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EXPLORING ANTENATAL FACTORS IN POSTNATAL DEPRESSION

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Up to 20% of all new mothers may suffer from postnatal depression. This amounts to around 3,500 mothers each year in Auckland alone. The effects of postnatal depression are far reaching and can impact detrimentally on the lives of mothers and those close to them. To understand more about postnatal depression, British researchers Cooper, Murray, Hooper, and West (1996) developed a measure for identifying antenatally women who may be at risk of developing postnatal depression. The present study examined the predictive validity of Cooper et al.'s antenatal index in identifying mothers likely to develop postnatal depression in a New Zealand population. Ninety-eight Auckland mothers completed antenatal and postnatal questionnaires that included Cooper et al.'s predictive index, the GHQ-12 and the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale. Results suggested that the predictive ability of Cooper et al.'s measure improved when including an antenatal measure of general wellbeing (the GHQ-12) into the regression equation. The results suggested that 6% of the variance in postnatal depression scores was attributed to the antenatal predictive index. The GHQ-12 added to the predictive ability by explaining an additional 19% of the variance in postnatal depression scores. Discriminant analysis showed that the percentage of cases correctly classified into depressed and non-depressed was 66% and the sensitivity, specificity and positive predictive value of the antenatal measures achieved comparable findings to that of Cooper et al. Recommendations for future research include using a different methodological approach and investigating the predictive power of the General Health Questionnaire further.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE...................................................................... i
ABSTRACT..................................................................... ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS............................................... iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.................................................. iv
LIST OF TABLES .......................................................... vii
LIST OF FIGURES ......................................................... vii
INTRODUCTION............................................................. 1

CHAPTER ONE
LITERATURE REVIEW................................................... 4

1.1 Overview of postnatal depression ................................. 4
  1.1.1 The course of pregnancy ........................................ 4
  1.1.2 The post-pregnancy environment .............................. 5
  1.1.3 Postnatal depression defined ................................. 6
  1.1.4 Impact of postnatal depression ............................... 7
  1.1.5 Identifying mothers with postnatal depression .......... 9

1.2 Models and theories of postnatal depression ................. 10
  1.2.1 Biological theories .............................................. 11
  1.2.2 A psychosocial model of postnatal depression ......... 12
  1.2.3 A biopsychosocial model ..................................... 13
  1.2.4 Treating postnatal depression ............................... 14

1.3 Predictors of postnatal depression ............................... 18
  1.3.1 Postnatal depression in New Zealand mothers .......... 23
    1.3.1.1 Satisfaction with maternity care ..................... 23
    1.3.1.2 Parity ....................................................... 24
    1.3.1.3 Education ............................................... 24
    1.3.1.4 Housing .................................................. 25
    1.3.1.5 Age ......................................................... 25
    1.3.1.6 Length of hospital stay ................................ 25
    1.3.1.7 Social support .......................................... 26
    1.3.1.8 General wellbeing .................................... 27

1.4 Predictive measures of postnatal depression ............... 28
  1.4.1 Common predictors ........................................... 28
  1.4.2 Timing of administration ................................... 31
  1.4.3 Control groups .............................................. 31
  1.4.4 Identifying postnatal depression .......................... 31
  1.4.5 Sensitivity and specificity .................................. 32
  1.4.6 Methodological issues ...................................... 33

1.5 Cooper et al.’s (1996) antenatal predictive index ......... 35

1.6 The purpose of the research .................................... 37
  1.6.1 Aims and objectives .......................................... 37
  1.6.2 Rationale ...................................................... 37

CHAPTER TWO
METHOD .................................................................... 39
2.1 Participants 39
2.2 Design of the research 41
2.3 Timing of administration 41
2.4 Measures 42
  2.4.1 The 17-item antenatal predictive index (Cooper, Murray, Hooper and West, 1996). 42
  2.4.2 General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1978). 43
  2.4.3 Satisfaction with maternity care (maternity satisfaction) 44
  2.4.4 Additional postnatal questions 45
  2.4.5 Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (Cox, Holden & Sagovsky, 1987). 45
2.5 Procedure 47
2.6 Data analysis 48

CHAPTER THREE
RESULTS 51
3.1 Data screening 51
3.2 Power analyses 52
  3.2.1 Two-tailed independent samples t-test and repeated measures t-test 53
  3.2.2 Pearson Product Moment correlation 53
  3.2.3 Chi-square test (2x2) 53
  3.2.4 One-way ANOVA 53
3.3 Assessing normality of distributions 53
3.4 Comparison of demographic data 54
3.5 Satisfaction with maternity care 55
  3.5.1 Satisfaction with choices available for maternity care 55
  3.5.2 Satisfaction with maternity caregiver 55
  3.5.3 Type of maternity care preferred by second-time mothers 55
3.6 History of depression 55
3.7 Social support 57
3.8 Housing 58
3.9 Employment 58
3.10 Education 59
3.11 Postnatal experiences 60
3.12 Scores on antenatal predictive measures of PND 61
3.13 One-sample chi-square test assessing goodness of fit 62
3.14 Chi-square tests for relatedness 62
3.15 T-tests 63
  3.15.1 General wellbeing (GHQ-12 antenatal and postnatal) 63
  3.15.2 Previous postnatal depression 63
3.16 Analysis of Variance 64
3.17 Correlations 64
3.18 Principal Components Analysis and Factor Analysis 66
  3.18.1 Principal Components Analysis of the GHQ-12 antenatal questionnaire (antenatal wellbeing) 66
  3.18.2 Factor analysis of the GHQ-12 antenatal questionnaire (antenatal wellbeing) 67
  3.18.3 Factor analysis of the GHQ-12 postnatal questionnaire (postnatal wellbeing) 68
  3.18.4 Factor analysis of the EPDS 69
3.19 Reliability 73
3.20 Multiple Regression 74
3.21 Discriminant Analysis ........................................................................................................... 75
3.22 Sensitivity, specificity and positive predictive value of the antenatal predictive measures ................................................................................................................................. 77
3.23 Supplementary analyses ........................................................................................................ 79
3.24 Post-hoc power analyses ....................................................................................................... 80
   3.24.1 Independent samples t-test (two-tailed) ............................................................................ 81
   3.24.2 Pearson Product Moment Correlation ............................................................................. 81
   3.24.3 Multiple Regression (Standard) ....................................................................................... 82
   3.24.4 Multiple Regression (Hierarchical) ................................................................................. 82

CHAPTER FOUR
DISCUSSION ................................................................................................................................... 83

4.1 Sample ..................................................................................................................................... 83
4.2 Questionnaires ........................................................................................................................ 84
4.3 Power analyses ....................................................................................................................... 84
4.4 Individual predictive variables of PND .................................................................................. 84
   4.4.1 Parity ................................................................................................................................ 85
   4.4.2 History of depression ........................................................................................................ 85
   4.4.3 Previous PND .................................................................................................................. 85
   4.4.4 Partners and social support .............................................................................................. 86
   4.4.5 Level of education ........................................................................................................... 86
   4.4.6 Housing conditions ......................................................................................................... 87
   4.4.7 Employment .................................................................................................................... 87
   4.4.8 Age ................................................................................................................................. 87
4.5 Antenatal predictive measures for PND .................................................................................. 88
   4.5.1 GHQ-12 (antenatal wellbeing) ......................................................................................... 88
   4.5.2 Cooper et al.'s antenatal predictive index (antenatal risk factors) ................................. 90
   4.5.3 Antenatal predictive measures combined (the GHQ-12 and Cooper et al.'s antenatal predictive index) ................................................................................................................. 91
   4.5.4 Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale ......................................................................... 92
   4.5.5 Satisfaction with maternity care ..................................................................................... 93
   4.5.6 Postnatal experiences ...................................................................................................... 94
4.6 Sensitivity, specificity and positive predictive value ............................................................... 95
4.7 Limitations ............................................................................................................................. 96
4.8 Recommendations for future studies ..................................................................................... 98
4.9 Summary ............................................................................................................................... 102

REFERENCES .................................................................................................................................. 104

APPENDIX A .................................................................................................................................... 115
A1. Information sheet .................................................................................................................... 115
A2. Consent form .......................................................................................................................... 119
A3. Pregnancy questionnaire ........................................................................................................ 121
A4. Letter sent with postnatal questionnaire. ............................................................................. 128
A5. Postnatal questionnaire .......................................................................................................... 129
A6. Letter sent informing mothers of high scores on the EPDS. ............................................. 135
A7. Newspaper Advertisement ................................................................................................... 136

APPENDIX B .................................................................................................................................... 137
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Effects on children born to mothers with postnatal depression 8
Table 2: Predictors of postnatal depression and related research findings 20
Table 3: The development of antenatal predictive indexes for postnatal depression 29
Table 4: Percentage of first-time mothers, range of ages and ethnicity 40
Table 5: Mean scores for measures with and without outliers 52
Table 6: Demographic data 54
Table 7: Scores on EPDS by parity, previous postnatal depression, antenatal anxiety and antenatal depression 56
Table 8: Relationships with mothers, partners and others 57
Table 9: Employment status 59
Table 10: Postnatal experiences 60
Table 11: Percentage of mothers with high scores on the antenatal measures 61
Table 12: Chi-square tests for parity, history of depression and antenatal depression 63
Table 13: Correlations 65
Table 14: Rotated Component Matrix for the GHQ-12 antenatal questionnaire (antenatal wellbeing) 71
Table 15: Factor Matrix for the GHQ-12 antenatal questionnaire (antenatal wellbeing) 71
Table 16: Factor Matrix for the GHQ-12 postnatal questionnaire (postnatal wellbeing) 72
Table 17: Factor Matrix for the EPDS 72
Table 18: Reliability scores for measures 73
Table 19: Comparison of performance of Cooper et al.’s antenatal predictive index (antenatal risk factors) 79
Table 20: Results obtained at different cut-off points for the EPDS 80
Table 21: Post hoc power analyses for correlations (two-tailed) 81
Table B1: Counts of observed and expected frequencies for chi-square tests 137
Table B2: Count of weeks pregnant when filling in the antenatal questionnaire and age of baby when filling in the postnatal questionnaire 138
Table B3: Analysis of variance for education, range of ages and hospital stay 140
Table B4: Live births by urban area (Auckland) by ethnicity of mother for year ending 1999 142
Table B5: Live births by urban area (Auckland) by ethnicity of mother for February-August 2000 in the present study 143

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Percentage of mothers from different Auckland regions 41
Figure 2: Educational qualifications 59
Figure B1: Scatterplot of correlations between the measures 139
Figures B2 and B3: Standardised residuals for EPDS scores 141