

How does COVID-19 influence anxiety in pregnant women during the pandemic?

NUR302 Evidence for Nursing Practice

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The COVID-19 pandemic created room for non-medical professionals to increase their knowledge regarding language commonly used in the field. People would talk about putting on PPE or personal protective equipment. Others would go to the grocery store fully donned with gloves, gown and a mask. Another term that increased in usage and popularity was the term “vulnerable”. When speaking of people who would fall under that category, there are the elderly, children, and immunocompromised to name a few. However, for the purpose of this paper, we will focus specifically on pregnant women and the anxiety brought on by the pandemic.

A literature review was conducted using a qualitative and quantitative study. The qualitative study focuses on the experiences pregnant women lived through during COVID. The quantitative study focuses more on fear and anxiety as it relates to being pregnant during COVID.

Between both studies, a total of 36 participants were included in this research. The participants were already pregnant before the pandemic started and remained pregnant while the study was being conducted. The common themes identified included: disruption of the tranquility and regular routines of daily life, new COVID related challenges and changes, resilience and adapting to the new “normal”.

A few factors that heightened the pregnant woman’s anxiety was intense stress related to the unknown, fear of getting infected, and if I get sick, will it harm my baby. This thought takes into consideration that all pregnant women feel responsible for their own lives and the lives of their unborn, for some doubling the anxiety. Also, the visiting policy in the United States during COVID placed many women alone and constantly being cared for by people in full PPE. Ways to improve the study would evaluate the pregnant women of differing socioeconomic status during

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this COVID. It would be worth exploring if a pregnant woman who is an essential worker has the same level of anxiety as a pregnant woman whose husband that was just laid off, and he was the sole income in the house.

COVID-19 has left a lasting impression on women who were pregnant during this time. “The lived experiences of pregnant women during COVID-19 pandemic”, is a qualitative study conducted in 2021. The study was approved by The Ethics Committee of Sabzevar University of Medical Sciences. There was no physical harm, discomfort or with minimal psychological distress. To prevent psychological harm, participants were directed to a psychiatrist if needed. The benefits to participants outweigh any potential risks or actual discomfort they experienced. and the benefits of society outweigh the cost to participants, as the most expensive thing required of the participants was their time utilized to conduct the interview. There was no type of coercion or undue influence used to recruit participants and they did have the right to refuse or to withdraw without penalty. The participants were pregnant women who were registered in public health centers affiliated with the University. The women that were interviewed were given an informed consent form and will be required to respond with a text message stating I consent and we're also given the option to change their name and to respond to questions by typing the answers instead of writing them. A pseudonym assigned to the participants as well as typing responses instead of writing them were the only safeguard measures that I noted. I was unable to locate a certificate of confidentiality, but I am not sure if one should have been obtained as the study was just about women's experiences and their names would not be provided in the study. Vulnerable groups were involved in the research as the study was related to pregnant women during covid. Midwives attended each session as a facilitator

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presumably to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the participants. Women who were not registered with the University Health Sciences Center were excluded.

For this particular study, there was no mention of a review or ethics board nor any other ethics review committee that approved or monitored this study. Study participants were not subjected to any physical harm, discomfort or psychological distress and researchers did take appropriate steps to remove or prevent harm, specifically psychological harm. There were several assessments used during the interviewing process to ensure the mental health status of the participants was maintained throughout the interview process. Overall, I would say that the benefits to the participants outweigh any potential risk or actual discomfort they experience which was none. Also, the benefits to society outweigh the cost to participants for a few reasons. One, the cost of participants was minimal as time was really the only thing that was required of them. Secondly, the purpose of the studies was to determine how the covid-19 pandemic impacted the anxiety level of pregnant women. Throughout history, there has been a knowledge deficit related to women's health. This study allows the general population to gain better insight as to how pregnant women experienced the pandemic. In terms of recruiting participants for the study, there was no type of coercion or influence noted in an attempt to get the participants to take part in the study. There was very little information regarding participant's privacy, ability to refuse or withdraw from the study, as well as requiring informed consent. The article did not mention whether or not informed consent was obtained, and I believe a consent should have been in place. The studies included in this article took place in different nations, and the participants need to be fully aware of the risks, benefits, and purpose of this research. For example, the participants need to know if their identity will be kept confidential, which may be a determining

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factor in whether or not they choose to participate in the study. The population for this study is pregnant women who would be considered as vulnerable.

References

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