

The Role of Islam in the Health of Pregnant Women

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Pregnancy and childbirth are associated with traditional religious beliefs and practices in many countries. Religious beliefs have led to improved health, quality of life, and increased reliance on God. Relationship between religious beliefs and faith has a proven relationship with physical and mental health. Given these beliefs, it can be helpful for the mother to cope with pregnancy related anxieties under optimal health conditions and to improve her safety during pregnancy, child delivery, and after delivery. The aim of this study was to investigate the role of Islam in the health of pregnant women.

Methods: In this narrative review study, a comprehensive review was carried out using ScienceDirect, Pubmed Google Scholar and SID international databases from 1940 to 2019 and only Persian and English articles were reviewed. The keywords applied included Islam, health, pregnant women, spirituality. The inclusion criteria included clinical, experimental, cohort, cross-sectional, and review studies and the assumptions about the health of pregnant women. The exclusion criteria included duplication and irrelevance of the text of the articles to their title. The author has not reported any conflicts of interest.

Results: The findings of the present study showed that happiness in pregnancy has reduced depression and anxiety, and the longer the time spent with the Quran and religious activities of pregnant women, the higher the level of happiness. Reciting and listening to the Quran has reduced the anxiety and pain of pregnant women. Pregnant mothers who had higher spirituality were also less anxious.

Conclusion: Considering that religion is one of the most effective psychological supports in our society, it is an important aid for the individual in difficult and critical times to reduce anxiety and fear of childbirth and have successful delivery. It is natural to combine pregnancy care with Islamic approaches using powerful factors such as faith in God, being with the Quran, and religious and spiritual activities. Spirituality is an essential element in preparing a woman for childbirth. Prenatal education based on religious teachings increases pregnant mothers' awareness of prenatal care, childbirth, and breastfeeding.



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Summary

Background and Objective

Pregnancy and childbirth are associated with

religious and traditional beliefs and practices in many countries (1). Many cultures, in addition to medical therapies, have other methods for treating human physical and mental illnesses. In this way, religious beliefs and faith have always been

important, and healing based on belief in God as a supernatural force has a long history among the followers of various religions (2). Mental changes occur naturally during pregnancy, but sometimes become pathological and serious (3).

Feelings of belonging to a great resource, hope for God's help in stressful living conditions, and spiritual support are resources that religious people can use to help them cope with problems, suffer less harm, and have better mental health (4). Pregnant women's awareness of religious and health teachings and advices will help them receive more and better care and reduce their anxiety and psychological distress (5). Today, researchers believe that religiosity should be a key component of health care education, meaning that health care providers can provide more comprehensive care by understanding the religious needs of their clients (1). Numerous studies not only have shown a positive relationship between religion and mental health, but also confirm the effect of religion on physical health (6). In this regard, it is possible to help pregnant mothers to cope with the anxieties of pregnancy safely and under maximum health conditions all through the prenatal or pregnancy, postnatal and postnatal periods. The aim of this study was to investigate the role of Islam in the health of pregnant women.

Methods

In this narrative review study, a comprehensive review was carried out using ScienceDirect, Pubmed Google Scholar and SID international databases from 1940 to 2019 and only Persian and English articles were reviewed. The keywords included Islam, health, pregnant women, and spirituality. The inclusion criteria included: clinical, experimental, cohort, cross-sectional, and review studies and the assumptions regarding the health of pregnant women. The exclusion criteria included duplication and irrelevance of the text of the articles to their title.

Results

Religion and religious beliefs are very important and influential factors in mental health (7). Happiness in pregnancy reduces depression and anxiety, and happy women are better able to control pain due to their high self-esteem and higher sense of personal control (8). Spiritual intelligence has a great impact on the mental health of pregnant women and increases their happiness and reduces stress (9). Also Islamic teachings describe the supernatural effects of maternal nutrition not only during pregnancy but

also before and after it. In Islamic hadiths, it is recommended to eat quince during pregnancy (10). Hearing the sound of the Quran by the pregnant women who had been hospitalized for childbirth reduced their anxiety levels (11). Many pregnant women who have gone through the stages of natural childbirth have considered religious beliefs and reliance on spirituality to be the main factor in reducing labor pains (12). Evaluation of sexual issues is an important part of health care. Islam recommends having sex even during pregnancy. On the other hand, in the religion of Islam, it is recommended to abstain from sexual intercourse for 40 days after delivery. Islam considers sexual intercourse during vaginal bleeding harmful to a woman's health. However, if there is no vaginal bleeding during this period, it is permissible to have sex (13). The Quran as the main source of Islamic law, provides a broad perspective on women's reproductive and sexual rights. The results of research on all verses of the holy Quran showed that more than 21 chapters and 81 verses of this heavenly book deal with various aspects of reproductive and sexual rights (14).

Conclusion

The present review is the first study that comprehensively assesses most of the religious factors related to the health of pregnant women from the perspective of Islam. Mental health needs the support of religion to achieve all its goals and at all levels of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention (15). According to a study conducted in Italy on 27,100 patients, the percentage of recovery of the patients who believe in religion is higher (4). Hall and Taylor have identified religion as the most powerful element in reducing labor pain (16). The results of a study in 2015 showed that increasing women's religious awareness and attitude reduces postpartum grief and perpetuates the effect of postpartum education (17, 18). The religion of Islam has emphasized the use of breast milk in the verses of the Holy Quran and the hadiths of the infallible imams long before the results of the studies are known. In several verses of the Holy Quran, the issue of breast milk is directly mentioned, among which we can mention verse 15 of the chapter of Al-Ahqaf, verse 14 of the chapter of Luqman and verse 233 of the chapter of Al-Baqarah. Reading the Quran before childbirth (third trimester of pregnancy) reduces the pain of childbirth and makes this pain tolerable due to the effect that the Quran has on spiritual memory (19). In a clinical trial study, it

was found that the recitation of the Holy Quran has been an effective non-pharmacological treatment to reduce maternal anxiety before cesarean section (7). The results of research on sexual intercourse in pregnancy show that sexual orientation in pregnancy is related to women's attitudes and religious, social and cultural beliefs (20). The results of research on all the verses of the Holy Quran have shown that more than 21 chapters and 81 verses of this holy book have dealt with various aspects of reproductive and sexual rights (14).

Pregnancy education based on religious teachings has increased the awareness of pregnant women about prenatal, delivery, and postnatal care. Considering the positive effects of religious practices and Quran teachings on promoting mental health, especially reducing anxiety, depression and increasing happiness in pregnant women and given the effects of during-pregnancy education on prenatal, delivery, and postnatal care, we can enrich pregnancy care with Islamic approaches and using strong factors such as belief in God, familiarity with the Quran, and religious and spiritual activities to reduce anxiety and fear of childbirth to help women successful natural childbirth and breastfeeding.

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Conflict of interest

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