# The Effects of Postpartum Depression On Mothers and Child Development

Geraldine Javier

Alliance University

GCN 503

Dr. A’tasha Christian

April 26, 2023

## Introduction

Postpartum depression (PPD) affects 10-15% of women worldwide, according to Anokye et al. (2018). Mothers' emotional health can have detrimental effects on children. The influence of maternal depression on the development of young children has not received as much attention, despite much research focusing on the consequences of parental stress on the emotional and social health of children. This needs assessment examines the consequences of postpartum depression on women and children and proposes program changes to reduce its impacts. An extensive study of the research on postpartum depression and its effects on children's developmental outcomes will be done as the first step in this needs assessment. Subsequently, the assessment will explain the objectives and inquiries that underpin the investigation, alongside the assumptions, if present, that will direct the research. The next section will provide an account of the research methodologies employed, encompassing the study's framework, participant characteristics, sample size, investigative approaches utilized, instruments employed, and data collection methods. The evaluation will additionally examine any conceivable limitations or predispositions that may arise, along with the ethical and culturally suitable approaches to construe and convey the outcomes of the investigation.

### Variables

The study incorporates variables such as postpartum depression and child development. Postpartum depression is the independent variable under consideration and is one that the researcher may manipulate or control. The variable that is influenced by the independent variable is regarded to be the dependent variable, which is child development. In order to determine its effect on infant development, the current study focuses on postpartum depression as the variable of interest. The current study is to determine whether the aforementioned variables are correlated

as well as the potential negative impacts of postpartum depression on the developmental outcomes of offspring.

## Literature Review

Postpartum depression is a disorder that affects women after labor and can last up to a year. Research by many authors, including Junge et al. (2017), looked into the relationship between perinatal mother depression and young children's social-emotional development. To comprehend the impacts of prenatal stress on children's social-emotional development, this literature review will critically assess several pieces of literature. The study will finally present proof of the significance of a mother's psychological well-being in the growth of preschoolers and the necessity of care for mothers who experience prenatal depression.

In a two-year study, Junge et al. (2017) evaluated the consequences of prenatal anxiety on a child’s social-emotional growth. The authors' longitudinal population research subject was one thousand two hundred thirty-five females that delivered at the Norwegian hospital Akershus University Hospital. The EPDS was employed in the research to evaluate maternal depressed symptoms at three intervals: 32 weeks of pregnancy, eight weeks after delivery, and two years afterward (Junge et al., 2017). The child's social-emotional growth was evaluated at age two utilizing the Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional (ASQ: SE). According to the study's findings, maternal depression at 32 weeks gestation and eight weeks after delivery was significantly correlated with social-emotional issues in the child at age 2 (Junge et al., 2017). The scientists concluded that prenatal and postnatal depression have separate, detrimental effects on children's social and emotional development. The research has significant restrictions, though, which should be considered. First, the study's minimal sample size may have limited how far the findings may be applied. Also, the study did not consider other elements like parental practices,

which might affect how children develop socially and emotionally. Future studies should consider these elements to build a more thorough knowledge of how maternal depression affects children's development.

By examining the effects of untreated mother psychological distress throughout the postnatal period on a child's language and behavioral maturation till age 7, Bell et al. (2019) present a significant addition to Junge et al.'s (2017) research. According to the study, children of mothers who received depression treatment up until age five fared better than those whose children did not, with clinically symptomatic and treated distress and self-reported prenatal emotional stress negatively affecting child behavioral development. However, the children's linguistic development had little or no differences.

Bell et al.'s (2019) findings confirm and add to those of Junge et al.'s (2017) research, offering more proof of the long-term impacts of untreated mother psychological distress on a child's development. It recommends implementing therapy for mothers as soon as possible to prevent long-term consequences on children. The results of Bell et al. (2019) also imply that current therapies for postpartum depressive symptoms may not be beneficial in symptom relief for women over the long run or in enhancing child outcomes.

In the UK, Netsi et al. (2018) conducted an observational study to evaluate the association between various levels of PND intensity and persistence and long-term child outcomes. According to the findings, women with chronic PND had higher emotional symptoms up to 11 years after giving birth than women whose PND was not persistent or did not score over the EPDS cutoff. The probability of child behavior disruption was also increased for all three severity levels of PND. Mothers with recurrent severe PND had odds ratios of 4.84, 2.65, and 7.44 for behavioral issues at age 3.5, worse maths test scores at age 16, and a greater frequency

of depression at age 18 (Netsi et al., 2018). The outcomes of the assessment are in accordance with those of Junge et al. (2017), who conducted a longitudinal population study in Norway to determine if mother depression at various stages throughout the perinatal period influences children's social-emotional development at age 2. Both studies show that prolonged, severe PND harms a child's social-emotional growth.

Although both studies show how mother depression during pregnancy harms a child's results, they are not identical. For instance the follow-up time by Netsi et al. was longer (up to 11 years) than that used by Junge et al. (until 2 years). Although Junge et al. only examined social-emotional issues, Netsi et al. assessed the impacts of PND. This research critically implies that maternal depression has a detrimental influence on kids' development. The results of Netsi et al. also indicate that PND severity and persistence are linked to a higher likelihood of unfavorable outcomes, notably in behavioral issues and depression. The findings from both studies highlight the significance of detecting and treating maternal depression during the prenatal period to lower the likelihood of negative consequences in offspring.

Cummings and Davies (1994) examined how maternal depression affected a child's development. The authors talk about how common maternal depression is, how it affects children’s emotional and cognitive growth, and what might affect how depression affects children. Data from both clinical and population-based research are used to examine how mother depression affects children. The authors begin by discussing maternal depression's prevalence and how it is commonly misdiagnosed since women are typically hesitant to seek care. They also talk about how different cultural perspectives on depression might make it difficult to identify maternal depression. The authors go on to discuss the repercussions of maternal anxiety on children, learning that they may struggle with emotional and cognitive difficulties. Issues may

arise such as increased anxiety, stress, psychosocial problems, and poor academic performance, than children of individuals who are not depressed. The topic of potential variables that might affect how maternal depression affects children is also covered. These factors include the mother's parenting style, the child's gender, age, and the degree and nature of the mother's depression. The authors point out that the child's age plays a significant role because younger children are more susceptible to the effects of distress than older children. Finally, the scholars discuss various treatments for maternal depression, such as family therapy, group therapy, and individual psychotherapy. They stress the value of early detection and intervention to lessen the effects of a mother's depression on children.

The authors offer a thorough analysis of the research on depressive symptomatology and its effects on a child's development. The article is well-cited, and the authors support their findings with empirical and clinical studies. They offer a fair analysis of maternal depression, its potential effects on children, and possible interventions that could lessen these effects. The article provides a significant starting point for future investigation into how maternal depression affects a child's development.

Closa-Monasterolo et al. (2017) investigated the effect of PPD and current mental health problems in the mother on the child's behavior at age eight using a supplemental data analysis from the EU-Childhood Obesity Study. They discovered that maternal postpartum depression and ongoing mental health issues significantly influence their children’s psychosocial development at age eight (Closa-Monasterolo et al., 2017). The researchers discovered that children with the most significant psychiatric problems were those whose parents had both PPD and CMP, followed by mothers with either CMP or only PPD. The expanding amount of research on PPD's impact on infant development is augmented by this study. Prior studies have

revealed that maternal PPD is linked to several adverse effects for the child, including a higher chance of enduring psychiatric and behavioral problems in the future. Furthermore, research has shown that PPD is linked to worse parenting behaviors, including less attentiveness, elevated detrimental effects, and inconsistent punishment.

In their 2013 study, Lucci and Otta wanted to determine how postpartum depression affects a child's first year. PPD, a prevalent mental health condition that affects women after giving birth, is characterized by emotions of melancholy, worry, and exhaustion (Lucci & Otta, 2013). According to the EPDS, the occurrence of PPD was reported to be 30.3% at four months, 26.4% at eight months, and 25.0% at twelve months. The study demonstrated that two interactional indicators at four months, two motor indicators at eight months, and one gross motor indication at twelve months all showed developmental abnormalities in newborns of women with PPD. After 12 months, however, the infants of women with PPD performed better on one fine motor and two verbal tasks. It implies that the repercussion of maternal depression on a child’s development may depend on both external and internal variables affecting the parent and offspring.

The study's results align with previously published research on how PPD affects a child's development. For instance, research by O'Hara et al. (2009) discovered a connection between maternal depression and a newborn’s delayed mental and motor development and higher stress in the mother-infant interaction. The development of infants whose mothers had PPD was observed to be delayed in comparison to infants whose mothers did not have PPD. The impacts of PPD on other aspects of toddler growth, such as cognitive or emotional development or neonatal growth during the first year of life, were not examined in the research. The study looked at the effects of many factors on the growth of infants of PPD mothers, such as the involvement of the father in

the child's life and the home environment. An in-depth investigation is required to understand how PPD affects a child's development and to look at the impacts of other variables such as the participation of the child's father and the kind of family setting.

The literature review has demonstrated that postpartum depression has a significant impact on children's psychological and social growth. Studies by Junge et al. (2017) and Bell et al. (2019) found a difference between prenatal and postnatal anxiety's impact on children's social-emotional maturation. According to studies by Netsi et al., persistent and severe depression also raises the likelihood of childhood behavioral problems (2018). Similar studies by Cummings and Davies (1994) and Closa-Monasterolo et al. (2017) support the idea that maternal depression may have long-term effects on a child's development, leading to higher levels of anxiety, depression, and behavioral issues as well as lower academic achievement and postponed developmental milestones. Last but not least, Lucci and Otta (2013) discovered that infants of postpartum depressed mothers experienced cognitive deficits at four months, two motor indicators at eight months, and one gross motor indication at twelve months.

**Purpose**

This needs assessment evaluates postpartum depression and child development. This study seeks to investigate postpartum depression's impact on children’s development and maturity and increase mother-child wellbeing. What are the likely impacts of postpartum depression on children’s development, and how does depression strength, duration, and variation affect its effects. Postpartum depressed mothers may have children with worse cognitive and physical development. This study investigates how postpartum depression impacts an infant’s development and how to lessen its effects. This needs assessment will help understand postpartum depression and its effects on children. This review will find ways to enhance

mothers' and children's physical and mental health and postpartum depression outcomes. The purpose is to raise awareness of this important issue and assist mothers and their children to live better and healthier.

### Study Design

Qualitative research is best for studying complex phenomena like the effects of maternal depression on newborn development (Tenny, Brannan, & Brannan, 2022). Focus groups or interviews can help researchers understand postpartum depression from the mothers themselves and gather their opinions. This technique will help mothers and their children understand how postpartum depression affects behavior and identify trends. The utilization of a qualitative research methodology enables researchers to delve into the subject matter in a comprehensive and intricate manner, surpassing the scope of investigation that a quantitative approach would permit.

### Population and Sample

Qualitative research uses non-random purposeful sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015). Participants are carefully selected based on study topics or objectives. The goal is to find people who can help with the inquiry. Purposive sampling of mothers with postpartum depression and children under three years old is advocated. Selection criteria ensure that the sample is representative of the population of interest and that participants' experiences will inform the research questions. Quantitative research uses larger samples than qualitative research (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The study questions, scope, data collecting and analytic resources determine the sample size. This study examines how maternal depression affects infant development. A large sample size may be needed to fully understand mother-child experiences. Time, funding, and

researchers' capacity must be considered while determining sample size. Ensuring diversity within the sample is crucial to capture a broad range of experiences and perspectives.

### Investigative Techniques

The investigative techniques employed for this needs assessment will primarily entail conducting in-depth interviews with mothers who have undergone postpartum depression. The interviews will be conducted in a semi-structured format, which will provide some degree of flexibility in the dialogue while also ensuring that essential themes pertaining to the impact of postpartum depression on child development are addressed. Furthermore, the researcher may engage in participant observations within real environments, such as observing maternal interactions with children within their households or at communal gatherings. The utilization of these methodologies will yield comprehensive and intricate insights into maternal encounters and the ramifications of postnatal depression on the growth and development of offspring.

### Instrumentation

The various tools and materials used for data gathering and analysis are referred to as instrumentation in qualitative research. An interview guide will be the main tool used in this inquiry to make it easier to conduct semi-structured interviews with the study's subjects. The interview protocol will comprise of open-ended inquiries that enable respondents to express their encounters with postpartum depression and its impact on their offspring's growth and development. Furthermore, the researchers will record observational notes throughout the interviews and focus groups to document nonverbal cues and contextual details. In order to ascertain the credibility and consistency of the data, a preliminary evaluation of the interview

guide will be executed with a limited cohort of mothers who have undergone postpartum depression.

The purpose of conducting a pilot test is to detect any potential shortcomings in the interview guide and facilitate the necessary modifications prior to the commencement of the actual data gathering process. In order to conduct data analysis, the recorded interviews and observational notes will be transcribed and subsequently subjected to coding. The process of coding will entail the classification of data into distinct themes and patterns that arise from the responses provided by the participants. Subsequent to encoding, the data shall be scrutinized to discern similarities and disparities in the impact of postpartum depression on child development.

**Data Collection**

The methodology for data collection will entail the acquisition of data from the established sample through the investigative techniques previously outlined. The audio recordings of the interviews and focus groups will be transcribed verbatim. The data will be recorded via field notes. The collected data will undergo meticulous scrutiny and examination to ascertain recurring trends and motifs pertaining to the impact of postpartum depression on the development of offspring. In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the collected data, the researchers will undertake a number of measures. Initially, the researchers will meticulously choose and provide training to the data collectors to guarantee the consistent application of investigative techniques. Subsequently, the researchers will perform member checking as a means of validating the accuracy of the data gathered, ensuring that it faithfully represents the viewpoints and experiences of the study's participants. Subsequently, the researchers will employ the method of triangulation to validate the results by comparing and examining the information obtained from diverse sources and methodologies.

## Ethical Considerations

Research participants must be protected. Ethics will protect participants' rights and privacy in the study. Informed consent is one of the most important ethical requirements. Participants will be informed of the study's goals, methods, pros and cons, and right to withdraw. This ensures that participants understand their consent and are not coerced. Ethical considerations include participant privacy and anonymity. Only study researchers will have access to identifying data. Participants' personal information will be protected against unauthorized access or disclosure. Researchers recognize that the study may harm participants. The affected parties will take measures to mitigate any detrimental effects of this problem. Participants will also have a variety of options and support services to help them understand their experiences. The investigation will also include culture. To ensure culturally relevant research, researchers will be sensitive to participants' beliefs and worldviews. This method promotes trust and teamwork. This research's ethical implications include informed consent, subject confidentiality and anonymity, reducing damage, and respecting cultural variations. This study will follow ethical norms and protect participants' rights.

## Bias

Selection bias occurs when the sample is not accurately representing the population, while memory bias happens when individuals have trouble recalling or reporting prior events. Researchers must pick a varied and representative sample and use suitable data-gathering procedures to avoid recall bias to reduce biases. It is crucial to avoid confirmation bias, which occurs when researchers prejudge the study's outcomes. To avoid bias from personal ideas or preconceptions, the researchers strive for impartiality and neutrality throughout the investigation.

To get accurate and reliable data, minimize bias as much as possible. Additionally, using several coders might improve the credibility of the outcomes while analyzing data.

**Assumptions**

Any research study must include assumptions since they serve as the foundation for the research design and data-gathering procedures (Nkwake, 2013). For this investigation, various presumptions might be taken into account.

- The respondents are going to provide truthful and precise data regarding their encounters with postpartum depression and the developmental progress of their offspring.
- The data collected will be recorded and interpreted with precision by the researchers.
- The sample of participants will be typical of all women who have gone through postpartum depression.
- The generalizability of the study's findings extends to other cohorts of mothers who have undergone postpartum depression.
- The selection of research design and investigative techniques will be congruent with the research inquiries and objectives of the investigation.

## References

Anokye, R., Acheampong, E., Budu-Ainooson, A., Obeng, E. I., & Akwasi, A. G. (2018). Prevalence of postpartum depression and interventions utilized for its management. Annals of general psychiatry, 17, 18. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12991-018-0188-0

Bell, K., Bloor, K., & Hewitt, C. (2019). How do undiagnosed symptoms of maternal psychological distress during the postnatal period affect child developmental outcomes? *Maternal and child health journal*, *23*, 1187-1195. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-019-02749-w

Closa-Monasterolo, R., Gispert-Llaurado, M., Canals, J., Luque, V., Zaragoza-Jordana, M., Koletzko, B., ... & Escribano Subias, J. (2017). The effect of postpartum depression and current mental health problems of the mother on child behavior at eight years. *Maternal and child health journal*, *21*, 1563-1572. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-017-2288-x

Cummings, E. M., & Davies, P. T. (1994). Maternal depression and child development. *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry*, *35*(1), 73-112. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Patrick-Davies-3/publication/227981186_Maternal_Depression_and_Child_Development_Annual_Research_Review/links/59d8d16caca272e60966c582/Maternal-Depression-and-Child-Development-Annual-Research-Review.pdf

Junge, C., Garthus-Niegel, S., Slinning, K., Polte, C., Simonsen, T. B., & Eberhard-Gran, M. (2017). The impact of perinatal depression on children's social-emotional development: a longitudinal study. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, *21*, 607-615. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-016-2146-2

Lucci, T. K., & Otta, E. (2013). Postpartum depression and child development in the first year of life. *Estudos de Psicologia (Campinas)*, *30*, 7-17. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-166X2013000100002

Netsi, E., Pearson, R. M., Murray, L., Cooper, P., Craske, M. G., & Stein, A. (2018). Association of persistent and severe postnatal depression with child outcomes. *JAMA psychiatry*, *75*(3), 247-253. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2017.4363

Nkwake, A. M., & Nkwake, A. M. (2013). Why are Assumptions Important?. *Working with Assumptions in International Development Program Evaluation: With a Foreword by Michael Bamberger*, 93-111.

Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and policy in mental health*, *42*(5), 533–544. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y

Sutton, J., & Austin, Z. (2015). Qualitative Research: Data Collection, Analysis, and Management. *The Canadian journal of hospital pharmacy*, *68*(3), 226–231. https://doi.org/10.4212/cjhp.v68i3.1456

Tenny, S., Brannan, J. M., & Brannan, G. D. (2022). Qualitative Study. In *StatPearls*. StatPearls Publishing.