

COVID 19 and violence in Pregnant women: A short review

Despina-Maria SAVVOUDI ^{1,*}, Eirini OROVOU ², Giannoula KIRKOU ¹, Maria DAGLA ¹, Georgios IATRAKIS ¹, Sofia Moriati ¹ and Evangelia ANTONIOU ¹

¹ Department of Midwifery, University of West Attica, Agiou Spyridonos 28, 12243 Egaleo, Greece.

² Department of Midwifery, University of Western Macedonia, Keptse, 50200 Ptolemaida, Greece.

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Abstract

Introduction: COVID 19 pandemic made pregnant women more likely to experience domestic violence due to its unique circumstances and the unpreparedness of the health care systems. Event that led to increased episodes of violence.

Purpose: This review aims to investigate the relationship between COVID-19 and violence in pregnancy.

Methodology: Recent articles between the period 2019 to 2023 were included after searching Medline, Pubmed and Google Scholar.

Results: The results spotted out that COVID-19 increased the prevalence of domestic violence comparatively to the period before the Pandemic due to lockdown which led the couples spending more time together and the lowest incomes. It also showed that there were negative impacts in both pregnant women and fetus, such as miscarriages and psychological impacts to women. While highlighted the need of better organized health care systems and public awareness.

Conclusions: Public awareness and more supportable health care systems could help in the early recognition of pregnant women at risk and reduce the phenomenal of violence during pregnancy.

Keywords: COVID-19; Pregnancy; Domestic violence; Consequences; Support systems; Pandemic

1. Introduction

The term of Domestic violence includes any action that can injure or harm the women physically, emotionally, or sexually as well as the verbal abuse. Verbal abuse is the most common form of violence followed by physical, psychological and sexual (1).

The most common risk factors for violence seems to be lower education, age differences between the couples, the culture, the economic and social status and the fear of the victims to report the violence incidents (2).

One in every three women have experienced a form of violence during their lives with Africa, Oceania and South Asian countries having the highest rates of domestic violence, while European and Central Asian countries have lowest rates of the phenomenal (3).

* Corresponding author: Despina-Maria SAVVOUDI

Violence during pregnancy have risks for both the fetus and the mother such as pre term deliveries, low birth weight, long term consequences on children, miscarriages, health traumas, psychological instability and depression among others (4).

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unique, challenging situations for families in conditions of lockdown quarantine resulting in a significant impact on domestic violence. Research on domestic violence in pregnancy during COVID-19 is a developing field of study, given the fact that the pandemic is a current problem, and the systematic reviews for the existing studies are scarce (5,6).

This review aims to investigate the emergence of violence during COVID 19 in pregnant women, the risk factors as well as the consequences for both mother and the fetus-child.

2. Material and Methods

This review included studies published from 2019 to 2024 written in English that assessed violence during COVID 19 on pregnant women found in databases such as Medline, Google Scholar and Pubmed. Meta analysis reviews, simple reviews and letters to editor were excluded from this review. Keywords related to domestic violence and COVID 19 pandemic were used.

3. Risk factors

Low education level, unemployment, age extremes, drugs and alcohol are some of the possible risk factors of violence during pregnancy alongside with the quarantine, the low incomes and the weakness remote control of healthcare systems in women at risk. The lockdown with partners who were violent even before the COVID 19, increased the possibilities of domestic violence during pregnancy at COVID 19 Pandemic (7–10). In other cases risk factors were also the sex refuse from the women, the number of older children, not giving birth to a boy and the patriarchy(11).

4. Maternal and Fetal outcomes

The most common outcomes were abortions, pre term births, low general health and a big percentage of women developed psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, baby blues and in extreme cases suicidal thoughts (7,12,13). The children whose mothers were abused during pregnancy occurred intellectual and developmental disorders sometime in their later life (8,14,15).

5. Incidence rate of domestic violence during COVID 19

Many studies showed that domestic violence during COVID 19 increased significantly. Psychological violence had the highest incidence with rates up to 92,9%, followed by emotional, sexual and physical abuse, economic abuse and controlling behavior by the partner(9,14,16,17).

6. Additional outcomes

Health care workers are those who must promptly recognize the sings of domestic violence during antenatal care even in long distance cases with telephone communication and the use of technology. Governments must led campaigns for the awakens of the community and provides health care workers with resources so they will be able to identify emotional distress of pregnant women in early stages of pregnancy and help them develop improvement strategies for them and their families (8,17–19). After analyzing the study and results, the main themes include domestic violence incidence on pregnant women during the pandemic, adverse effects of intimate partner violence on pregnant women, COVID-19-associated factors leading to the high level of domestic violence and solutions that could have helped manage the incidence in circumstances such as COVID 19 (20,21).

7. Conclusion

Domestic violence during pregnancy were always a concerning problem in all over the world that increased dramatically during the COVID 19 Pandemic due to the new living conditions that came with it. Public awareness about the risks of violence in pregnant women is very important to reduce domestic violence during pregnancy. Polity, health care workers and all the community must cooperate to reduce violence and ensure the easy access to resources and

information for the health of mother and fetus. A collective effort that includes the entire society can ensure a better future to decrease domestic violence and create the ideal environment for child births and the safety of their mothers.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

There are no conflicts of interest or acknowledgements.

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