

## A WOMAN'S SENSE OF CONTROL OVER HER CHILD BIRTH EXPERIENCE

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### ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted with an aim to measure a woman's sense of control over her child birth experience, at the Modern Government Maternity Hospital Hyderabad, TS. The objectives of the study were to measure the woman's sense of control over her child birth experience and to co-relate it with the selected demographic variables. Sixty postnatal mothers were selected using quota sampling method, were inducted into the study with their written consent. The data was collected using Ellen Hodnett's Labour Agency Scale (LAS). This is a standardized scale with an r value of 0.9 which was successfully tested to measure a woman's sense of personal control (SPC) during her labor. The SPC scores range from 10 to 70, low scores indicate low control and high score indicates high of control over oneself and one's environment while giving birth. The data was collected during June and July 2016, and was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The data revealed that even though women did not demonstrate high sense of control over self during their labour, it was observed that women aged 30 to 35 years, women who were employed, women who had birth companions, women who gave normal vaginal births, and women who did not experience any complications during their pregnancy or child birth had a higher sense of control during their birthing experience.

**Key words:** Child birth; Ellen Hodnett's Labour Agency Scale; Woman's sense of personal control.

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### INTRODUCTION

Childbirth is more than physical labour. The four dimensions of health- physical, psychological, social and spiritual- are intricately interwoven during birthing process. The comprehensive nature of birthing process is sadly depreciated into labour or delivery, undermining the complex nature of the process. The psychological status of the mother has the potential to both impact on and be influenced by the child birth [1]. It is often observed that a woman giving birth undergoes tremendous stress, which is manifested in the form of fear and anxiety. One of the major factors that contribute to this stress is the want of a sense of security and to feel involved in decisions affecting them during childbirth [2]. These feelings along with some more factors affect the attitudes towards further pregnancies and childbirth experience retrospectively.

The most prominent factors that could affect the child birth process include control, choice in decision

making, social support, and efficacy of pain control. Women define control as consisting of internal and external processes, both of which impact their feelings about the overall birth experience. Internal control refers to a woman's ability to control her feelings and expressions of pain and to make bodily decisions (e.g., changing position freely) during labor. External control, on the other hand, refers to a woman's ability to take part in decision making concerning her birth, including medical interventions, sources and types of support, and where and how to give birth. A lack of control is more likely to be associated with a negative childbirth experience, whereas feelings of both internal and external control are associated with a positive experience. During birth, the development and negotiation of control are part of a dialectical process between a woman and her care team4 predominantly her midwife.



Susan M Hall and Immy Holloway describe having personal control during childbirth as the ability to exercise choices, releasing inhibitions, coping with pain and experiencing fulfilment. Women feel in control when the individuals allow them to take charge of the birthing process, gaining mastery of the situation, making decisions and negotiating support during labour and birthing [3-5].

**METHODOLOGY**

The present study was under taken with a view to measure a woman's sense of control over her child birth experience. This descriptive study was conducted at the Modern Government Maternity Hospital Hyderabad, Telangana State after obtaining the permission from the head of the institution. The objectives of the study were to measure the woman's sense of control over her child birth experience and to co-relate the selected demographic variables with the sense of control over the child birth experience.

**Sampling:** Sixty postnatal mothers were selected to participate in the present study using quota sampling method. Fifteen (15) women who gave normal vaginal births, 15 women who gave vaginal birth with an episiotomy, 15 women who gave birth with the help of instruments (either an obstetrical forceps or a vaccum cup), and 15 women who gave birth through a LSCS, were inducted into the study after obtaining their written consent. **Tool:** The data was collected using Ellen Hodnett's Labour Agency Scale (LAS). The LAS was used to measure the experiences of control over self during their birthing, the scores were be obtained from summing of the scores of individual items on the scale. The possible range of scores is from 10 to 70, low scores indicate low experiences and a high score indicates high experiences of control over oneself and ones environment during birthing.

The data was collected over a period of two months during June and July 2016, and was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The description of the selected demographical variables and their Sense of

Personal Control (SPC) mean scores are as follows, 56.7% of the sample was in the age group of 19 to 24 years, whose obtained Sense of Personal Control (SPC) mean score was 39.53. Out of the 60 women who participated in the study, 41.7% were in the age group of 25 to 30 years, the obtained SPC mean score was 37.40. Only one woman who participated in the study was aged between 31 to 35 years whose obtained mean SPC score was 42.

In regard to the education of the women, it was observed that one third of the subjects had primary education, 23.3% completed their secondary school education , 15% were educated upto intermediate, and 15% of the sample were not formally educated but were able to read or write and the remaining 15 % were unable to even read or write. The obtained SPC mean scores of women with primary education was 37.20, SPC mean score of women with secondary education was 39.14, and that of the women who were educated up to intermediate was 39.25. The obtained SPC mean scores of those who could read and write without any formal education was 39.11 and the mean SPC score of the women who could not read or write at all was 40. 33.

78.3% Of the subjects were homemakers, 20% worked as daily wage workers or household helpers, and only one woman was an employee. The obtained SPC mean score of the women who were home makers was 38.98, that of a daily wage/ house hold worker was 37.50 and that of an employee was 39.00.

In regard to the type of family 63.3% of the subjects came from nuclear families and the remaining 36.7% were from joint families. The mean SPC score of the women who belonged to nuclear families was 39.61, while that of the women from joint families was 37.09.

41.7% of the women were primiparae while 47.1% were para two 10% of the subjects were multiparae and 6.7% were grand multiparae. The obtained mean SPC scores were 36.96 for primiparae, 40.20 for para two, 36.00 for multiparae and 44.00 for grand multiparae.

**Figure 1. Distribution of Women According to their Age and their Sense of Personal Control Score**

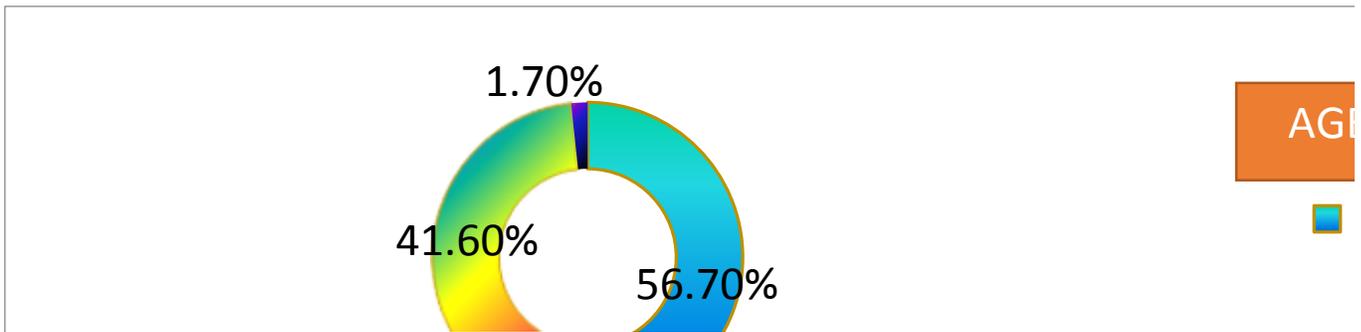


Figure 2. Distribution of Women according to their Education and their Sense of Personal Control Score

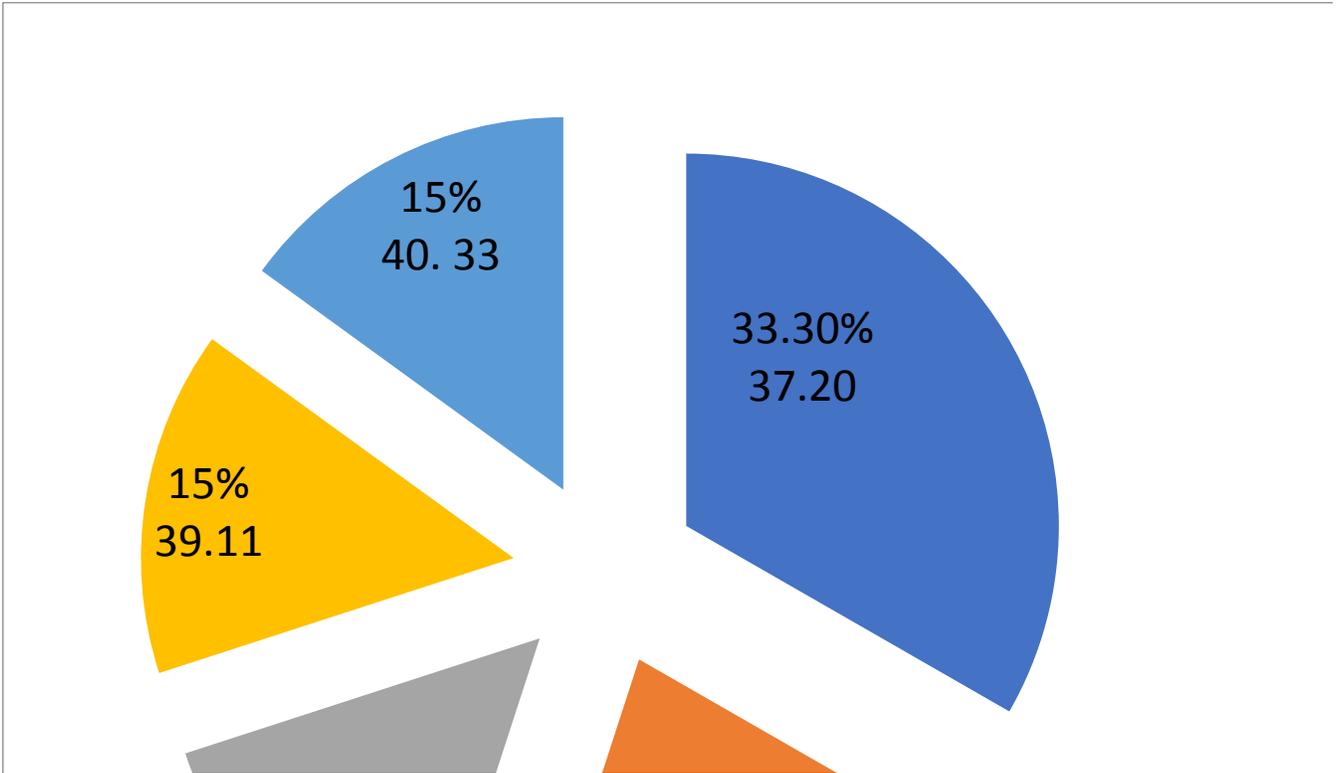


Figure 3. Distribution of Women according to their Occupation and their Sense of Personal Control Score

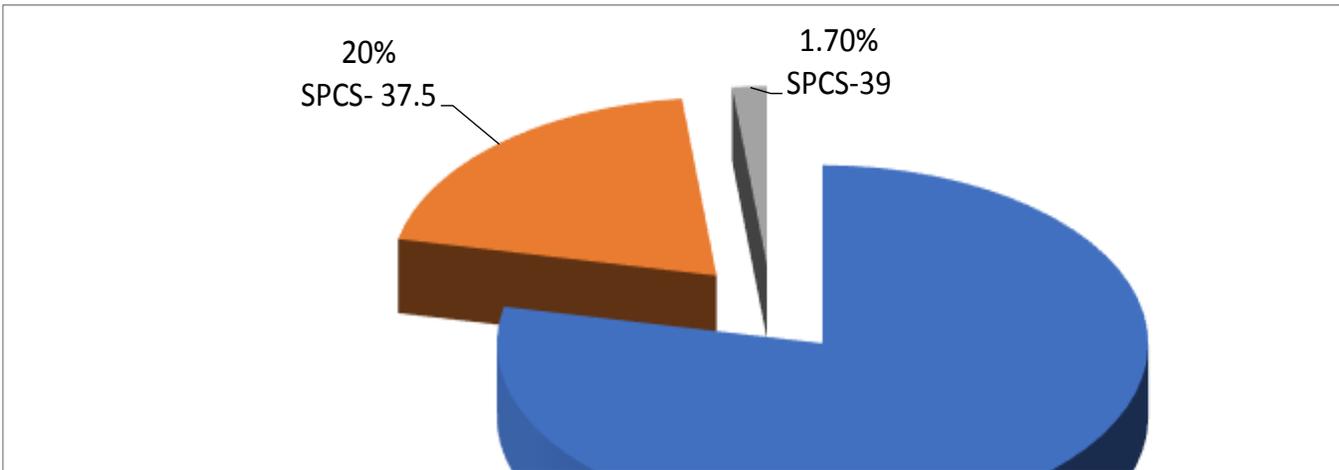
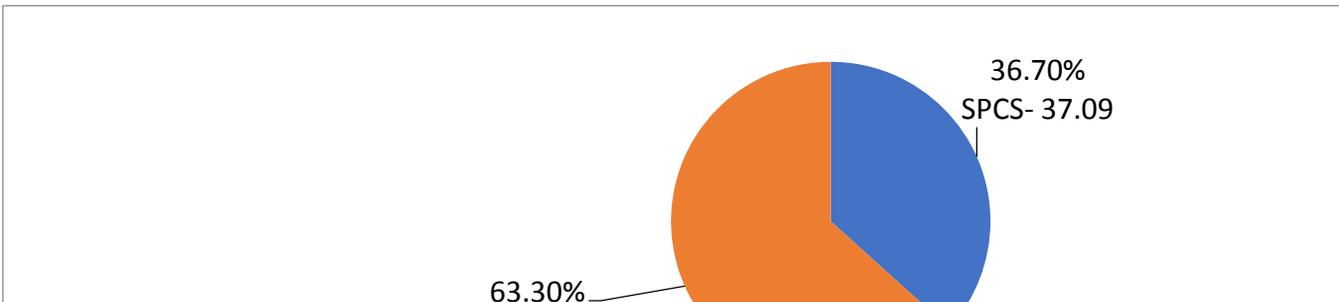


Figure 4. Distribution of Women according to the Type of Family and their SPC Score



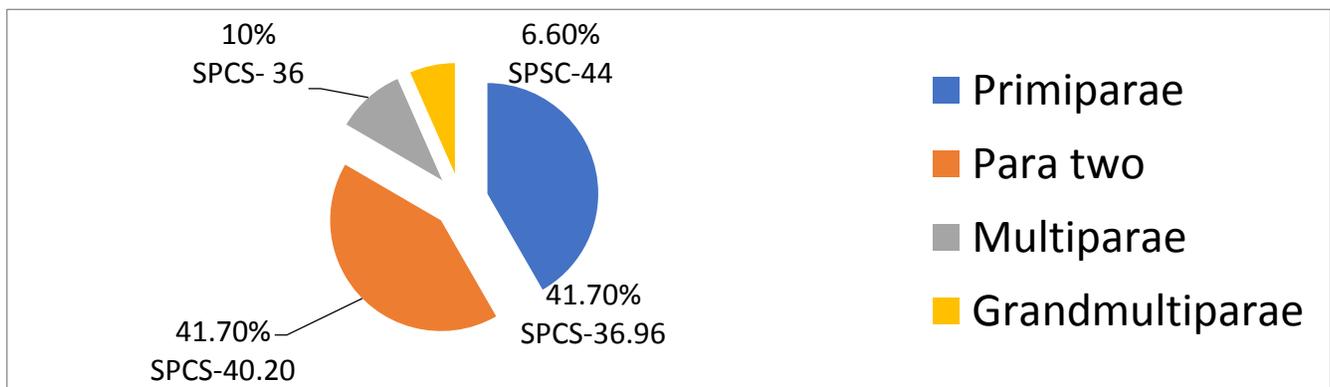
Out of the 60 women selected 48 (80%), did not have any complications related to pregnancy or labour while 12 (20%) had complications related to pregnancy or child birth. The mean SPC score for those who did not have any complications was 39.29 while that of the women who had complications related to pregnancy was 36.25.

86.7 % of the women did not have any birth companion in the birthing room while 13.3% were allowed to have birth companions. The mean SPC score for those who did not have a birth companion was 36.50 and those with birth companion was 39.02.

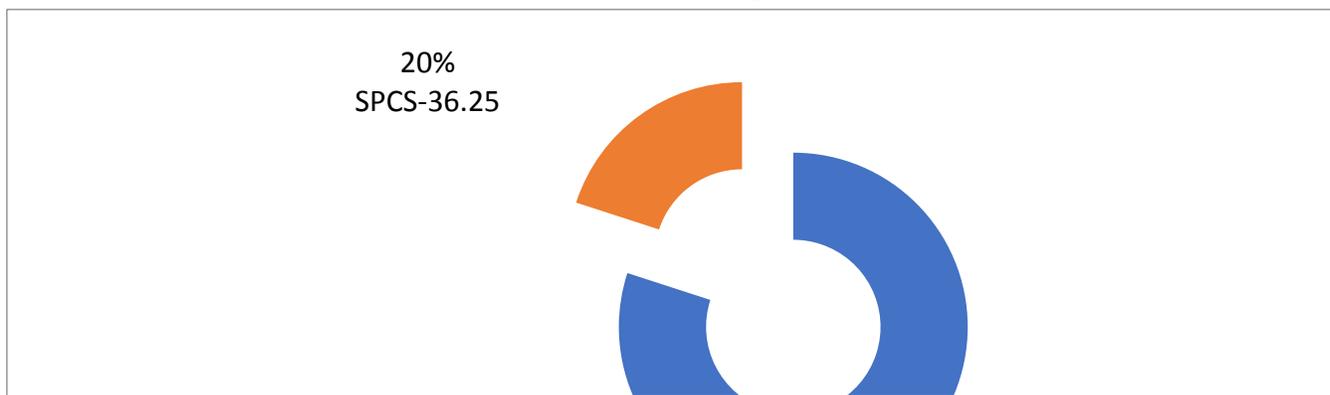
In regard to the type of delivery, 25% of the subjects had normal vaginal delivery, 25% of the selected women, gave birth vaginally with an episiotomy, 25% of women had vaginal instrumental deliveries and the remaining 25% gave birth through a LSCS. The mean SPC scores of those with a normal vaginal delivery was 42.87, that of the women who gave birth vaginally with an episiotomy was 37.80, that of women with instrumental deliveries was 37.00 and that with LSCS was 37.07.

Information on the child birth was provided by health personnel among 75% of the subjects. The obtained mean SPC score in this group was 39.87, 13.3 % of the women got information on child birth preparation from family and friends this sect of the subject's mean SPC score was 35.13. Personnel experience as birth preparation measure was reported in 10% of the subjects, who scored a mean SPC score of 35.8 and remaining 1.7% reported that the mass media was the source of information on child birth, with the obtained SPC score of 31.00.

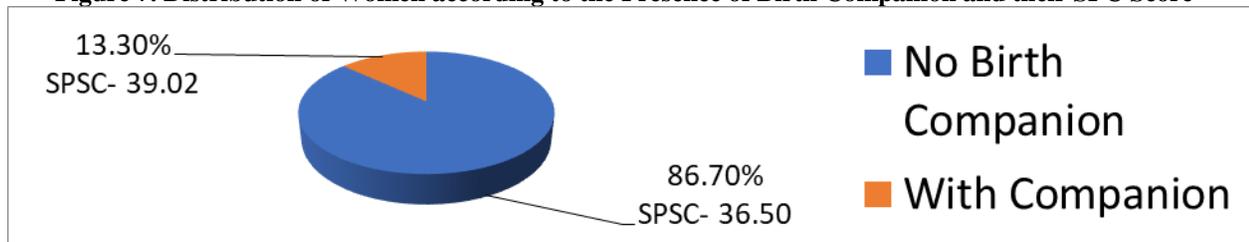
**Figure 5. Distribution of Women according to the Parity and their Sense of Personal Control Score**



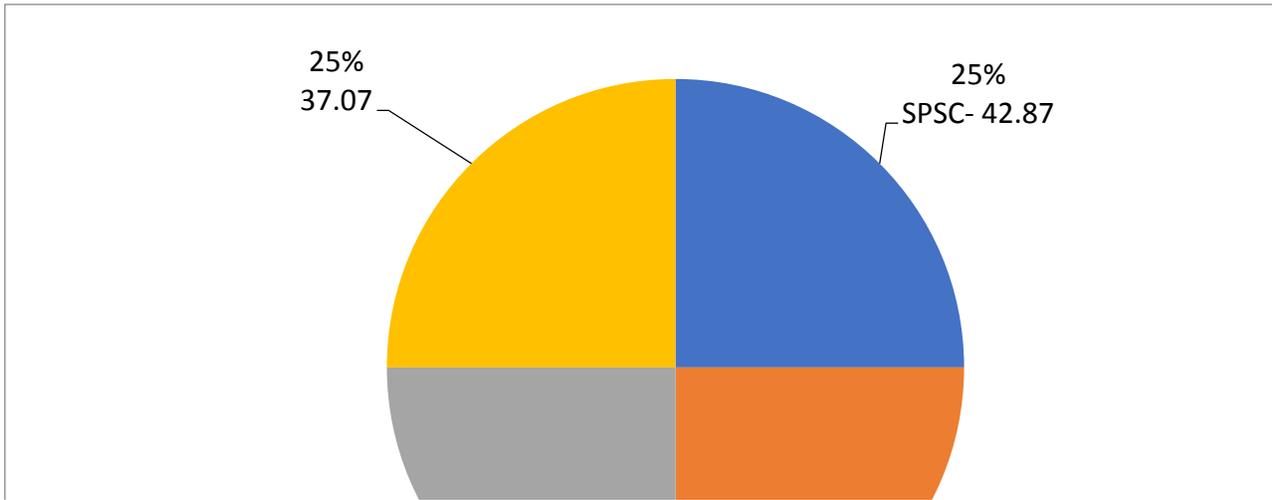
**Figure 6. Distribution of Women according to the Presence of Complications and their Sense of Personal Control Score**



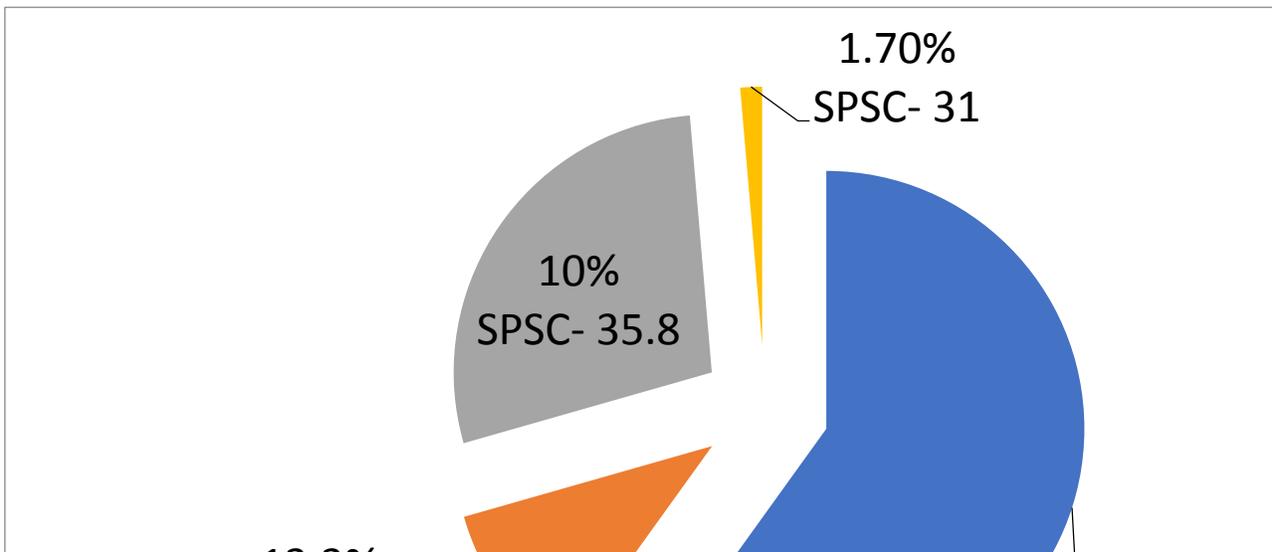
**Figure 7. Distribution of Women according to the Presence of Birth Companion and their SPC Score**



**Figure 8. Distribution of Women according to the Presence of Birth Companion and their Sense of Personal Control Score**



**Figure 9. Distribution of Women according to the Source of Information on Giving Birth and their Sense of Personal Control Score**



One-way ANOVA was performed to find if there was any statistically significant difference the Sense of Personal Control among women with selected demographic variables , it was found that variables like age, occupation, presence of birth companion during birthing and the type of birth effects the Sense of Personal Control among women.

**CONCLUSION**

Sense of Personal Control among women while giving birth is an important factor contributing to positive child birth experience, in the present study it was observed that women aged 30 to 35 years, women who were employed, women who had birth companions, women who gave normal vaginal births, and women who did not experience any complications during their pregnancy or birthing had higher sense of control during their birthing experience.



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