

Narrative Review of Mental Health Problems in Pregnant Women During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Vulnerable groups such as pregnant women are at increased risk of experiencing mental health issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. The implementation of social restrictions reduced social support for pregnant women, which could negatively impact their mental health. This study aims to analyze mental health issues in pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is a narrative literature review. The study was conducted from September to December 2021. Article searches were conducted through the PubMed, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar databases. Selected articles were based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Analysis was performed on 20 research articles. The results show that the most prevalent mental health issues in pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic were anxiety and depression, followed by obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. The prevalence of mental health issues in pregnant women was higher compared to non-pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interventions to reduce mental health problems in pregnant women and promote preventive behaviors are essential.

BACKGROUND

During the COVID-19 pandemic, various restrictions were implemented on routine services, including maternal and newborn healthcare. Pregnant women became hesitant to visit healthcare facilities due to the fear of contracting the coronavirus, as well as the advice to postpone pregnancy check-ups and prenatal classes. Furthermore, healthcare services faced challenges in terms of staff readiness, infrastructure, and the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE). These factors contributed to potential risks during pregnancy, ultimately affecting the mental health of expectant mothers. A study indicated that levels of anxiety and depression in pregnant women were higher after the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, compared to before, with an increased incidence of self-harm tendencies.

OBJECTIVE

The aim of this study is to conduct an in-depth identification of mental health issues in pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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RESULTS

A total of 20 relevant research articles were found based on the inclusion criteria across three databases. Analysis of these 20 articles revealed that the prevalence of mental health issues in pregnant women was higher compared to non-pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic. The most common mental health issues among pregnant women during the pandemic were anxiety and depression, followed by obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

METHOD

This study is a narrative literature review. Article searches were performed using the PubMed, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar databases. The search utilized the following keywords: (mental health OR psychological impact) AND (anxiety) AND (depression OR depressive) AND (pregnant OR pregnancy) AND (COVID-19 OR pandemic). Articles were selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria.

SUGGESTION

It is recommended that healthcare professionals, especially midwives, actively engage in providing communication, information, and education to pregnant women about the importance of mental health. Additionally, it is essential to involve all family members and the surrounding community in providing social support to pregnant women.

DISCUSSION

Mental health issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly impacted pregnant women, who are among the most vulnerable groups to COVID-19 infection. Research findings indicate that the pandemic has had a greater impact on the mental health of pregnant women compared to non-pregnant women. Clear information about COVID-19, regular physical activity, increased social support, self-efficacy, eHealth services, and telemedicine have been identified as protective factors for the mental health of pregnant women during the pandemic. Anxiety disorders in pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic have been notably high. This condition is associated with factors such as low family income and employment status, concerns and fears about contracting and transmitting COVID-19 from the mother to the fetus, the spread of false information about COVID-19, unpreparedness for childbirth, gestational age, maternal age, and the level of knowledge about COVID-19 among pregnant women. The following is an overview of anxiety disorders in pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to anxiety disorders, the prevalence of depression in pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic has also been notably high. This condition is associated with lockdown measures, mandatory quarantine, social isolation, financial stress, as well as maternal age and gestational age. The following is an overview of depression disorders in pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

The prevalence of mental health issues has been high among pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pregnant women have shown higher levels of depression, anxiety, and more pronounced negative effects compared to non-pregnant women. The most prevalent mental health issues among pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic were anxiety and depression, followed by obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).