

PANDEMIC STRICKEN PREGNANCY AND IMPORTANCE OF PRENATAL ATTACHMENT; A REVIEW PAPER

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Abstract

Perceived stress and anxiety are normal psychodynamics of pregnancy which was triggered with the advent of Covid-19 pandemic. The consequences and modes of prevention from the deadly disease both were exhaustive and detrimental from a prospective view of Positive Pregnancy psychology. The paper thus highlights the role of prenatal attachment as expressed in various studies among pregnant mothers during the covid 19 pandemic and objectively focuses the findings from the papers, which included prenatal attachment or antenatal attachment or prenatal bonding. This review thus clarifies that prenatal attachment is unique attribute of parents to be which needs more acceptance and promotion. The objective of the paper thus is to highlight that promotion of prenatal attachment was so less explored during the pandemic, where its need was highest as suggestive from various studies concluded that stress, anxiety and psychological wellbeing of mothers were grossly affected during pandemic and poor prenatal attachment among mothers were reported. Needless to justify the importance of promotion of prenatal attachment. The studies reviewed, indicated that prenatal attachment or bonding needs promotion and awareness during crisis all the more for a pregnant mother for a healthy outcome of pregnancy and beyond.

Key words – Prenatal Attachment/ Bonding, Ante Natal Attachment / Bonding, Pandemic, Pregnant Mothers Pandemic Stricken Pregnancy and Importance of Prenatal Attachment; A Review Paper

INTRODUCTION

The covid19 pandemic's effect on pregnant mothers were rising concern, WHO in its opening message expressed their deepest concern related to the lack of utilization of the antenatal care and putting a significant number of populations at risk. The concern was all the more related to isolation and treatment profile. Perceived stress and anxiety are normal psychodynamics of pregnancy which was triggered with the advent of Covid-19 pandemic. The consequences and modes of prevention from the deadly disease both were exhaustive and detrimental from a prospective view of Positive Pregnancy psychology. Reports from various researches highlights the various aspects of mental wellbeing been disturbed during pandemic which resulted in difficult bonding process and despite these, maternal experiences of bonding with their unborn child has not been studied well. ²

The ill effects of poor prenatal attachment or bonding has been well established and during the pandemic prenatal attachment was a vital aspect to be explored and promoted for the pregnant mothers.

Study Aims

The study thus had the aim to highlight the findings related to prenatal attachment of the mothers during pandemic, from the various researches that were conducted. The study also aims further to highlight the importance of promotion of prenatal attachment routinely and pandemic was the time to emphasize more on prenatal attachment, through its promotion.

Search Methods

Online search was performed with the key words of prenatal attachment/ antenatal attachment or prenatal bonding /antenatal bonding during covid 19 pandemic. Only 4 papers from Scopus data base were available which was published in years of 2021-2022. Manual searching of references were also done from the selected papers to which the four papers were mutually exhaustive, which included prenatal attachment during covid 19 pandemic.

Results –

Only four studies were selected and found suitable to deal and highlight the findings related to prenatal attachment during pandemic. Among these 2 studies were published in the year 2021 and two in the year 2022. Among these two studies included stress, anxiety along with prenatal attachment and maternal resilience was also studied among one of these studies. one study was comparative in design assessing the effects of covid 19 as (covid group and control group) and it studied child birth related fear along with prenatal attachment. The last study dealt with perception of covid 19 pandemic on prenatal attachment and psychological distress. The study conducted by Amanda Koire Leena Mittal, Carmina Erdei, Cindy H Liu¹ (Study 1) on – maternal fetal bonding during covid 19 pandemic, was the first to report potential protective and risk factors to the maternal-fetal bonding process in women pregnant during the COVID-19 pandemic¹. It revealed that depressive symptoms being associated with lower quality maternal fetal bonding and higher anxiety level of mothers was associated positively with bonding. The study further revealed that maternal resilience as a protective factor of prenatal attachment or bonding. Important aspect of this study findings was that bonding was promoted with higher levels of worry regarding impact of COVID-19 on health. Further strong association (positive) with first pregnancy and prenatal was revealed. High income and Higher Education were negatively associated with prenatal bonding in the study. Anxiety, Depression stress of Covid 19 and its impact on Psycho social parameters of pregnant mothers in UK were studied by Filippetti ML, Clarke ADF, and Rigato S. The results revealed that prevalence of anxiety (60%), depression (47%) and stress (40%). There were association between low attachments with the higher depressive symptoms in the samples. (95% HPDI [-0.46, -0.1]). The study identified social support to be a protective factor and was found to be associated anxiety level of the mothers, which were comparatively low. 95% HPDI = [-0.52, -0.21]

The reviewed study on the influences of pregnancy during pandemic on the birth expectation and antenatal bonding conducted by Schaal NK, Hagenbeck C, Helbig M, Wulff V, Märthesheimer S, Fehm T, Hepp P. The study compared the control group and experimental group, regrading birth expectations and antenatal bonding. Fear of childbirth was significantly higher in the Corona group compared to the Control group in the study. Further corona group or the control group reportedly had lower antenatal bonding. The study further revealed that absence of partner during labour and restriction of visitors or isolation were reported factors associated with the highest worries of the mothers

The study conducted on Italian pregnant mothers (1179) to find effects of maternal psychological distress and perception of COVID-19 on prenatal attachment of the samples. The study identified state anxiety to be a potent predictor of prenatal attachment of the samples after analysing the data with multivariate analysis. ($p < 0001$) revealed that the state anxiety was shown to be a significant predictor of prenatal attachment after multivariate analysis. The study further revealed that the COVID-19-risk perception positively moderate the relationship between trait anxiety and prenatal attachment ($p=0008$), indicating that when COVID-19-risk perception is high, the effects of trait anxiety on prenatal attachment is attenuated

Study no.	Title	Author's & year of publications	Design	Sample & Sample size	Country	Findings related to Prenatal Attachment
1.	Maternal-fetal bonding during the COVID-19 pandemic	Amanda Koire Leena Mittal , Carmina Erdei , Cindy H Liu 2021	online cross - sectional survey	686 pregnant mothers	UK	-Depressive symptoms being associated with lower quality maternal fetal bonding. - Identified Maternal resilience as a protective factor of prenatal attachment or bonding improvement.
2.	The mental health crisis of expectant women in the UK: effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on prenatal mental health, antenatal attachment and social support	Maria Laura Filippetti Alasdair D F Clarke , Silvia Rigato 2022	Survey	50 pregnant mothers	Uk	-Prenatal attachment were associated with the higher depressive symptoms among the pregnant mothers.
3.	The influence of being pregnant during the COVID-19 pandemic on birth expectations and antenatal bonding.	Schaal, Nora K; Hagenbeck, Carsten; Helbig, Martina; Wulff, Verena; Märthesheimer, Sarah; Fehm , Tanja; Hepp, Philip. 2021	A comparative survey design among pandemic exposed and non -exposed pregnant mothers	74	Romina Bergman	-Low bonding (prenatal attachment) were found in the corona group (the group who was pregnant during the pandemic) compared to the group who were pregnant before pandemic.
4.	Effect of maternal psychological distress and perceptions of covid 19 on prenatal attachment in a large sample of Italian pregnant women.	Francesco Craig Maria Cecilia Gioia Vito Muggeo JuanitaCajiao Alessia Aloia Iolanda Martino Flaviana Tenuta , Antonio Cerasa Angela Costabile	online survey	1179	Italy	- After multivariant analysis, state anxiety was found to be a potent predictor of prenatal attachment. -Moderate relationship between prenatal attachment, trait anxiety and positive perception of Covid risk among the pregnant mothers were found.

Table 1 : Showing the main findings of the studies related to prenatal bonding during pandemic among mothers

Conclusion:

The study reviewed highlighted that prenatal bonding may be altered positively and negatively with certain factors, resilience, support system and anxiety related to covid were positively associated with prenatal attachment and depressive symptoms were negatively associated with prenatal attachment. These results underline the importance of monitoring the prenatal attachment process ⁴ and also the importance of promoting prenatal attachment routinely through antenatal care.

The review also brought in light that role of fathers or partners of pregnant women was marginalised and rarely addressed in researches in relation to paternal prenatal attachment during pandemic and also involved pregnancy care. Awareness and strategies from health care professionals are important regarding the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on fear of childbirth and antenatal bonding³.promotion of prenatal bonding was very less explored, considering the higher prevalence poor bonding during the pandemic is an issue of concern and also reflects that prenatal attachment should be promoted with highest concern by the health care professionals routinely.

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