



Articles

Pregnant Women's View on Their Relationship: A Comparison With Nonpregnant Women

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Abstract

The positive effects of partner support on pregnancy outcomes and maternal (mental) health are well established in the literature. Less is known about pregnant women's perceptions of their partner and relationship, and whether these differ from those of nonpregnant women. Therefore, in the current study, data were collected through an online questionnaire among pregnant ($n = 66$) and nonpregnant ($n = 59$) women with similar demographic profiles. The results show that pregnant women reported feeling significantly more happy with both their partner and their relationship than nonpregnant women. Importantly, we did not find any differences in self-esteem or mate value between groups. Although the present study is mainly exploratory, we suggest that pregnant women may show a positive bias in the way they view their partner and their relationship, which in turn may be beneficial to her own as well as her child's mental and physical health.

Keywords: pregnancy, relationship satisfaction, partner satisfaction

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Pregnancy is a unique period in a woman's life. These relatively short interludes have profound influences on virtually every aspect of a woman's life, not only after the pregnancy has resulted in motherhood, but also during the pregnancy itself. Various studies have shown that women's cognitive functioning, specifically their verbal learning and memory, undergoes changes during pregnancy. For example, [Buckwalter et al. \(1999\)](#) report that pregnant women demonstrated more difficulties with verbal learning, and that their learning styles were less effective and more haphazard. Other research shows that during pregnancy, women's emotional functioning also undergoes changes. Research by [Pearson, Lightman, and Evans \(2009\)](#) shows that women in their third trimester of pregnancy become more sensitive to faces signaling negative emotions, specifically threat or anger. This suggests that as women approach delivery, they become more vigilant of threats in their environment, possibly as a preparation for the nurturing tasks of motherhood. As pregnancy affects cognitive and emotional functioning, one can expect that it may also affect relational functioning, i.e., the way women feel about their partner and their relationship. In the current study we therefore investigated whether pregnant women's view of their partner and their relationship differed from that of nonpregnant women.