

Predictors of Mother - Infant relationship: A study based on late pregnancy and early postnatal period. (2000)

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Background: In previous studies several single factors have been identified as related to the quality of early mother-infant relationship. Several studies stress the importance of maternal pre-birth adjustment, attitude and affection towards the foetus. The aim of this study was to ascertain the predictive value of factors such as maternal prenatal attachment to her unborn baby, maternal childhood history, maternal personality, partners' relationship and maternal perception of infant temperament.

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Methods: One hundred seventy-one expectant normal mothers in the age range of 21-50 at third trimester of pregnancy were investigated. During third trimester of pregnancy following self-administered instruments were used: Prenatal Attachment Inventory (PAI), Giessen complaints list (GBB-24), for childhood history (EMBU) (A Swedish acronym for "own memories of upbringing"). Midwives assessment, and attitude towards pregnancy, IFEEL-pictures (A projective test regarding maternal interpretation of infant facial emotions). After 3 postpartum months, the Temperament Character Inventory (TCI), Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), and Baby Behaviour Questionnaire (BBQ) were used. Finally, mother-infant interactions were monitored by filming each dyad on ten minutes sequences of mother-infant en face interactions.

Results: The results revealed that maternal emotional relationship with her child begins before the child is born. The Prenatal Attachment Inventory proved to be a suitable instrument for Swedish sample. Maternal age, parity, attitude towards pregnancy and her own experience of parental rearing played an important role in establishing attachment with her unborn baby. Continuity was observed in maternal perception of infant's facial cues. Results also demonstrated an association between prenatal attachment and the quality of early mother-infant interaction. Regarding multiple indicators of relationship, several mother-infant factors played an important role. However, maternal prenatal attachment, and personality traits were the two strongest predictors for the early mother-infant relationship. Midwives generally were shown to be able to differentiate amongst maternal bond.

Conclusion: This dissertation underscores the importance of multiple indicators. Maternal prenatal attachment and personality traits emerged as the two strongest predictors associated to postnatal mother-infant interaction, and as such they may be of important diagnostic aid in identifying those women in whom the early mother-child relationship is likely to be suboptimal.

Keywords: Prenatal attachment, Pregnancy attitude, Childhood history, Personality trait, Partner relationship, Infant temperament, Mother-infant interaction

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New Series No. 659 ISSN 0346-6612 ISBN 91- 7191-813-2

