

Pregnancy in Focus: A Multi-Dimensional Review of Maternal Health

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ABSTRACT

Pregnancy is a very significant phase in the life of a woman. The fruitful result reaps in her life, when she becomes pregnant after years of investment in the menstrual cycle. The phase of pregnancy ignites various fears, curiosities and changes her role into a mother, which has a lifelong relationship with the one developing in her womb. This requires dedicated action from an expectant mother from the day of awareness about pregnancy to time beyond as the intimate bond with mother exists because of the united consciousness shared in her womb. It is very important to prepare yourself for the transformation from womanhood to motherhood. The overall health becomes the main priority for enriching transformation and pure devotion towards the developing life in the womb. The current research takes into consideration various nuances that influence the phase of pregnancy. Pregnancy is the gift to women and the phase might have certain similarities but the experiential journey of one would be different from another one to understand the phase from physical, psychological, emotional, social spiritual dimensions a necessity during pregnancy. The findings of the study help in understanding the health of pregnant women and the necessity to follow self-care practices.

Keywords: Health, Mental, Spirituality, Pregnancy, Women

Pregnancy is a time for women to embrace the beauty of impending motherhood. She carries a life that will have a social identity but that begins through her, inside of her, and with her. Since the intimate bond with the mother exists because of the shared consciousness present in her womb, this requires dedicated action from the expectant mother from the day of awareness about pregnancy to time beyond. Citta Parikrama, or mental preparation, is crucial for preparing oneself for the transition from womanhood to motherhood. For an enriching transformation and sincere devotion to the developing life in the womb, general health becomes the top priority. The review takes into account a number of details that affect the stage of pregnancy.

The foundation of a healthy pregnancy is self-regulatory behaviours and an attitude of self-constructiveness. Regulating breath, calming the nervous system, valuing positive thoughts, learning from others' experiences, awareness of wakefulness, and dream experiences can all be significant methods for preparing the mind for the worthwhile phase, and its outcome can be cherished in the woman's lifelong journey (Mahadevan, 2019). The way a mother takes

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care of herself while she is pregnant can affect the experiences a child has throughout their life. As the mother cannot ever hide her emotions and feelings from the developing fetus or the life she is nurturing within herself, pregnancy is the time to communicate and share the most primal feelings with one another. Interventions based on mindfulness can improve overall well-being and ease pregnancy's challenges, according to Dhillon et. al. (2017). For better understanding of the physical, emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual health journey of an expectant mother, significant themes have been compiled through the review. The mother is nurtured in a significant way by the spiritual health domain, which empowers her to cherish the pregnancy.

The aim of this research is to explore the health of women during pregnancy. With a focus on physical, mental and spiritual health this paper attempts to understand the issues faced by the women during pregnancy. Almost every woman goes through the rollercoaster of changes which are not physiological but psychological as well. And this is what this paper aims at, to cover the phases of pregnancy with a focus on the overall health of women during pregnancy.

Maternal-fetal Attachment and Pregnancy

The time a human spends gestating from conception to delivery is called the pregnancy. It is a life-changing period that alters a woman's life trajectory forever, and she begins to focus on the present by adjusting to the change to become ready to become a mother (Modh et. al., 2011). It has three main stages: foetal, embryonic, and germinal. Each stage has its own requirements of the expectant mother, such as the germinal stage, which starts with conception, continues through fertilisation and zygote creation, and finishes with embryo implantation. She is not having her monthly period at this time, which proves that her position is unanticipated. When it is planned, a couple is eager to learn that conception actually occurred. Later, during the embryonic stage, which lasts from week 2 to week 8 of pregnancy, embryonic organs and functions such as the heartbeat, the start of the lungs, and the limbs begin to grow. Preliminary fingers and toes, eyes, eyelids, a nose, mouth, and external ears are all present by the end of this stage, along with the basic components of the nervous system, which can be partially seen through the screening. This stage helps the expectant mother feel more connected to her embryo because she can do so through ultrasound reports. The final stage is the fetal stage, which lasts from week 8 until birth and includes the child's total development (Shaffer & Kipp, 2013).

Pregnancy is neither an illness nor a normal physical state for a woman, it has special significance in life. based on the high calibre work of Lou and their colleagues (2017). The possibility of miscarriage in the first trimester of pregnancy fosters secrecy, and the ultimate happy outcome ties her with the fetus as a milestone in the pregnancy journey, according to a 2017 study that thematically analysed data from women in the first trimester of the Denmark region. Researchers stressed the significance of investing time in information gathering and that, despite some obstacles, a woman can connect with her fetus through feelings of love and contentment by paying attention to her body.

Atashi et.al. (2018) conducted a study on the maternal-fetal emotional bond that discovered connections and dependencies that support both parties' holistic development. They emphasised the importance of developing it and the healthcare system for healthy growth. Prenatal attachment encourages families to follow healthy habits and makes fathers and mothers more prepared to take on the role of parents (Brandon et.al., 2009). According to the research of Göbel et al. (2018), 'the mother may experience anxiety at certain points

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throughout the connection whenever a challenge or physical impact occurs because she begins to place more emphasis on her fetal growth at that point'. It follows that throughout the stage that can lessen the detrimental effects on mental health, solid attachment is essential.

Bjelica and colleagues (2018) conducted a psychological study on the issue of pregnancy. The research underlined the fact that, despite the phase's complexity in a woman's life, it also affects her psychological and social functioning in addition to its physiological effects. The transition from a woman to a mother causes psychological ambivalence in terms of physical appearance, femininity, affections, and sexuality. This increases the likelihood of vulnerability and causes weariness, emotional problems, and worry. Not only can women who have challenging pregnancies have psychological dysfunction and changes, but also women who have typical pregnancies. The mother's psychological condition during pregnancy can have an impact on how the baby develops. It is crucial to prevent the phase's harmful effects with professional psychotherapy help, family support, emotional association with a partner, and a sense of belonging with empathy in the expecting mother's social environment (Bjelica & Stanulovic, 2004)

According to the concept analysis by Suryaningsih et. al. (2020), the relevance of attachment is present because it fosters the mother's sense of joy, brings happiness from paying close attention to physical development and checking the foetal development on a regular basis, and allows for reciprocal interaction with the baby while taking into account physical cues and signals. It strengthens a mother's instincts for protecting her infant. With all of that, it aids in the development of the interpersonal bond through emotional ties and expression through the mother's controlling behaviours.

Physical Condition during Pregnancy

Women's pregnancy-related natural physical and hormonal changes are beneficial for both the mother and the child over the long term. The adjustments, discomfort, and rules prepare her for motherhood and guarantee her readiness for a sense of obligation to the womb. Positive counselling can be used to provide prenatal care for pregnant women because vomiting and nausea have a significant negative impact on a woman's physical health and cause weakening in the body. Positive lifestyle habits are less prevalent before pregnancy, but this increases throughout the early stages of pregnancy due to the health effects that the period of time brings, according to cross-sectional research conducted in south Ireland by O'Keeffe et al. (2016). It is a truth that many women do not follow the recommendations adequately, which has an effect on both the woman and the fetus.

The importance of a healthy identity in lowering the physical stress caused by pregnancy cannot be overstated. Morris et. al. (2020) supported changing one's health identity in order to improve one's behaviour in a continuous manner. O'Keeffe and colleagues (2016) through a study in Ireland showed the significance of healthy lifestyle modifications during pregnancy. By reducing the likelihood of physical distress by accepting the changes and demands of the body, regular exercise, attending to nutritional needs, eating sensibly, and maintaining emotional stability can all have a positive impact on one's physical well-being. Physical activity is crucial for addressing the physical health issues that arise during pregnancy, according to Bahadoran and Mohamadirizi (2015). It is the role of the midwives and the mother's immediate caretakers to encourage healthy routines and activities for the mother during this critical period for her general health. Regular physical activity, such as waking and some yoga asanas, can reduce the likelihood of a caesarean section by raising

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the likelihood of a normal delivery. Corrigan et. al., (2020) stated that the features and effectiveness of pregnant yoga intervention for expectant mothers were carefully examined and meta-analyzed. The review provided insightful details on the benefits and characteristics of yoga practices, including how they enhance vaginal delivery rates and cut labour time in half.

Women's Mental Health During Pregnancy

Prevalence of hypertensive diseases occurs throughout pregnancy and is a risk factor for preterm birth and fetal growth in general. Pregnant women who have high blood pressure have significant changes in their physical and mental health (Falcao et. al, 2016). According to a review by (Kazemi et.al., 2017) based on the interviews analysis, negative psychological states, irritability, sleep disorders, body image issues, aspects related to changes in sexual intercourse, and anxiety related to physical effects have an impact on the psychological health of women during gestation and affect the moods, which in turn lowers her wellbeing.

Nodoushan et al. (2020) have studied the phase's therapeutic consequences and psychological effects. According to studies by everyone, during the COVID-19 pandemic, pregnant women's mental health could deteriorate and stress levels could rise, which could raise the risk of premature birth and poor birth. According to research by Farrell et al. (2020), anxiety and depression are more common in pregnant women now than they were before the epidemic. For both mother and child to develop more optimally during the pregnancy, the mother's psychological health is crucial. The pandemic has put the mental health of both mother and child at danger owing to mental tiredness, thus interventions that can be used include online psychological testing, instructional videos broadcasts on mental health through radio, and television.

Couples who get pregnant have to deal with changes and obligations that affect both parents, not just the woman. According to Jesse and Swanson's (2007) research, a couple's connection is a significant part of the larger social support construct and acts as a buffer against depression during pregnancy. As a result, the care and support of the family promote the health of the expectant mother because support networks are crucial for the control of psychological wellness. Additionally, the sense of obligation and connection to the developing child in her womb is emphasised by the faith development through cultural values and religious realms.

The phase and the subject of pregnancy had been studied, for example by the cross-sectional study by Durmus et al. Al (2022) in Turkey on 336 pregnant women discovered that their spiritual well-being was above the moderate range, their depression was at a mild level, and their dread of COVID-19 was at a moderate level. It was shown that there was a strong negative association between pregnant women's spiritual wellbeing and their anxiety and depressive symptoms. Nodushan et al. (2020), during the COVID-19 pandemic, pregnant women's mental health could deteriorate and stress levels could rise, which could raise the risk of premature birth and unsafe birth. When compared to the pre-pandemic environment, Farrell et al. (2020) found that anxiety and depression were more common in pregnant women during the pandemic.

Nasution & Darmawati (2020) emphasised the value of physical activity in a pregnant woman's psychological well-being. According to the systematic review, it was discovered that taking care of one's body improves one's sense of self and that maintaining psycho

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emotional stability helps a person's stress levels, anxiety levels, and bad moods. By lowering prenatal distress, pregnant activities, gentle aerobics, and yoga performed under qualified supervision can make pregnancy enjoyable. This has been thoroughly investigated by Polán et al. (2021) for the promotion of health, and supervised prenatal activities can be a valuable source of lowering prenatal anxiety and associated symptoms. According to Pan et al. (2019), mindfulness programmes can have a favourable impact on promoting health throughout pregnancy and the postpartum period.

Quality of Life during Pregnancy

The research (Kazami et. al., 2022) used the WHOQOL-26 questionnaire including physical, psychological, social, and environmental elements to assess people's quality of life. According to reports, women who have unplanned pregnancies report lower quality of life than those who have planned pregnancies. In addition, the mother's gestational age has an impact on the phase's quality of life. According to research by Bahadoran and Mohamadiri (2015), pregnant women should engage in regular physical activity, even if it is unplanned, because it preserves their welfare, gives their cells energy, and speeds up their metabolism. This plays a significant role in raising her quality of life.

Quality of life is impacted during this time because, according to research by Kazemi and colleagues (2017), pregnancy can have unfavourable consequences on a variety of women's lives and lower life quality. It is crucial in prenatal care that in addition to addressing the physical aspects of maternal health, the quality of life is taken into consideration because it may be impacted by a variety of circumstances. Because there is readiness, pregnancy planning can have an impact on the expectant mother's quality of life. Negative Religious/Spiritual coping was linked to higher levels of melancholy, anxious, and stress symptoms as well as worse physical and psychological QOL, according to research conducted among Brazilian women in their early pregnancies et al in 2021. It is crucial to pay close attention to the pregnant woman's quality of life so that her welfare and journey during the phase might be easy by avoiding the variables affecting her general state (Mazuchova & Kelcikova, 2017). Physical activity can significantly contribute to the control of health during the second and third trimesters as well (Krzepota et. al., 2018).

Spirituality and Pregnancy

According to Jesse & Swanson (2007) work, guidance and support, protection, blessing, or reward, communication with God, strength and confidence, assistance with challenging moral decisions, and a generalised positive effect were the six themes that emerged from the content analysis of their data on the meaning of faith or spirituality in pregnancy. This study emphasises that a pregnant woman's spiritual health is frequently holistic and includes faith development through religious affiliation, familial contact, and receiving blessings. The importance of religion and a higher power to pregnant women. The utilisation of religious rituals and beliefs as effective coping mechanisms to heighten the meaning of life and accept transformation, as studied by Callister & Khalaf (2010) childbirth as a time to grow closer to God.

According to correlational research by Zahrani et al. (2020), more maternal-fetal attachment behaviours were linked to higher spiritual health. This highlighted the significance of bolstering spirituality when pregnant as a useful tactic for enhancing attachment behaviours. The scale was created by Dhar et. al. (2011) based on their understanding that spirituality and faith in a higher power can have a significant impact on how one develops a relationship with oneself, improving one's sense of self-worth, confidence, and capacity to respond

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positively to both internal and external challenges. It may be a useful strategy for lowering the harmful effects of preterm birth and fetal growth inside the uterus. Similar to this, Abdollahpour & Khosravi (2017) proposed that spiritual intelligence is a crucial area for managing a pregnant mother's mental status because it aids in boosting happiness and lowering delivery anxiety. This may also help to increase the likelihood of vaginal births as opposed to caesarean sections.

Garbha Sanskar is an essential component of a child's growth for lifelong advancement, according to Baldha (2019). Specific samskaras can be instilled by the expectant mother through her relationship with her foetus through storytelling, dialogue, and experience. The quality of the seed, the amount of energy, the environment, and the stage of pregnancy are important variables that affect embryonic growth. It is the mother's responsibility to govern her overall behaviour in order to foster the link within. In mythology, this interconnectedness is described by Abhimanyu's understanding of the chakravyuha, which he discovered when his mother was paying attention to her father explain it. Which denotes that mother and child's consciousness are connected to one another and joined for improved nutrient absorption.

Wojujutari et al. (2018) were able to understand the connection between pregnant women's psychological health and psychosocial adjustment using mindfulness and spiritual intelligence as moderators. Researchers used a cross-sectional survey design on pregnant women in the Ondo state and discovered that sudden changes in environment and social isolation, which can be brought on by extrinsic factors, are related to sudden mood swings, anger, and anxiety. By helping people to achieve their fundamental requirements, spend time with their partners, pursue interests and activities thoughtfully tied to everyday living and overall wellness, positive psychological wellbeing can improve psychosocial adjustment. The capacity to comprehend the purpose of one's own existence in order to achieve a state of consciousness and enhance performance is known as spiritual intelligence. Spending time practising mindfulness can increase spiritual intelligence, which can help general welfare and adjustment with phase adaption.

Monfaredkashki et. al., (2020) looked at how spiritual counselling affected the lives of women who were expecting their first child. Results indicated that spiritual counselling can influence prenatal education positively and effectively through appropriate psychological support. According to Csala et. al., (2021) conducted a systematic evaluation of empirical studies about the relationship between yoga and spirituality. Which concluded that both are favourably associated with one another, yoga can also impact spiritual conduct among them. With faith, hope, compassion, and inner contentment, this association fosters spiritual ambitions, the pursuit of insight or wisdom, a worldview, and a feeling of purpose. Regular practice might inspire someone to take constructive action. Utilizing these techniques can be crucial for the expectant mother in developing her inner strength and spiritually preparing herself for both herself and the unborn child. Additionally, social support can enhance pregnant women's spiritual wellness and life satisfaction, according to a cross-sectional study by Nagima et al. (2019). If there is companionship while the pregnant ladies practice yoga, she may be more inspired and committed to the duties necessary to preserve her health.

The existing literature suggests that a woman goes through a lot of changes during pregnancy. These changes impact the mental health of women, which can have a severe impact on the infant as well. Even though the research has been covering almost all the

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aspects related to pregnancy. Yet there are still some gaps which fail to give reason for why it is important to take care of physical, mental and spiritual health during pregnancy. Through this paper we aim to bridge this gap by providing a theoretical explanation. This will help in understanding the importance of self-care during pregnancy.

Objective: To explore the overall health of women during pregnancy.

METHODOLOGY

In this research, we adopt a narrative review approach to delve into the overall health of pregnant women. A narrative review can be explained as the summary and analysis of the existing literature. The selection of books and articles was made with a focus on their pertinence to biopsychosocial and spiritual health challenges faced by women during pregnancy. The literature was obtained from well-regarded databases like PubMed, PsycInfo, Springer and Google Scholar, with an emphasis on peer-reviewed articles, to ensure authenticity, certain literature was cross-referenced with some of the neurology and neuropsychology books. The keywords used for finding the appropriate journals were: pregnancy, health during pregnancy, pregnancy and quality of life, pregnancy and mental health, mental health of pregnant women, spirituality and pregnancy, quality of life during pregnancy, maternal attachment, yoga and pregnancy, meditation and pregnancy.

DISCUSSION

For women, being pregnant is a period of life change because it involves the development of their unborn child and bringing them into the world. As her fetus may be affected, her obligations to maintain her general well-being increase. She needs a lot of courage to complete tasks at home or at work with the same results as before. The pregnancy experience of a woman may vary depending on her personal characteristics, her social environment, and other factors, but the overall phase has significance that is the same for all pregnant women.

As the findings of the study suggested that, during pregnancy women start having the feeling of fetal attachment and maternal instincts. And the reason behind this can be found in the attachment theory by Bowlby. According to Bowlby (1960), the relationship between a mother and her kid is influenced by internal variables. In addition to that Pillitteri (2010) states that 'attachment behaviour that gradually develops beginning in the first trimester of pregnancy, peaks in the third trimester, and persists after delivery is vital for adjustment to pregnancy'. The health of the mother and the unborn child can be improved, and this can result in happiness with the pregnancy's outcome, through maternal foetal attachment behaviours in relation to appropriate prenatal care, nutrition conditions, and a tendency to know about the foetus.

The research further moved towards physical health during pregnancy. It was noticed that women face certain problems like nausea, back pain, body pain, morning sickness and exhaustion frequently. And it becomes quite important to take care of their physical health. As the mother's health can influence the health of the infant as well. As lifestyle choices made during pregnancy have an impact on the development of the fetus, improving personal health will benefit the fetus's health for the rest of its life. Researchers have stressed again and time again that investing in maternal physical exercise can minimise prenatal weight growth, reduce emergency caesarean section rates, and aid to control postpartum symptoms (Meander et. al., 2021).

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By investing in activities, both pregnant mothers and the fetus' physical health is preserved. Nasution & Darmawati's (2020) systematic review on exercise during pregnancy focused on the intervention for uncomplicated pregnancies that the exercises can help with by enhancing her flexibility, strengthening her abdominal and pelvic muscles, and calming her mind through breathing exercises. The reason behind the effectiveness of physical activity can be found in the mind-body relationship concept. As the mind-body relation “dualism”, as described by Ryle (1949), “A person... lives through two collateral histories, one consisting of what happens in and to the body, the other consisting of what happens in and to his mind... The events in the first history are events in the physical world, those in the second are events in the mental world.”

Moving towards the mental health of pregnant women. Clinical perspectives on existing health focused on the physical and psychological struggles experienced by pregnant women, including their distress, body image issues, anxiety, fear, sadness, mood swings, and physical changes. Few people offered their opinions on the nature of quality of life and the significance of physical activity, but there is a paucity of information on spiritual health, which plays a significant role in determining an individual's overall subjective well-being. Pregnancy is a stage that calls for special attention, nourishment, and a need for positive subjective well being. This can be achieved by understanding the spiritual health component in her experiential journey through connectedness with the life within her growing fetus, because it is connected to her physically and psychologically. When one first learns about their own pregnancy, which is a stage that drastically alters the pregnant parents' lives, attachment begins to grow.

The evidence regarding the importance of taking care of psychological and spiritual health can be found in the hierarchy model of needs by Maslow. As it states that ‘when spiritual needs are met, individuals report higher life satisfaction, inner peace and resilience’. This concept of self-transcendence illustrates the importance of spiritual health for the fulfilment of the psychological needs at the highest level (Venter, 2017). Thus, based on the mentioned studies and the theoretical models it can be said that women during pregnancy face several changes. These changes impact the overall health of pregnant women, and it is very important for the woman to take care of their health during pregnancy.

Additionally, the effort to investigate the spiritual aspect of health can fill a research gap that currently exists. Today, many couples find it difficult to get pregnant because of unhealthy habits and other outside issues related to lifestyle. When the process is successful, the mother's general health and the father's health are both impacted. Couples must meet specific needs throughout pregnancy because the growing fetus causes new physical, psychological, emotional, and social changes. The phase has an impact on the expectant mother's general health.

CONCLUSION

The spiritual aspect of health has a significant role in defining an individual's general welfare. It promotes the growth of self-awareness, knowledge, and self-esteem, which can help a pregnant woman develop herself further by accepting responsibility for herself, her potential, managing herself, and actively working to control her emotions, feelings, and desires for both herself and the unborn child she is nurturing. The experiences of the expectant moms will be beneficial to future expectant mothers in terms of spiritual health, and they can serve as a foundation for creating a health promotion strategy that will make pregnancy a holistic experience for both the mother and her child.

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The existing studies helped us in understanding that by examining the spiritual health, it would be a social welfare effort to make pregnancy a more holistic stage for women, where she can actively engage in her interests, pick up new skills, improve her mood by purposefully focusing on other aspects, and consciously be there for her child while maintaining her health and work-life balance. This will provide light on how she views herself and reveal her true emotions regarding her relationship with the developing fetus during the prenatal stage, which the researchers have not taken into account. Therefore, it is crucial for the sector to conduct study on the state of the world today and to offer working women and other women a plan for a healthy pregnancy. This can help in getting a better treatment and intervention plan for pregnant women. Later on this can result in an effective healthcare facility during pregnancy.

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Conflict of Interest

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