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Maternal expectations: its impact during pregnancy**Elizabeth Emmanuel***Southern Cross University, Australia*

Maternal expectations entail emotional work and form part of the transition process to motherhood. During pregnancy expectations are associated with excitement, anticipation and planning. For others, these are linked to stress and distress which can affect a mother's functioning. Various protective factors can cushion this effect and alter the experience for mothers. This study aimed to investigate the effect of maternal expectations on Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQoL) during pregnancy, and to explore maternal distress and its mediating influence. Pregnant women (n = 630) at 36 weeks gestation attending antenatal clinics at three metropolitan hospitals were invited to participate in the study. The variables maternal expectations, maternal distress, social support and HRQoL were measured and analysed using multiple linear regression to investigate the relationships. Maternal expectation was found to be significantly related to both physical and mental HRQoL. When entered in the regression model, maternal distress had a mediating influence on the relationship between maternal expectations and many components related to HRQoL (including social functioning, physical and emotional role). Expectations, is an essential part of the transition process during pregnancy. Enhancing this adjustment process can allow for improved HRQoL for mothers, particularly those who are having difficulties. Midwives need to be responsive to maternal expectations, and related emotional work. Taking the time to ask appropriate questions during the antenatal period will highlight issues for mothers and identify how these may affect HRQoL. Educating mothers on realistic perceptions about emotional work, personal lifestyle changes and relationship adjustments can help their HRQoL.

Biography

Elizabeth Emmanuel has extensive clinical experience in clinical midwifery. She followed up this interest through higher degree studies and completed a PhD at Griffith University, Australia. She has since joined academia to teach nurses and midwives and pursue her interest in midwifery and women's health. She has published on maternal role development, maternal distress, social support and quality of life during the childbearing period. She is currently teaching at Southern Cross University, a regional tertiary centre on the Gold Coast.

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