

Trajectories of violence: abuse during pregnancy and parental practices in very young children

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Objective

The objective of this study was to evaluate the relationship between violence during pregnancy and parenting practices in very young children.

Method

Data was collected with the Conflict Tactic Scale 2 (CTS2, Strauss), the Parent Behavior Checklist (PBC, Fox, 1994) and the Griffiths Mental Development Scales 0-2 years (PBC, Fox, 1994).

Introduction

Violence against women is a global problem with a high risk of suffering on millions of women and families, including women who are pregnant and postpartum (Martin, Arcara & Pollock, 2011) and is characterized by major changes in women's physical and psychological levels. Recent researches have been proving that these changes and the environmental context in which the household is directly influence the babies' development in prenatal and postnatal periods and the dynamics of parents-children relationships.

Evidence shows that domestic violence potentially interfere negatively in the parenting process as a result of lower emotional readiness, leading to real change in the quality of parent-child relationships, reflected in the adoption of less capable parental styles (Calheiros and Monteiro, 2007). An especially concerning form of abuse is the one that occurs during pregnancy.

Participants

204 pregnant women from the routine prenatal consultation at the obstetrician and gynecology service at Pedro-Hispano, Hospital in Matosinhos / Porto Portugal, participated in this study. They had an average of 29 years of age, with more than 25 weeks of gestation and Portuguese nationality.

Results

In this study we found that 107 (58.2%) pregnant women were victims of abuse by their partners.

With regard to parenting practices we found that these women exhibit more aggressive behavior suggesting the more use of punitive practices (physical or verbal), report lower expectations regarding her child's competence/development, nevertheless showed the same positive behaviors of affection. When we consider the mental development in regards to parental behaviors adopted, we found that high expectations, as well as high punitive behaviors are related to low mental development in babies at one year of age, while high positive affect behaviors promote high mental development babies at one year of age.



Conclusion

This study concluded that violence during pregnancy tends to affect the strategies and parenting styles chosen, and those were demonstrated to have direct impact on mental and social development of babies at one year of age.

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