Presentation Abstract

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Psicoterapy

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Unspoken: How Intergenerational Messages Shape a Mother's Meaning-Making and Recovery Following Birth Trauma: A Phenomenological Enquiry

Abstract

Background and Objectives: Birth trauma affects approximately one in three women, yet within Transactional Analysis literature the perinatal period remains significantly underexplored. This study addresses a specific and largely unexamined gap: how intergenerational scripts and sociocultural messaging shape a mother's meaning-making and recovery following birth trauma. Notably, TA search terms including motherhood, birth trauma, perinatal, and intergenerational produce few results in either the International Journal of Transactional Analysis Research and Practice or the Transactional Analysis Journal, representing a striking gap given the clear resonances between TA theory and lived maternal experience.

Methods: A single-participant qualitative phenomenological study was conducted, involving one in-depth interview with a co-researcher with lived experience of birth trauma. The co-researcher is a qualified psychotherapist engaged in long-term personal TA therapy. Thematic analysis was conducted through a TA interpretive framework, with key constructs including script, injunctions, drivers, and intergenerational transmission providing the analytical lens.

Key Findings: Six primary themes were identified: intergenerational silence and institutional fear; aloneness and compulsive independence; bonding and attachment rupture; intergenerational scripts and sociocultural messaging; the collapse of idealised motherhood narratives; and meaning-making, recovery, and script change. Findings suggest that the Be Strong driver and injunctions including Don't Feel, Don't Need, and Don't Talk — transmitted across four generations — shaped both the experience of birth trauma and the possibilities for recovery. An original

TA-informed adaptation of Park's (2010) meaning-making model was developed, distinguishing between script reinforcement and script awareness and change as divergent recovery pathways.

Conclusions and Implications: Intergenerational scripting appears to shape not only how birth trauma is experienced but which recovery pathways remain available. Long-term relational psychotherapy emerges as clinically essential rather than optional for this population. The study contributes an original theoretical model and calls for expanded TA research into this critically underserved field.

Professional Picture

