



Original article

The effect of maternal obesity on self-esteem and body image

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ABSTRACT

Abstract stress, dissatisfaction and the feeling of inadequacy experienced as a result of the change in appearance caused by weight gain affects self-esteem and body image of pregnant women negatively. The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between maternal obesity, self-esteem and body image. The study was performed through a questionnaire in a state hospital in Trabzon, Turkey with 300 unselected pregnant women who were recruited from the delivery unit. As data collection tools, Body Image Scale (BAS) and Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale (GIS) were used between April and May 2016. According to BMI variables, 12.3%, 57.0% and 30.7% of the pregnant women were normal, overweight and obese respectively and gained an average of 12.11 ± 3.03 kg during pregnancy. Accordingly, the majority of pregnant women who participated in this study were found to be overweight and obese. While the body image of pregnant women surveyed in this study was at a high level (158.84 ± 21.34), their average self-esteem was found at a moderate level (64.01 ± 15.88). Based on BMI, 56.8% of the women with normal weight perceived themselves as normal, 48.0% of overweight women perceived themselves as normal and 53.3% of obese women perceived themselves as overweight. There was a positive significant relationship between participants' body image and their BMI ($r = 0.119$, $p < 0.05$). The pregnant women with normal BMI were more likely to feel satisfied. While 56.8% of the pregnant women at normal weight based on BMI were found to feel satisfied and 43.3% of those overweight felt satisfied, 54.3% of obese ones did not feel satisfied. A weak positive significant correlation was found between body image and self-esteem ($r = 0.172$; $p = 0.003 < 0.05$). As the self-esteem increases, body image increases, too. It was found that the majority of pregnant women were overweight and obese according to BMI and their average body image and self-esteem were high and medium level respectively.

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1. Introduction

Obesity is one of the greatest public health challenges of the 21st century and it is also rapidly increasing among women of childbearing age (Baltacı, 2008; Can et al., 2014; Apay and Pasinlioğlu, 2009). The most accessible, simple and widely used diagnosis measure of obesity is body mass index (BMI). The formula for BMI is weight in kilograms divided by height in meters

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squared and while it is normal between 18.5 and 24.9 and overweight between 25 and 29.9, it is considered as obesity when the values are 30 and above (WHO, 2001). The body image and self-esteem of pregnant women is affected negatively by the changes experienced in external appearance due to weight gain during pregnancy (Okanlı et al., 2003; Yanıkerem et al., 2006). Body image is defined as the intrinsic expression of an adult appearance. In a study by Boscaglia et al. (2003) it has been reported that there is a significant reduction in the satisfaction levels of pregnant women with their body image from pre-pregnancy period to early stages of pregnancy. Pregnant women perceive their bodies unattractive especially during the last trimester and this negatively affects their self-esteem (Smith et al., 2008). Additionally, there are studies showing that this situation is also effective on the relationship between spouses during the pregnancy period. Welsh (2010) also reported that 13.1% of the women were worried about the fact that the weight they gained in pregnancy would have a negative impact on their relationship with their spouses (Welsh, 2010).

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Similarly, Johnson et al. (2004) indicated that the pressure about being slim caused by the spouses and the media had a negative effect on the husband-wife relations (Johnson et al., 2004). Babacan-Gümüş et al. (2011) reported that women who perceived their self-esteem and body image positively in the pregnancy were more likely to have a better relationship with their spouses compared with those who perceived it negatively (Babacan-Gümüş et al., 2011). This suggests that this situation is too important to be ignored in terms of the relationship between spouses after pregnancy in marriage.

Self-esteem is defined as the value that individuals attach themselves as a result of their life style perceptions and life experiences (Cüceloğlu, 2005). Whether self-conception is appreciated or not builds self-esteem (Hamurcu et al., 2015). That an individual is satisfied with his/her body is associated with self-esteem (Özmen et al., 2007).

In a study conducted with pregnant women in various cultures, individuals have expressed their concerns about weight gain during pregnancy and indicated that they have felt less attractive than before pregnancy. Likewise, individuals who are satisfied with their body during pregnancy have shown less negative mood symptoms than those who are not satisfied (Chang et al., 2006). In the literature, high self-esteem is reported to cause pregnant women to protect against stress, use better coping mechanisms and experience a more positive process during pregnancy (Kamysheva et al., 2005).

The development of self-esteem should be given due importance so as to enable pregnant women to have healthy psychology and increase their quality of life during pregnancy because negative body image also affects self-esteem in a negative way. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the body image of a pregnant woman during pregnancy to prevent the problems that may arise (Kumcağz, 2012). Taking the small number of studies on this subject carried out in Turkey into consideration, this study is thought to make a significant contribution to the literature on the effect of maternal obesity on body image and self-esteem.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Type of research

This study is a descriptive research.

2.2. Location and time of the research

The research was carried out from April 15 to May 15, 2016 at Trabzon Kanuni Training and Research Hospital. Trabzon Kanuni Training and Research Hospital is located in the northeast of the country as a regional hospital and serves women in all socio-economic status in terms of the intensity of the patients.

2.3. Population and sample

The research population consisted of all women (7776) at 38–40 pregnancy week admitted to the Maternity Ward all year round at Trabzon Kanuni Training and Research Hospital. To calculate the minimum sample size to be taken to the research, the sample selection formula was used when the number of individuals in the universe is known. According to this formula, the sample of the research must be at least 275 individuals. ($7776 * 3.84 * (0.25 * 0.75) / 0.0025 * 7775 + 0.96 = 275$ people). The study was completed with 300 people.

In the sample selection, women with delirium, amnesic disorders, epilepsy, seizures history, a physical illness that led to a loss of a specific function and those who had loss of consciousness as a

result of a head trauma, mental retardation, other neurological disorders, drug addiction and obesity depending on an endocrine disorder were excluded from the study.

2.4. Data collection tool

All the pregnant women were informed about the study and their consent was obtained. The data were collected through face to face interviews by the researchers. In collecting the data, 'Personal Information Form', 'Body Image Scale (BIS) and Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale (CSES) were used.

2.5. Data collection

Personal Information Form: This form consists of questions that contain information related to socio-demographic characteristics of the pregnant women.

2.5.1. Body Image Scale (BIS)

It aims to measure how satisfied a person is with various parts and functions of his/her body. The scale has 40 items which are scored from 1 to 6. High scores indicate high satisfaction levels (Hovardaoglu and Özdemir, 1990).

2.5.2. Coopersmith self-esteem inventory

It is a measurement tool used to assess a person's attitudes about herself in various areas. The scale has 25 items and the total score value obtained from the scale can vary between 0 and 100. As the scores received from the scale increase, self-esteem of individuals increases too (Pişkin, 1997).

2.6. Data analysis

The data obtained in the study were analyzed using SPSS 22.0 software. In the evaluation of the data, numbers, percentage, mean, chi-square were used as descriptive statistical methods. ANOVA (one way) test was used in comparing quantitative continuous data between more than two independent groups. Following Anova test, Scheffe test was used as a complementary post hoc analysis to determine differences. Pearson correlation and regression analysis were used between continuous variables of the study. The findings were evaluated in the 95% confidence interval and $p < 0.05$ significance level.

2.7. Ethical aspects of research

Before starting the research, approval and the necessary permits were obtained from Trabzon Kanuni Training and Research Hospital Research Ethics Committee. The pregnant women were informed about the aim of the research and "Informed Consent", "Privacy and Protection of Privacy" and "Respect for Autonomy" principles were fulfilled by informing them about the purpose of the study, providing voluntary participation and ensuring to keep the data confidential respectively (Bayık, 2004).

3. Results

In this section, to solve the research problem there are findings obtained from the analysis of the data collected from the participants through the scales. Based on the findings, explanations and comments are presented.

The average "body image" and "self-esteem" of pregnant women were found as (158.840 ± 21.344) and (16.003 ± 3.971) respectively.

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