The relationships between physical violence, verbal abuse and women's psychological distress during the postpartum period.

Submitted by admin on Mon, 09/08/2014 - 8:44am

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Title

Publication Type: Journal Article
Year of Publication: 2009
Authors: Romito, P, Pomicino, L, Lucchetta, C, Scrimin, F, Turan, J Molzan
Journal: J Psychosom Obstet Gynaecol
Volume: 30
Issue: 2
Pagination: 115-21
Date Published: 2009 Jun
ISSN: 1743-8942
Keywords: Adult, Age Factors, Depression, Postpartum, Domestic Violence, Female, Humans, Infant, Newborn, Italy, Longitudinal Studies, Personality Inventory, Pregnancy, Psychometrics, Quality of Life, Socioeconomic Factors, Spouse Abuse, Young Adult

Abstract

OBJECTIVE: To analyse the relationship between violence in the post-partum period and mothers' psychological distress.

METHOD: Three hundred and fifty two women responded to a questionnaire after the birth, at the Trieste Hospital (Italy), and 292 of them responded to a telephone interview 8 months later. Psychological distress was evaluated with the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ); partner and family violence were evaluated with a 28-item scale.

RESULTS: Eight months post-partum, 10% of women were experiencing violence either from the partner or from another family member; 5% showed high psychological distress. Multivariate analyses show that, after adjustment for covariates, the OR for depressive symptoms was 19.17 for women experiencing partner or family violence. Being dissatisfied with their working situation, hospitalisation of the baby and pre-pregnancy mental health were also significantly associated with high GHQ scores.

CONCLUSION: These results stress the relationship between violence in post-partum and maternal psychological distress. Measures aimed to identify and end violence against women around pregnancy could contribute to the improvement of women's mental health post-partum.