

Publication

Antenatal depressive symptoms and subjective birth experience in association with postpartum depressive symptoms and acute stress reaction in mothers and fathers: A longitudinal path analysis

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Postpartum depressive symptoms (PDS) and acute stress reactions (ASR) after childbirth are frequently documented in mothers, but research is scarce in fathers. In a longitudinal path analysis, the interplay of depressive symptoms in pregnancy and the subjective childbirth experience of mothers and fathers are examined with regard to the development of PDS and ASR postpartum.; One hundred eighty nine expectant couples were recruited between August 2006 and September 2009. They completed the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) in the last trimester of pregnancy. In the first week postpartum, they answered the Salmon's Item List (subjective birth experience), and four weeks after birth the EPDS and the Impact of Event Scale - revised (IES-r). The data were evaluated in a longitudinal path analysis.; Compared with fathers, mothers reported more depressive symptoms (pregnancy: $p < 0.001$; postpartum: $p < 0.001$), higher ASR ($p < 0.001$), and lower 'positive birth experience' ($p < 0.001$). The association between depressive symptoms in mothers and fathers was not significant during pregnancy ($r = 0.107$, $p > 0.10$), but moderately correlated four weeks after birth ($r = 0.387$, $p < 0.001$). Depressive symptoms during pregnancy and a negative subjective birth experience were independently predictive of PDS and ASR after childbirth in mothers and fathers controlling for age, mode of delivery, parity, epidural anaesthesia, infant gender and birth weight. Antenatal depressive symptoms were related to subjective childbirth experience only in fathers.; Parental prenatal depressive symptoms and subjective birth experience are important predictors of postnatal psychological adjustment in mothers and fathers.

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