

The Negative Impact of the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic on Maternal and Child Health, Considering Maternal Experiences of Abuse and Neglect in Childhood

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Abstract : Preventive isolation and social distancing strategies during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic have confronted families with a variety of different restrictions and stresses. Especially during this stressful time, children need a stable parental home to avoid developmental disorders. Additional risk factors such as maternal childhood abuse and neglect (CM) experiences may influence mothers' psychosomatic health (pG) and children's physical well-being (kW) during times of increased stress. Our aim was to analyse the interaction between maternal CM, maternal pG and children's kW during the pandemic. Mothers from a well-documented birth cohort to study transgenerational transmission of CM, were included in an online 'pandemic' survey assessing maternal pG and children's physical health during the pandemic. Our mediation analysis showed a significant positive association between the extent of maternal CM experiences, mothers' psychosomatic symptoms and their children's kW. Maternal psychosomatic symptoms significantly mediate the interaction between CM and children's kW; the direct effect remains non-significant when maternal psychosomatic symptoms are included as mediators. Maternal CM appears to be a relevant risk factor for maternal pG and children's kW during the pandemic. Maternal CM experiences seem to influence the way parents cope with stressful situations and increase the risk of suffering from depressive symptoms. The latter also affect their children's kW. Our findings underline the importance of carefully assessing the specific situation of families with children and offering individually adapted help to help families survive the pandemic.

Keywords : pandemic, maternal health, child health, abuse, neglect, maternal experiences

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