Prenatal Fatigue and Quality of Life of Pregnant Women over 26 Weeks of Gestation

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Background

- Pregnant women have high rate of experiencing tiredness or fatigue(87.2% to 96.5%, which is related to preterm birth and impact women's quality of life.
- Mothers perceive significantly higher level of fatigue in the evening than in the morning.
- Severity of perceived fatigue increases from the 7th to 9th month of gestation.
- Increase of fatigue level starts as early as 11 to 12 weeks of gestation.

Research Purpose

- To examine relationship between fatigue and QoL (general, physical, mental, and social health) of women in the third trimester.

Study Design

- The study was a cross-sectional design with snowball sampling.

Participants

- 128 pregnant women without pregnancy-related physical/mental complications
- Mean gestational age was 32.66 (SD=3.76)
- Mean age was 29.41 (SD=4.30, 18.95-40.51)
- 55% were primiparous
- 57% were employed
- 59% had an educational level higher than high school
- 51% planned for the pregnancy

Instruments

- 16-item Multidimensional Assessment of Fatigue (MAFS)
  - Scores 1-50
  - Score ≥ 28 indicates fatigue
  - Cronbach's alpha was .96
- 17-item Duke Health Profile (DHP)
  - Scores 0-100 on each dimension of health (general, physical, mental, and social)
  - Higher score indicates healthier
  - Cronbach's alpha was .80

Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics, ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and regression were used.
- Participants were grouped by gestational age for comparison purposes.
  - <32 weeks: n=56
  - 32-36 weeks: n=46
  - >36 weeks: n=26

Results

- Fatigue
  - Mean score was not very high (M=20.56, SD=10.52)
  - 26.6% of participants experienced fatigue; 10 (17.9%) <32 weeks, 18 (39.1%) at 32-36 weeks, 6 (23.1%) >36 weeks of gestation
- Quality of life
  - Was not high on physical health (M=52.97, SD=20.17)
  - Was not high on mental health (M=64.61, SD=18.48)
  - Was not high on social health (M=63.71, SD=18.30)
  - Was not high on general health (M=60.43, SD=15.20)

Results

- Fatigue and quality of life
  - Fatigue was negatively correlated with
    - Physical health (r=-.68)
    - Mental health (r=-.53)
    - Social health (r=-.45)
    - General health (r=-.70)
- Prediction relationship
  - Fatigue could explain
    - 47% of the variance of physical health
    - 28% of the variance of mental health
    - 20% of the variance of social health
    - 49% of the variance of general health

Results

- Comparison by demographic
  - Health did not differ by gestational age groups
  - More participants at 32-36 weeks experienced fatigue
  - Both did not differ by educational level (college and higher, n=75; lower than college, n=52)
  - Both did not differ by happy about pregnancy (happy, n=104; unhappy, n=11; uncertain, n=13)
  - Fatigue did not differ by employment status
  - Employed pregnant women had better mental ($t=2.14$, $p=0.04$) and social ($t=2.81$, $p=0.01$) health than unemployed women

Summary

- 26.6% of participants experienced fatigue.
- Did not perceive good health (all dimensions).
- Fatigue had prediction effects on health, especially physical and general health.
- More participants at 32-36 gestational weeks experienced fatigue.
- Employed participants perceived better social and mental health.

Discussion

- Strategies such as time management to manage fatigue may improve maternal QoL, especially for those who were pregnant 32-36 weeks .
- Helping pregnant women to be employed may increase their QoL.
- Longitudinal study can help to understand patterns of fatigue and QoL during pregnancy.

Thank you