

Abstract

The rigorous thesis „Experiencing loss of child“ deals with the psychological aspects of adaptation to the loss of a child. Its main objective is to analyse the supporting factors that help the adaptation and factors that make the process of adaptation more difficult. Furthermore, we intended to find out how such loss influences individuals and their subsequent life and to describe the process of the loss of a child as such.

The theoretical part of the thesis focuses on the issue of the loss of a close person and details the specifics of the loss of a child. Based on available literature the author explores the process of grieving and its manifestations and determines the variables that influence the adaptation to a child loss with a focus on the connection between the loss of a child and complicated grieving. She also evaluates the impact of the child loss on the individual and the potential for intervention in the process.

The empirical part determines both the factors that help to cope with such loss and factors that make the adaptation more complicated. It also describes how the loss influences the life of the individual and focuses on the needs of the bereaved parents.

The data gathering consisted of ten individual in-depth interviews with women which experienced the loss of a child. These interviews were then qualitatively analysed using the IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) method. The research probe is complemented by Adult Attitude to Grief Scale (AAG) which shows the degree of how well the loss was coped with.

Based on the results of the qualitative analysis we identified four main support aspects of adaptation to child loss – social support, individual activity, professional help and faith. The main factors complicating the adaptation are predominantly the absence of social support and associated secondary crises. Furthermore we found that the loss of a child brought some positive effects into the lives of the individuals as well, such as concentration on helping others and a change of values.

Keywords:

loss of a child, grief, trauma, coping with loss, complicated grief