**Motherhood Perception and the Contribution of Mental Distress, Differentiation of Self, and Marital Satisfaction to Personal Growth among Mothers of Twins**

Raising twins may produce a more stressful family environment than raising an only child. This situation can lead to social, psychological, and economic challenges and may produce feelings of distress. While most research on mothers of twins focuses on the difficulties they face, in recent years, studies have emerged focusing on positive psychological changes and personal growth resulting from challenging life situations, including parenting. However, existing information on personal growth resulting from parenting twins is limited. For this reason, we chose to focus on mothers of twins. Using Schaefer and Moos’ growth model (Schaefer & Moos, 1992), we examined mental distress, differentiation of self, and marital satisfaction in the personal growth of mothers of twins and their perception of motherhood. Mothers were surveyed when their twins were two years old and again two years later for comparison. We also took into account the contribution of the characteristics of the twins (identicality, birth order, sex etc.).

The study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. It was based on a questionnaire administered to mothers of twins as part of a MOST (single mothers of twins) study. In the quantitative phase, 161 mothers of twins were surveyed. They answered the questionnaire two and four years after the birth of their twins. The mothers with the highest and lowest growth scores were selected in the qualitative phase. There were 48 mothers in each of these groups. They were asked open-ended questions two years after birth, and their responses were analyzed.

The quantitative findings suggest that mothers of four-year-old twins experience personal growth, while mothers of premature twins experience the most significant growth. It was found that the lower the mental distress, the more growth the mother experienced, especially among mothers of non-eldest twins. Higher differentiation is associated with lower mental distress, which, in turn, contributes to more personal growth. Higher differentiation among mothers of same-sex twins contributes to more growth than mothers of different-sex twins, in whom lower differentiation contributes to more growth. Moreover, greater marital satisfaction contributes to more growth, especially among mothers of eldest twins.

The qualitative phase suggested that two main focuses characterize the mothers’ perception of motherhood in two-year-old twins. These are the mother’s reference to herself and the mother’s reference to the twins. Not many differences were found between mothers with higher and lower growth. In the first focus, the mothers described feelings of significant life changes. They describe difficulties of different types over time, both physical to mental. They described the difficulty of raising two children simultaneously on a physical and emotional level. Dealing with the difficulties led to a sense of success, and they described the enjoyment of raising the twins. The main feeling associated with their motherhood perception was the sense of uniqueness. The second focus was characterized by thoughts about raising the twins in terms of the desire to strengthen the unique twin bond while simultaneously allowing each child to develop individually.

The focus on mothers of twins expands existing knowledge and understanding of motherhood perceptions by providing a perspective on motherhood and personal growth different from the norm. The study could help develop interventions that acknowledge the ability of mothers to grow, reinforcing their sense of uniqueness and the factors that contribute to growth.