives in rural China.

Methodology: This was a discourse analysis study. The study was conducted in Tonglu County, Zhejiang, China. A total of 40 in-depth individual interviews were completed from April to August 2009. Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis was adopted to analyze the interview text.

Results: All women verbalized that keeping healthy was important to both women and men before pregnancy. Participants drew from individual, family, and societal levels of social practices to form the following four main discourses of the concept of preconception health and care: (a) keeping free from diseases, (b) keeping free from menstrual abnormalities, (c) maintaining physical strength, and (d) maintaining a positive emotional and mental state.

Conclusions: This study affirms the prevalence of Chinese medicine in shaping preconception health and care beliefs and the need to promote a family-centered approach to preconception health promotion.

Keywords: Preconception Health, Preconception Care, Rural China, Women, Critical Discourse Analysis, Family-centered Care