

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY: APPLIED BUSINESS AND EDUCATION RESEARCH

2022, Vol. 3, No. 11, 2480 – 2484

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.03.11.30>

Research Article

Postpartum Anxiety and Stress during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Article history:

Submission March 2022

Revised November 2022

Accepted November 2022

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to obtain information about the anxiety and stress of postpartum mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study used a descriptive survey method on a sample of pregnant women and women giving birth by purposive sampling, namely those who visited the Independent Practice Midwife (BPM) clinic in Bekasi City from April to July 2020, totaling 78 people. Data were collected using the DASS-21 questionnaire which was packaged in a google form and distributed online via WhatsApp social media. The data collected was then analyzed descriptively to be presented as a result of the research. The results showed that the psychological response to anxiety was normal 50 (64.10%), mild 14 (17.95%), moderate 11 (14.10%), severe 2 (2.56%), and very heavy 1 (1.28 %) of respondents. While the psychological response to normal stress was 59 (75.64%), mild 11 (14.10%), moderate 6 (7.69%), and severe 2 (2.56%) experienced psychologically normal but some experienced anxiety and stress. Most of the psychological responses to normal anxiety, but there are mild, moderate, severe, and very severe anxiety, as well as psychological responses to stress, although most normal, there is also mild, moderate, and severe stress.

Keywords: anxiety, breastfeeding, childbirth, covid-19, stress

Introduction

It has passed the first year since the stipulation of the COVID-19 pandemic on March 11, 2020, by the World Health Organization (WHO) where everyone has adapted to new habits. In this new habit, the world community is required to wear a mask and wash their hands. Even so, humans cannot be separated from

feeling worried psychologically because COVID-19 has not yet disappeared from the earth. COVID-19 is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 corona-virus (Pramana et al., 2020) and since Indonesia contracted the COVID-19 pandemic coronavirus has increased the risk of depression and anxiety in new mothers. According to a study that says one in seven women already

How to cite:

Meliyana, E., Sirait, L. I., & Suratmi (2022). Postpartum Anxiety and Stress during the Covid-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*. 3 (11), 2480 – 2484. doi: 10.11594/ijmaber.03.11.30

struggles with symptoms of this mental illness in the perinatal period. Health psychology has an important role in understanding how people will respond to and overcome the threat of COVID-19 and how they will comply and adapt to transmission prevention behaviors including washing hands, wearing masks, maintaining distance (physical and social distancing), reducing mobility to isolating themselves. Health psychology also has a role to play in understanding how people can respond to and cope with the threat of a global pandemic and the changes in their lives that are created to reduce that threat. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected many aspects of life, including women's pregnancies, births, and the postnatal period. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many restrictions to almost all routine services, both in terms of access and quality, including restrictions on maternal and neonatal health services, such as a reduction in the frequency of antenatal care and restrictions on postnatal and neonatal visits (KEMENKES RI, 2020).

In December 2020, the number of Covid-19 cases in the City of Bekasi, West Java continued to increase to 14,202, with 1,134 active cases and 227 deaths (Hartoro, 2020). The results of previous studies showed that 87% of postpartum mothers experienced anxiety with the majority of mild-moderate anxiety categories. The study describes the majority of postpartum mothers in the Baturraden District experiencing anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic (Yuliani & Aini, 2020). An another study reported using the EPDS subscale score (Edinburgh Postnatal Depression scale) in immediate postpartum mothers showing that mean scores for anhedonia, anxiety, and depression were all higher in the puerperium group at COVID-19 than in the first postpartum group. previous year sebelumnya (Zanardo et al., 2020). There is evidence of a significant impact of the pandemic on the general mental health of the population. Stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, insomnia, denial, anger, and fear are the most commonly reported mental health difficulties. Even in the absence of stressful life events, the transitional nature of the perinatal period can cause distress for some, though not all, women. Therefore, there is a high probability that women who experience pregnancy,

childbirth, and childbirth during COVID-19 will have an impact on perinatal mental health. Women tend to experience concerns about their health and the risk of infection, as well as health risks to their babies and loved ones. Quarantine and/or large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) have caused a variety of feelings, including fear, anger, sadness, irritability, guilt, or confusion, which can make isolation a challenge to maternal health. Of course, this is a concern because adaptive changes both physically and immunologically occur throughout this period. This study aims to obtain information about the anxiety and stress of postpartum mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods

Before the implementation of the research, ethics management was first carried out and received approval from the Health Research Ethics Commission No.614/KEPK/STIKES-NHM/EC/IV/2020.

This research was conducted using a descriptive survey method, namely to determine the anxiety and stress of postpartum mothers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research subjects were postpartum and breastfeeding mothers who visited the Independent Practical Midwife (BPM) clinic in Bekasi City from April to July 2020. This sample was taken by purposive sampling due to limitations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data was collected online via social media WhatsApp (WA) using a questionnaire containing questions about "Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale-21 Items (DASS-21)" packaged in a google form. Subjects who gave responses from April to July 2020 were 78 people and then analyzed descriptively to be presented as research results.

Result and Discussion

The results showed that based on the characteristics of the majority of respondents aged 20-35 years, most of them had high and middle education and most had multiparity parity (Table 1). The anxiety of postpartum and breastfeeding mothers (Table 2) was mostly normal (64.10%). But the rest require attention to mild anxiety (17.95%), moderate anxiety (14.10%), severe anxiety (2.56%), and very heavy anxiety (1.28%). Meanwhile, the stress of postpartum

and breastfeeding mothers (Table 3) was mostly normal (75.64%). Similar to anxiety, stress data also requires attention to light stress (14.10%), moderate stress (7.69%), and severe stress (2.56%).

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	F = 78	%
Age		
<20 years	0	0
20-35 years	69	88.46
> 35 years	9	19.54
Education		
Basic	11	14.10
Intermediate	33	42.31
High	34	43.59
Parity		
Nullipara	0	0
Primipara	32	41.03
Multiparous	46	58.97

Table 2. Anxiety in Postpartum and Breastfeeding during A Pandemic Covid-19

Anxiety	F = 78	%
Normal	50	64.10
Ringan	14	17.95
Sedang	11	14.10
Berat	2	2.56
Sangat berat	1	1.28

Table 3. Stress in Postpartum and Breastfeeding during a Pandemic Covid-19

Stress	F = 78	%
Normal	59	75.64
Ringan	11	14.10
Sedang	6	7.69
Berat	2	2.56
Sangat berat	0	0

Anxiety and stress of postpartum and breastfeeding mothers must be a concern because it is closely related to baby care, including the fulfillment of breast milk for the baby. Taharu reports that (59.5%) of postpartum mothers experience anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic that affects breastfeeding (Tamburu, 2020). In addition, it can adversely affect the thinking and emotions of new mothers and worsen depressive symptoms (Zanardo et al., 2020). Psychological conditions during a pandemic must be maintained to remain unstable so that breastfeeding mothers do not experience problems and milk production continues

to run smoothly. The psychological condition of mothers who lack confidence in their ability to breastfeed can cause reduced milk production. The COVID-19 pandemic is a scourge that can increase anxiety and stress due to fears of postpartum mothers being exposed to COVID-19, the period of quarantine, and the need to carry out health protocols. Worries and anxiety experienced by the mother can reduce the hormone oxytocin, which is the hormone that secretes breast milk, plus another problem in breastfeeding mothers is nipple confusion due to breastfeeding or formula using a bottle or pacifier (Widaryanti, 2021).

Some of the things that often or very often cause anxiety and worry related to COVID-19 in postpartum mothers are visits to the hospital for pregnancy checks (72.65%), COVID-19 protection methods (60.17%), messages on social media (52.14%), the safety of infants from infection after birth (52.14), the effect of COVID-19 on the fetus (45.76%) and pregnancy outcomes (44.92) and safety for breastfeeding (44.44%) (Nanjundaswamy et al., 2020). In general, anxiety in pregnant women and postpartum mothers can have an impact on the health of the mother and fetus or baby. The COVID-19 pandemic can increase the incidence or level of anxiety in pregnant women and postpartum mothers, so these problems require further treatment, to reduce the negative impact on the well-being of mothers and fetuses or babies. Our recommendation is, in each antenatal visit during the pandemic, both face-to-face and online, psychological assessment of pregnant women and post-partum mothers can be carried out more optimally so that if they are detected suffering from psychological problems such as anxiety, further management can be given immediately. Medical and mental health interventions must be carried out immediately to prevent a decline in maternal psychological health, which is made worse due to physical/social distancing and various health regulations/protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hossain et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Most of the psychological responses to normal anxiety, but there are mild, moderate, severe, and very severe anxiety, as well as psychological responses to stress, although most normal, there is also mild, moderate, and severe stress.

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