

OP 13

Depressive Symptoms and Associated Factors among Pregnant Mothers Attending Antenatal Clinics at Teaching Hospital Mahamodara

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Background: Pregnancy and childbirth are described as periods of happiness in a women's life. Unfortunately, this period has increased the risk for mental health issues. Maternal depression is the commonest mental health disorder identified, and unlikely to postnatal depression, antenatal depression has drawn less attention.

Objectives: To describe the depressive symptoms and its associated factors among pregnant mothers attending antenatal clinic.

Methods: A hospital based descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted at Teaching Hospital Mahamodara, Galle. Pregnant mothers (n=320) with a ≥ 12 weeks of gestation were evaluated. Validated Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) was used to assess depressive symptoms. An EPDS score ≥ 10 considered as probable depression cases. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. Variables having $p < 0.05$ were considered as statistically significant.

Results: The mean (SD) age of the participants was 28.45 (± 5.69) years with a range of 15 to 42 years. The probable antenatal depression was found to be in 30.6% (n=98) of the participants. Antenatal depressive symptoms were associated with quality of time spend with family [$r(318)=0.32, p < 0.001$], gestational weeks [$r(318)=0.12, p < 0.05$], lower education [$F(4, 315)=3.35, p=0.01$], multiparous [$F(2, 317)=3.41, p=0.03$], unplanned pregnancy [$t(318)=-3.27, p=0.001$], antenatal morbidities [$t(318)=8.67, p < 0.001$], presence of mental disorder [$t(318)=2.31, p=0.021$] and experience of suicidal attempts by a family member [$t(318)=2.85, p=0.005$].

Conclusions: The study revealed that nearly two in five antenatal mothers are suffering from depressive symptoms. Therefore, not only postnatal mothers but also antenatal mothers should be screened for depressive symptoms and helped to improve their psychological state.

Keywords: Antenatal clinics, Antenatal mothers, Depressive symptoms, Pregnancy, Teaching Hospital Mahamodara