

Review Paper:

The Effect of Tokophobia on Mother and Child's Health: A Literature Review



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ABSTRACT

Background: Tokophobia has been defined as a psychological disorder which ranges from insignificant to extreme fear of childbirth. The prevalence of tokophobia in pregnant women is estimated to be 14-20%. There is a significant evidence that tokophobia has serious long-term and debilitating adverse effects on both mother and child. The purpose of this study was to review the effect of tokophobia on the health status of mothers and children.

Methods: In this review study, the search was conducted among related papers indexed in Google Scholar, PubMed, MEDLINE, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Scopus, PsycINFO and SID (Scientific Information Database) databases. The used keywords were "tokophobia", "fear of childbirth", "child mental health", "child health", and "mother's health". Articles published from 1995 to 2018 were selected. Of 38 searched articles, after reviewing abstract and full texts, 13 were excluded and in the end, 25 papers were selected for the review.

Results: Results were categorized in two main categories: 1. Mother's health consequences: insomnia, increased maternal cortisol level, increased request for cesarean section, longer labor period, antenatal depression, anxiety disorders, increased risk postnatal depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, avoiding further pregnancy or increased interval between pregnancies, increased instrumental birth, stronger need for pain relief and epi-dural anesthesia, subsequent sterilization, loss of self-control, fear of own incompetence, change in eating habits and physical activity, fear of not being able to take care of baby; 2. Child's health consequences: Decreased child-mother bonding, increased rate of admission to neonatal intensive care unit due to diseases, lower birth weight, and negative effects on the infant's emotional and social reactions.

Conclusions: Given the negative effect of tokophobia on mother and child's health, diagnosis of tokophobia and close liaison with the obstetrician and the comprehensive therapeutic assessment may reduce the morbidity rate associated with tokophobia.

Keywords: Tokophobia, Fear of childbirth, Pediatric health, Maternal health
