Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Symptoms, Depression Risk, and Quality of Life in Black Pregnant Women

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Experiencing mental health difficulties during pregnancy predicts a variety of quality-of-life (QoL) outcomes for Black women. However, one area of prenatal mental health remains underresearched: attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Given the impairments reported by adults with significant symptoms of ADHD and the linkages between depression and ADHD in nonpregnant samples, the current study aimed to examine the relationships among ADHD symptoms, depression, and QoL in Black pregnant women.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: Participants for this study were 116 pregnant Black women aged 18-43 years (mean age = 27.14, standard deviation = 5.67) presenting to an urban women's health clinic. We investigated associations among maternal ADHD symptoms, risk of maternal depression, and different aspects of QoL, including relationships, life outlook, and life productivity.

RESULTS: Linear hierarchical regressions were performed to investigate the ability of maternal depression risk to mediate the relationship between maternal ADHD symptoms and QoL. Moderate to large negative correlations were found between maternal ADHD symptoms, depression risk, and quality of life (p's ≤ 0.001). Furthermore, maternal depression risk either partially or fully explained the relationship between ADHD symptoms and the different QoL variables.

CONCLUSIONS: This study illustrates that symptoms of both ADHD and depression are important clinical considerations for Black women during pregnancy. As significant ADHD symptoms can lead to the development of depression, future research should investigate the temporal relationship between depression and QoL in pregnant women diagnosed with ADHD, as well as study whether ADHD treatment results in improvements in depressive symptoms.