



Fear and Anxiety during the Covid-19 Pandemic Among Pregnant Women in Buug, Zamboanga Sibugay

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ABSTRACT

Pregnancy is a moment of time when stress and anxiety are at their peak. Pregnant women might be worried about their baby's health as well as their own (Ford, 2021). Unexpectedly, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted family planning and maternal and newborn health services globally. As the national and local health systems are overwhelmed by the necessary response to the COVID-19 patients, attention, and resource for women's health might have been diverted. Pregnant women's utilization of facilities for ante-natal check-up and delivery is declining, because of services disruption, difficulty in commuting, and their fear of contracting COVID-19 (UPPI and UNFPA, 2020). The present study utilized the descriptive method of research using the questionnaires adapted from Ahorsu, D. K. et al. (2020), Alipour A, et al. (2020), and Alipour, A, et al (2020). A total of sixty-seven (67) respondents from the nine (9) selected barangays of the Municipality of Buug, Zamboanga Sibugay were considered as respondents of the study. The obtained data were then analyzed. The results revealed that the pregnant women had high fear with a general weighted mean of 3.06 and they also had high anxiety with a general weighted mean of 2.74 of COVID-19. Based on the result of this study, it was undeniable that pregnant women in Buug, Zamboanga Sibugay had high level of stress and fear brought by COVID 19 pandemic outbreak. Therefore, it is necessary to pay more attention on the welfare and mental health of the pregnant women during pandemic situation. In addition, it is recommended to establish health policy that will strengthen the health promotion program for pregnant women especially in this challenging time – the attack of Covid 19 pandemic.

Keywords: covid-19, pandemic, fear, and anxiety

1. INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy is a time of wonder and change. It is also a moment when stress and anxiety are at their peak. Even without COVID-19, pregnancy is already an extremely difficult period for women. Pregnant women may become irritable, nervous and confused. They might be worried about their baby's health as well as their own (Ford, 2021). Surprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted worldwide family planning and maternal and newborn health services globally (University of the Philippines Population Institute [UPPI] & United Nations Population Fund [UNPF], 2020). As the mandated response to COVID-19 patients overwhelms the national and indigenous health systems, attention and resources for women's health may need to be shifted. Because of service disruptions,

commuting difficulties, and their fear of getting COVID-19, pregnant women are using fewer facilities for antenatal check-ups and deliveries (United Nations Fund for Population Activities [UNFPA], 2020).

On top of that, pregnant and recently pregnant women were reported to be at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID19 than nonpregnant women. Additionally, pregnant women with COVID-19 are at a higher risk for preterm birth and might have a higher risk for other adverse pregnancy outcomes (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2021). Furthermore, natural disasters or emergency situations such as COVID-19 that occur during pregnancy can cause significant emotional distress, resulting in risk factors in pregnancy that have negative consequences for maternal and fetal health, such as preterm birth, low birth weight, maternal mood disorders, and infant development delays (Preis et al., 2020). Emotional anguish in the mother is frequent throughout the



prenatal period and is linked to the pregnancy itself. Pregnant mothers commonly worry about their unborn child's health as well as the outcome of childbirth. Other than pregnancy-induced anxiety, a variety of other risk factors have been related to heightened anxiety levels during pregnancy (Bayrampour et al., 2015). As a result, insecurity linked to catastrophic events or natural disasters is one of the factors that will affect pregnant women's mental health (Feduniw et al., 2020).

The psychological and stressful implications of the COVID-19 emergency should not be overlooked in vulnerable individuals and during key developmental windows, such as pregnancy and neonatal life (Linner & Almgren, 2020). As a result, prenatal care services societies should be aware of pregnant women's concerns and requirements to improve prenatal care services and provide a service for their safety and well-being (Masjoudi et al., 2020).

Given the significance of women's mental health during pregnancy, developing a strategy for early detection and possible interventions in pregnant women affected by pandemic is critical for supporting psychological adjustment, preventing emotional disorder complication, and improving prenatal care services (Salehi et al. 2020) thus resulting to a healthy pregnancy, safe delivery as well as a hale and hearty newborn.

By conducting this study, the researchers were able to determine the level of fear and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic among pregnant women in Buug, Zamboanga Sibugay and the result of this study will help the public health authorities to plan for situations like this in advance and should be prepared to adopt appropriate measures to address and reduce pregnant women's concerns.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study utilized the descriptive method of research. It was descriptive as the study was to measure the level of fear and anxiety of pregnant women.

2.2 LOCALE OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted in the municipality of Buug, Zamboanga Sibugay during the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. It is politically subdivided into twenty-seven (27) barangays and out of twenty-seven (27) barangays of Buug, Zamboanga Sibugay, the researchers only selected nine (9) barangays namely barangay Poblacion, Bliss, Datu Panas, Manlin, Maganay, Del Monte, Compostela, Bawang, and Villacastor.

2.3 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The researchers used questionnaires as the research

instruments of this study namely: The fear of COVID-19 Scale (FCV-19S) from Ahorsu et al., (2020) and Corona Disease Anxiety Scale (CDAS) from Alipour et al., (2020).

The questionnaires had gone through back translation before it was administered to the respondents. Back translation was used in this study as a quality assurance method. A linguist was able to translate the original source language into Visayan language (which was the dominant dialect used by the residents in Buug), then another linguist was able to translate the local dialect back into the source language literally to convey the meaning of the translation.

To ensure the validity of the questionnaires, the questionnaires were validated by two expert professors of the MSU Buug. There were considerations obtained. The appropriateness and applicability of the questions or statements for the respondents and the items to be answered were thoroughly scrutinized.

2.4 DATA GATHERING METHOD

The researchers had to undergo some data gathering procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic and had to cover the pregnant women of the selected nine (9) barangays of the Municipality of Buug, Zamboanga Sibugay. But before gathering data, the researchers had secured permission (formal communication) from the Municipal Health Office of Buug, Zamboanga Sibugay and from the respondents. They had to be informed of their rights as respondents and the confidentiality of their responses which were used only strictly for the purposes of this study. The researchers had to gather the number of pregnant women in selected barangays with the help of the assigned midwives, nurses, and barangay health workers (BHW) in each barangay of Buug.

Then, the researchers went to each of the respondent's homes in the selected barangays. To ensure the safety of both the respondents and the researchers, the researchers followed the COVID-19 safety rules and protocols. The respondents were informed of their options for participation in the researchers' study. The researchers also gathered data via telephone call using the questionnaires to the respondents that had mobile information on their profiles from their barangay midwives or nurses.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The table shows the results of the Level of Fear and Anxiety during COVID-19 among Pregnant Women of Buug, Zamboanga Sibugay.



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<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>Level of Fear During Covid-19 Pandemic</i>	3.06	<i>Agree</i>	<i>High Fear</i>
<i>Level of Anxiety During Covid-19 Pandemic</i>	2.74	<i>Agree</i>	<i>High Anxiety</i>

The table reveals the result for data on the level of pregnant woman's feeling on the fear of covid-19. Using the fear of covid-19 scale with a 7-item constructs, the result of the data that was gathered that has obtained a general weighted mean of 3.06 with an interpretation of "high fear". This study's finding is comparable with that of Rashidi and Simbar (2020), who found that pregnant women are terrified of both the continuous of their pregnancy on the risk to their own lives as well as the need to terminate it due to infection. They are especially concerned about infection spreading to the fetus as well as isolation and quarantine. Moreover, pregnant women reported fear and anxiety about the health of the fetus and baby during the pandemic period according to a study by Ahorsu et al. (2020).

Using the Covid-19 Anxiety Scale, the result for the Level of Anxiety in pregnant women during covid-19 has gathered a general weighted of 2.74 which has a descriptive interpretation of "high fear". This supports the study of Ibrahim Meleis (2016) that having a very high anxiety of contracting the covid-19 infection and fear of losing the expectant child was clearly the defining change that had happened to the pregnant women during this time of pandemic. As a matter of fact, pregnant women are concerned about the health of the fetus in addition to their own health. Even before the covid-19 outbreak, the possibility of giving birth to an unhealthy baby was the most prevalent causes of worry and anxiety in pregnant women (Mortazavi & Akaberi, 2016).

4. CONCLUSION

The pregnant women in Buug, Zamboanga Sibugay reported to have a high level of fear and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic. Bearing in mind the effects of high level of anxiety and fear during pregnancy, the result of this study is worthy of attention by health care providers and policy makers. Providing care and support to pregnant women should have a high priority during the COVID 19 pandemic.

5. RECOMMENDATION

The result of this study indicates the high level of fear and anxiety of the respondents during the COVID-19 Pandemic which the researchers believed that may affect pregnant women's well-being as well of their growing babies. As such, the findings call for actions by health care providers and in particular midwives and nurses assigned in barangay health stations to supporting pregnant women during this difficult time of pandemic. This can be achieved best by incorporating assessment and investigation of level of fear and anxiety during prenatal care. This would be more effective if health experts can come up with an efficient checklist of identifying signs and symptoms of fear and anxiety among pregnant women. Asking pregnant women how they have been doing since the pandemic started and have them identify their concerns related to COVID 19 and their pregnancy would be helpful. Women who reported and had been observed with clinical manifestations of fear and anxiety should be referred to counselor.

Strengthening awareness about fear and anxiety related to COVID 19 among this special population is also vital. As they say, prevention is better than cure. Educating women about the psychological challenges COVID 19 can bring among them may enable women how to manage themselves appropriately and know when to seek help, thus complications and threats can be avoided or at least minimized.

Providing care and support to pregnant women, particularly the more disadvantaged and vulnerable groups should have high priority during the COVID 19 pandemic. Public health authorities should plan for situations like this in advance and should be prepared to adopt appropriate measures to address and reduce pregnant women's concerns.

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