

PP 57

Perceived stress and its associated factors among pregnant women in Colombo North Teaching Hospital, Ragama

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Background: Stress is a very common mental health problem among pregnant women that can adversely affect both mother and the baby. The global prevalence of stress is 10% during the pregnancy.

Objective: This study aimed to assess perceived stress and its associated factors among pregnant women in Colombo North Teaching Hospital (CNTH) Ragama.

Method: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 322 pregnant women who were admitted to the antenatal wards in CNTH, Ragama. A systematic random sampling method was used to select the participants. Stress levels of mothers were measured using the Perceived stress scale (Sheldon Cohen- 10 item scale) that has been validated in Sri Lanka. Scores ranging from 0-13, 14-26 and 27-40 were respectively considered as low, moderate, and high stress. Additional data were collected by using a pretested interviewer-administered questionnaire which was developed and pretested by the researchers. Descriptive statistics and Chi-square test were performed to analyze data using the statistical package SPSS version 23.0.

Results: About half (49.9%) of the respondents belonged to the age group of 21-30 years and 3.3% of the participants were unmarried. Nearly half (54.2%) of the participants were in the third trimester and 37.3% were primi mothers. The majority (65.5%) were educated up to advanced level. Nearly half (44.8%) of them were employed. About 60% of women had planned pregnancies. The majority (77%) had reported moderate levels of stress followed by 10% who had high, and 13% who had low levels of stress. The mean stress score was 18.1 ± 1.2 . The educational status ($p=0.05$), employment status ($p=0.01$), living arrangement ($p=0.04$), living in own house ($p=0.00$), engagement of leisure time activities (0.00), and age of the last baby were ($p=0.00$) significantly associated with perceived stress ($p \leq 0.05$).

Conclusion: Prevalence of perceived stress was moderate among pregnant mothers and factors such as education, employment, and living status were the determinants of perceived stress.