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SOCIAL STRESS AND DEPRESSION DURING PREGNANCY IN WOMEN OF A LOW INCOME COUNTRY

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There has been considerable research on postnatal depression (PND), in comparison to antenatal depression (AND). We aimed to study the Prevalence of AND, testing the following hypotheses:

- a. Depressed pregnant women will have more negative life events than non depressed women.
- b. Depressed women will have less social support than non-depressed women.

Methods: Using a cross sectional study design 1366/1401 women in their 3rd trimester of pregnancy were screened for depression using the Self-Rating Questionnaire (SRQ) and the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS). These instruments are validated, available in Urdu and have been used in the pre and postnatal period in Pakistan. The life events checklist was used to measure social stress and the Brief Disability Questionnaire (BDQ) for disability.

Results: 342 women scored ≥ 12 on the EPDS giving an estimated AND prevalence of 25.6 %. The EPDS and SRQ scores showed a high positive correlation. A significantly higher percentage of depressed women experienced problems in marital relations, work, finances, housing and domestic violence. Depressed women had higher disability scores. 32% of the depressed and 14% of non depressed were unable to perform usual daily activities. 35% of depressed women stayed in bed due to illness as compared to only 16 % of non-depressed.

Conclusion: This study confirms a high prevalence of AND in less educated women, experiencing a large number of social difficulties.