

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/374510535>

Spirituality and Psychological Wellbeing During Pregnancy and Childbirth: A Review of the Literature

Article in *Journal for ReAttach Therapy and Developmental Diversities* · August 2023

CITATIONS

0

READS

61

8 authors, including:



Manar Abu-abbas

Jerash University

7 PUBLICATIONS 20 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE



Yasmeen Abu Sumaqa

Zarqa University

13 PUBLICATIONS 102 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE



Sajeda Alhamory

Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan

5 PUBLICATIONS 0 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE



Mohammad Abudari

Fatima College of Health Sciences

9 PUBLICATIONS 38 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Spirituality and Psychological Wellbeing During Pregnancy and Childbirth: A Review of the Literature

¹Manar Abu-abbas, ²Ibrahim R. Ayasreh, ³Yasmeen Abu Sumaqa, ⁴Sajeda Alhamory, ⁵Tamador Raked Al Tarawneh, ⁶Mohammad Othman Abudari, ⁷Haitham Khatatbeh, ⁸Suad Sadi Jakalat,

Received: 19- June -2023
Revised: 02- July -2023
Accepted: 10- August -2023

¹Assistant professor, Faculty of Nursing, Jerash University, Jerash, Jordan. manar.abuabbas@jpu.edu.jo, orcid ID: 0009-0008-7855-1546

²Assistant professor, Faculty of Nursing, Jerash University, Jerash, Jordan. ibrahim.ayasrah@jpu.edu.jo

³Assistant professor, Faculty of Nursing, Zarqa University, Zarqa , Jordan. yabusumaqa@zu.edu.jo, orcid ID: 0000-0003-2367-3569

⁴Assistant professor, Faculty of Nursing, Al-Zaytoonah University, Amman, Jordan.

⁵Clinical Instructor, Faculty of Nursing, University of Mutah , Alkarak , Jordan.

⁶Assistant professor, Arab Emirates, Fatima College of Health Science, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates. M-abudari@yahoo.com

⁷Assistant professor, Faculty of Nursing, Jerash University, Jerash, Jordan. Haitham.Khatatbeh@jpu.edu.jo

⁸Faculty of Nursing, Al-Balqa Applied University, Amman, Jordan.

Abstract

Globally, there is a growing interest in the spiritual care; neglecting spirituality during health care provision may negatively affect psychological, emotional and physical well-beings. Specifically, providing spiritual care during pregnancy and childbirth affects health outcomes and decreases the risk for complications. Current literature review explains the main spiritual attributes in maternal psychological health. In addition, the review help healthcare providers decide upon suitable strategies to overcome the negative consequences of the psychological difficulties during pregnancy and childbirth.

Keywords: Psychological wellbeing, Spirituality, Pregnancy, Childbirth.

Introduction

Spirituality is a main domain need to be in consideration, it is more than an aesthetic part of human`s life, it is considered a central part of human`s wellbeing and holistic care (Goyal et al., 2019; Hemmati et al., 2019; Hodapp and Zwingmann, 2019; Mertha, 2020). Spirituality effect is obvious on several aspects of health; however, highlighting spirituality effect during pregnancy is necessary. Recent literature witnessed a growing interest in the spirituality during pregnancy and childbirth (Abu-abbas, Khalaf and Abu summaqa, 2022; Abu-abbas, Khalaf and Al-Shraydeh; 2022).

Several studies found spirituality a critical source for coping with illnesses, an integral part of quality of life and a source of better mental wellbeing (Burlacu et al., 2019; Hemmati et al., 2019; Piccinini et al., 2021; Rathakrishnan et al., 2022). In addition, spirituality was considered a central factor in palliative care during chronic and terminal diseases, and was found an effective factor resulted in better prognosis and positive outcomes (Dinapoli et al., 2022; Goyal et al., 2019; Mertha, 2020; Sharif and Ong, 2019; Ozveren and Kirca, 2019).

Specifically, the importance of spirituality among childbearing women is valued and it was considered an important component of perinatal health (Callister and Khalaf, 2010; Rathakrishnan et al., 2022; WHO, 2018). Several complications such as caesarian section, the use of intrapartum analgesia and assistive procedures and the incidence of post-partum depression could be minimized when providing spiritual support (Abdollahpour and khosravi; 2018; OBoyle et al., 2017).

Recently, there is a global trend toward the use of spirituality as a complementary non-medical and alternative management factor to maintain psychological wellbeing perinatally (Chehrazi et al., 2021; Haghighat et al., 2018; Kamali et al., 2018; Nourimand et al., 2020). Yet there is still little research focusing on spirituality and its effect on pregnancy, and little is known about the indicators that maintain maternal mental wellbeing (Field, 2017).

Spirituality during pregnancy and childbirth

Pregnancy and childbirth are critical phases that childbearing women encounter. Considering the multiple physical and psychological changes of pregnancy, severe health problems could occur if this period is not managed properly (WHO, 2018). Antenatal care is a holistic approach of care; including the physical, psychological, social and spiritual care (Australian government, Department of health, 2019; Mitchell, 2014; OBoyle et al., 2017; WHO, 2018).

Specifically, spiritual midwifery is an overarching theme that emerged from an international cooperative inquiry and reflected the existential significance and meaningfulness of childbirth (Crowther et al., 2020). Wojujutari (2018) discussed the issue of ritualizing pregnancy and childbirth as a spiritual experience in secular societies including the five dimensions of spirituality; moral, majestic, mysterious, questions of meaning and unifying with the other or something outside of self. OBoyle et al. (2017) found that providing spiritual support during childbirth decreases caesarian section incidence and the use of intrapartum analgesia and prevents several complications and assistive procedures.

During Covid-19 pandemic, Nodoushan et al. (2020) investigated spiritual health among 560 pregnant women; study findings revealed that the majority of pregnant women had high levels of stress and low levels of spiritual and psychological well-beings, which leads to an increase in the risk of preterm delivery and unhealthy births. Collectively, most of the evidences showed the inverse correlation between spirituality and stress during pregnancy, which adds to the body of knowledge spirituality importance in maternal stress management.

Specifically in a multidimensional study in Brazil, Piccinini et al. (2021) conducted 160 pregnant women to investigate the effect of religious and spiritual beliefs on several indicators; it was found that negative religious and spiritual coping were associated with higher levels of depressive, anxious and stress symptoms and worse physical and psychological quality of life. On the other hand, Athan et al. (2015) studied spiritual beliefs of mothers who had distressing pregnancies. Authors found that women who held attributions of God as loving, knowable and residing within the self, witnessed lower levels of anxiety, depression and perceived stress and higher levels of social support, these meanings represented in spirituality as a more general concept opposing considering God as a supreme being who was judging (Athan et al., 2015).

Spiritual intelligence is another concept associated with spirituality; Wojujutari et al. (2018) studied it in Nigeria by collecting data from 348 pregnant women using the spiritual intelligence self-report inventory that include human capacity to ask questions about the ultimate meaning in life. Results of the study showed the significant moderation role of the spiritual intelligence on the relationship between psychological well-being and maternal psychosocial adjustment (Wojujutari et al., 2018). Moreover, another study in Iran conducted pregnant women using the spiritual well-being and DASS (Depression, Anxiety, Stress) questionnaires, Nourimand et al. (2020) considered spirituality an integral part of the quality of life and a central factor during pregnancy for mental health (Nourimand et al., 2020). The study used a general measurement instrument regarding anxiety rather than a specific prenatal anxiety scale.

Using multi-stage sampling technique among 200 pregnant women, the relationship between maternal-fetal attachment and spiritual well-being showed a positive correlation (Zahrani et al., 2020). Moreover, Dokuhaki and Ghodrati (2019) conducted a unique study among primiparous women and their infants; maternal religious attitudes affect fetal mental health by using specific newborns mental health indicators.

Spirituality was considered as one of the associated factors which decreases the incidence of postpartum depression (Abdollahpour and khosravi; 2018; Clements et al., 2016; Cheadle and Schetter, 2018). Specifically, Cheadle and Schetter (2018) conducted 2399 women who had symptoms of post-partum depression to participate in interviews at three time points over 15 months. Cheadle and Schetter (2018) found that higher levels of spirituality lead to better maternal mental health and emotional wellbeing after childbirth; psychosocial resources

of mastery, self-esteem, and optimism were the mechanisms linking religiousness and spirituality with the symptoms of postpartum depression (Cheadle and Schetter, 2018). Consistently, Clements et al (2016), in another similar study, found that social support and religious commitment predict depressive symptoms during pregnancy and after childbirth; Clements et al. (2016) measured social support using Prenatal Psychosocial Profile while religious commitment was measured using Religious Surrender and Attendance Scale. Consequently, it is strongly evident the effect of spirituality on maternal mental wellbeing during pregnancy and in the postpartum period; studies revealed the significant association between spirituality and several variables related to psychological wellbeing by using various measurement methods.

Psychological wellbeing during pregnancy and childbirth

Stress during pregnancy affects women's physical and psychological wellbeing, therefore, stress management strategies is essential to promote maternal health, one of the protective and adaptive coping strategies is spirituality which provides pregnant women with the ability to mitigate stress and its consequences and adapt well during difficulties (Jenna et al., 2021). In their structural model, Dolatian et al. (2017) and his colleagues, found that there was a significant effect for spirituality and psychological well-being in reducing pregnancy-specific stress. Additionally, Dilgony et al. (2016) studied same correlation previously in 2016 in Iran among 450 pregnant women and they confirmed same results. Furthermore, Foruzandeh et al. (2019) found the predictive role of spiritual well-being for the pregnancy-specific stress. Contradictory, in a cross sectional study which was done in the USA among Hispanic pregnant and postpartum women, it was found that religiousness and spirituality was associated with increased perceived stress (Mann et al., 2010).

Spirituality and psychological wellbeing is highly correlated; according to a qualitative study in Iran, women described their experiences of pain during childbirth as a time for psycho-spiritual transcendence reflecting the need for engaging spirituality in maternity care (Taghizdeha et al., 2017). In addition, Mutmainnah and Afiyanti (2019) investigated the experience of spirituality among Muslim pregnant women in Indonesia. The main themes of the study were; submission to God makes it easier to overcome pregnancy and childbirth, spiritual stories enhances confidence and motivation, remembrance of God is a way of self-control and overcoming anxiety and labor pain and, finally, faith raises self-confidence during labor and help to overcome the challenge of pregnancy and childbirth (Mutmainnah and Afiyanti, 2019). Study themes reflect the strong power that women have when they increase their level of spirituality.

On the other hand, life satisfaction is a health related concept that was studied with spiritual wellbeing by Niaghiha et al. (2019), cluster-sampling technique was used to select 160 pregnant women from the health care centers in Iran. Scales of: Diener Life Satisfaction, Vaux Social Protection and Dehshiri Spiritual Well-being were used for data collection, and the study results showed the positive strong correlations between life satisfaction, social support, and spiritual well-being, taking into account the mediating role of social support (Niaghiha et al., 2019).

Researchers investigated spirituality during pregnancy using randomized clinical trials as a strong research method to explore its effect on other variables. Haghight et al. (2018) found a significant effect of spiritual counseling on stress and anxiety among 112 pregnant women. Kamali et al. (2018) found a significant effect of spiritual care education on postpartum stress disorder among 72 women with preeclampsia. Moradi et al. (2022) found that the integration of spirituality into prenatal care using group counseling which include spiritual contents, improve sleep quality and reduce insomnia severity during pregnancy.

Adanikin et al. (2014) found that 75.8% of the pregnant women reported the need for spiritual integration during pregnancy and childbirth. Even though, Crowther and Hall (2015) in their investigation found that the introduction of spiritual care guidelines into pregnancy and childbirth health care practice do not address spiritual meaningful significance of childbirth. Collectively, there is an evidence-based recommendation, indicating the importance of providing spiritual care during antenatal care to maintain maternal psychological wellbeing (Chehrazi et al., 2021; Foruzandeh et al., 2019; Nourimand et al., 2020). Health care professionals are responsible to engage spirituality, provide consultation about its benefits and to implement effective spiritual strategies and educational training for pregnant women at the clinical settings (Chehrazi et al., 2021; Nourimand et al., 2020).

References

- [1] Abdollahpour and khosravi (2018). Relationship between Spiritual Intelligence with Happiness and Fear of Childbirth in Iranian Pregnant Women. *Iran Journal Nursing Midwifery Research*; 23(1): 45–50. doi: 10.4103/ijnmr.IJNMR_39_16.
- [2] Abu-abbas, Khalaf and Abu-Summaqa (2022). Psychological Aspects of Health during Pregnancy: a Comparative Critical Review, Before, During and After Covid-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(9), 1984-1994
- [3] Abu-abbas, Khalaf and Al-Shraideh (2022). The Effect of Spiritual Interventions on the psychological aspects, stress and quality of life during pregnancy: a Systematic Review of Randomized Clinical Trials. *Turkish Journal of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation*; 32(3), 2651-4451
- [4] Adanikin, Onwudiegwu and Akintayo (2014). Reshaping maternal services in Nigeria: any need for spiritual care?. *Pregnancy and Childbirth*; 14:196 <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2393/14/196>
- [5] Athan, A., Chung, S. and Sawyer Cohen, J. (2015). Spiritual beliefs of mothers with potentially distressing pregnancies. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, 2(3), 216–232. <https://doi.org/10.1037/scp0000069>
- [6] Australian government, Department of health (2019). Clinical practice guidelines; Pregnancy Care. Canberra
- [7] Burlacu, Artene, Nistor, Buju, Jugrin, Mavrichi and Covic (2019). Religiosity, spirituality and quality of life of dialysis patients: a systematic review. *International Urology and Nephrology*; 51(5):839–850 doi: 10.1007/s11255-019-02129-x.Caton (2021). The impact of spirituality, social support, and self-esteem on the resilience of Haitian nurses: Implications for nursing education. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*; 35, 206-212. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnu.2020.08.006>
- [8] Callister, L. C. and Khalaf, I. (2010). Spirituality in childbearing women. *The Journal of perinatal education*, 19(2), 16-24 doi: 10.1624/105812410X495514
- [9] Cheadle & Schetter (2018). Mastery, self-esteem, and optimism mediate the link between religiousness and spirituality and postpartum depression. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 41:711–721 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10865-018-9941-8>
- [10] Chehrizi, Faramarzi, Abdollahi, Esfandiari and Shafie (2021). Health promotion behaviours of pregnant women and spiritual well-being: Mediatory role of pregnancy stress, anxiety and coping ways. *Nursing open*; 8 (6), 3558-3565
- [11] Clements , Fletcher, Childress, Montgomery and Bailey (2016). Social support, religious commitment, and depressive symptoms in pregnant and postpartum women. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*; 34 (3), 247–259 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02646838.2016.1152626>
- [12] Crowther, Stephen &Hall (2020) Association of psychosocial–spiritual experiences around childbirth and subsequent perinatal mental health outcomes: an integrated review, *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, 38:1, 60-85, DOI: 10.1080/02646838.2019.1616680
- [13] Dilgony, Dolatian, Shams, Zayeri and Mahmoodi (2016). Correlation of spirituality and psychological well-being with pregnancy-specific stress. *Journal of Reaserch on Religion & Health*; 2(4), 35- 43
- [14] Dinapoli et al. (2022). Resilience, spirituality and survival outcome in glioblastoma patients after radiotherapy. *Radiotherapy and oncology*; 170 (1), 203 [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-8140\(22\)02796-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-8140(22)02796-7)
- [15] Dokuhaki and Ghodrati (2019). Investigation of Relationship Between Maternal Religious Attitude and Mental Health of Infant at Birth. *Women Health Bull*, 6(3):e93292. doi: 10.5812/whb.93292
- [16] Dolatian, Mahmoodi, Dilgony, Shams and Zaeri (2017). The Structural Model of Spirituality and Psychological Well-Being for Pregnancy-Specific Stress. *Journal of Religion and Health*; 56:2267–2275 DOI 10.1007/s10943-017-0395-z
- [17] Field (2017). Prenatal anxiety effects: A review. *Infant Behavior and Development*. 49, 120-128. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.infbeh.2017.08.008>
- [18] Foruzandeh, Foruzandeh, Darakhshandeh, Deris, Jalaly, Jaafary and Delaram (2019). The Role of Spiritual Well-being in Predicting Pregnancy-Specific Stress. *Journal of Health and Care*; 20 (4), 292-300 DOI: 10.29252/jhc.20.4.292
- [19] Goyal, Lp, Salsman and Avis. (2019). Spirituality and physical health status: a longitudinal examination of reciprocal effects in breast cancer survivors. *Supportive Care in Cancer*, 27(6):2229–2235 doi: 10.1007/s00520-018-4494-5.

- [20] Haghghat et al. (2018). The Effect of Spiritual Counseling on Stress and Anxiety in Pregnancy: A Randomized Controlled Clinical Trial. *Iran Red Crescent Medical Journal*, 20(4). doi: 10.5812/ircmj.64094
- [21] Hemmati et al. (2019). Religion, Spirituality and Risk of Coronary Heart Disease: A Matched Case–Control Study and Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 58(4):1203–1216 doi: 10.1007/s10943-018-0722-z.
- [22] Hodapp and Zwingmann (2019). Religiosity/Spirituality and Mental Health: A Meta-analysis of Studies from the German-Speaking Area. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 58(6), 1970–1998 doi: 10.1007/s10943-019-00759-0.
- [23] Kamali Z, Tafazoli M, Ebrahimi M, Hosseini M, Saki A, Fayyazi-Bordbar et al. (2018). Effect of spiritual care education on postpartum stress disorder in women with preeclampsia. *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*; 7 (73). DOI: 10.4103/jehp.jehp_170_17
- [24] Kamali Z, Tafazoli M, Ebrahimi M, Hosseini M, Saki A, Fayyazi-Bordbar et al. (2018). Effect of spiritual care education on postpartum stress disorder in women with preeclampsia. *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*; 7 (73). DOI: 10.4103/jehp.jehp_170_17
- [25] Mann, McKeown, Bacon, Vesselinov and Bush (2008). Religiosity, spirituality and antenatal anxiety in Southern U.S. women. *Archives of Womens` Mental Health*; 11: 19–26 DOI 10.1007/s00737-008-0218-z
- [26] Mertha, Palmer Kelly, Hyer, Mehta, Agne, Deans, Fischer and Pawlik (2020). Patient perceptions about the role of religion and spirituality during cancer care. *Journal of religion and health*; 59 (4), 1933-194
- [27] Mitchell (2014). Women’s use of complementary and alternative medicine in pregnancy: A search for holistic wellbeing. *Women and Birth*; 27: 276–280 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.wombi.2014.06.011>
- [28] Moradi, Maleki and Zenoozian (2022). The Efficacy of Integrating Spirituality into Prenatal Care on Pregnant Women’s Sleep: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *BioMedical Research International*, 4295761, <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/4295761>
- [29] Mutmainnah and Afiyanti (2019). The experiences of spirituality during pregnancy and child birth in Indonesian muslim women. *The Second International Nursing Scholar Congress*; 29(2), 495-499 DOI: 10.1016/j.enfcli.2019.04.074
- [30] Niaghiha, Baglooei, Mafi and Taherpour (2019). Spiritual well-being and life satisfaction in pregnant women: The mediating role of social support. *Social and Health Behaviors*; 2, 83-88. DOI: 10.4103/SHB.SHB Taghizdeha, Ebadib, Dehghanic, Gharachehd and Yadollahi (2017). A time for psycho-spiritual transcendence: The experiences of Iranian women of pain during childbirth. *Women and Birth*; 491-496 http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.wombi.2017.04.010_11_19
- [31] Nourimand et al. (2020). Studying the Correlation between Spiritual Well-Being and Religious Attitude with Mental Health and Quality of Life in Pregnant Women. *Public journal of medical health*, 14(1),681-684
- [32] Oboyle, Brady and Timmins (2017). Making space for spirituality in childbirth. *Journal of clinical nursing*, 2823-2825, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.13795>
- [33] Ozveren and Kirca (2019). Influence of Palliative Care Training on Last-Year Nursing Department Students’ Perception on Regarding Spirituality and Spiritual Care: A Single-Group Pretest–Posttest Intervention Study. *Journal of Religion and Health*; 58(3):860-869. doi: 10.1007/s10943-018-0701-4.
- [34] Piccinini, Almeida, Ezequiel, Fajardo, Lucchetti and Lucchetti (2021). Religiosity/Spirituality and Mental Health and Quality of Life of Early Pregnant Women. *Journal of Religion and Health*; 60, 1908–1923 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-020-01124-2> doi: 10.1007/s10943-019-00907-6.
- [35] Rathakrishnan B, Singh S.B, Yahaya A, Kamaluddin M.R and Aziz S.A (2022). The Relationship Among Spirituality, Fear, and Mental Health on COVID-19 Among Adults: An Exploratory Research. *Frontiers in Psychology* 12:815332. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.815332
- [36] Sharif and Ong (2019). Education Moderates the Relationship Between Spirituality with Quality of Life and Stress Among Malay Muslim Women with Breast Cancer. *Journal of religious health*; 58, 1060-1071 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-018-0587-1>
- [37] WHO (2018). WHO recommendations on antenatal care for a positive pregnancy experience. World Health Organization, 20 Avenue Appia, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland
- [38] Wojujutari, Alabi, Emmanuel and Olugbenga (2018). Spiritual Intelligence and Mindfulness as Moderators of Relationship between Psychological Well-Being and Psychosocial Adjustment of Pregnant Women.

Journal of Women's Health Care; 7(3) DOI: 10.4172/2167-0420.1000435

- [39] Zahrani, Rafiei, Hajian, Majd and Izadi (2020). The Correlation between Spiritual Health and Maternal-Fetal Attachment Behaviors in Pregnant Women Referring to the Health Centers in Qazvin, Iran. International journal of community based nursing and midwifery ;8(1), 84-91. doi: 10.30476/IJCBNM.2019.81668.0.