

## Assessment of the health behaviors patterns among women during pregnancy

### تقييم أنماط السلوكيات الصحية بين النساء خلال فترة الحمل

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#### الخلاصة :

الهدف:-إن سلوك النساء خلال الحمل من الممكن ان يؤثر على صحة رضيعها وربما تكون ناتجة عن موقفها اتجاه الحمل لذا تهدف الدراسة تقييم أنماط السلوكيات الصحية للنساء خلال الحمل .  
المنهجية: تم اجراء دراسة وصفية باختيار عينة عشوائية من (١٠٠) أمراه حامل يراجعن مستشفى بغداد التعليمي وتم جمع العينة بالمقابلة الشخصية باستخدام الاستمارة الاستبانة المعدة لأغراض الدراسة.  
النتائج:- ظهرت الدراسة ان نسبة عالية من عينة الدراسة هم ضمن الفئة العمرية ( ٢١-٢٥ ) سنة ، خريجات الابتدائية وريبات بيوت و ( ٦٤ % ) منهن كانوا بكريات الحمل و (٧٢%) منهن لديهن ، (١-٢) ولادة سابقة و (٦٤%) منهن ليست لديهن إسقاطات سابقة ، فيما يتعلق بنمط السلوكيات الصحية للنساء الحوامل كانت فقرات الغذاء الصحي جيدة بينما السلوكيات الصحية للنوم والاسترخاء والتمارين الرياضية ، استخدام الادوية والأعشاب والرعاية الصحية خلال فترة الحمل فكانت جميعها ضعيفة .  
التوصيات:- أوصت الدراسة ببناء برنامج تثقيفي للنساء الحوامل لتعزيز نمط سلوكياتهم الصحية خلال فترة الحمل للوقاية من مضاعفات الحمل والولادة عن طريق المراكز الصحية ووسائل الاعلام .  
الكلمات المفتاحية : السلوكيات الصحية ،أنماط ، النساء ، الحمل

#### Abstract

**Objective:-** Women's behavior during pregnancy which can affect the health of their infant , may be influenced by their attitude toward the pregnancy. The study was carried out to assess the pattern of health behaviors for pregnant women.

**Methodology:** A descriptive study was carried out to select randomized (100) pregnant women attending Baghdad Teaching hospital. The data were collected through personal interview by using questionnaire form constructed for the purpose of the study.

**Results:-** The result of the study revealed that the highest percentage of study sample were in age group (21-25) years, primary graduated and house wife . The results showed that the highest percentage( 64%) of them were primigravida, (72%) of them have (1-2) children and( 64% )of them had no previous history to abortion . Regarding the pattern of pregnantwomen's health behaviors about healthy food was good, while their health behaviors about the sleep ,relaxation ,exercise ,using medication herbs and health care during pregnancy were poor .

**Recommendation:-**The study recommended establishment educational program for pregnant women's to promote their health behaviors during pregnancy in order to prevent the pregnancy and labor complications through. MCHC and mass media.

**Key words :** Health behavior ,Patterns, women , pregnancy .

#### Introduction

The identification and modification of women's health

behaviors in pregnancy is important for implementation of health promotion programs . Many researchers emphasize the necessity to analyze changes that occur in health behaviors before and during pregnancy <sup>(1)</sup> . It is equally important to undertake educational, consultative and preventive measures to fight obesity among pregnant women <sup>(2)</sup>. As well as to prevent pregnancy complications through proper preparation to childbirth and implementing appropriate health behaviors both before and during pregnancy <sup>(3)</sup>. In the past decade ,evidence has accumulated that women's behavior during pregnancy can strongly affect the health of their infants <sup>(4)</sup>. Many life style factors contribute to and can have adverse effects on the health and wellbeing of a women and her baby during pregnancy , birth and beyond <sup>(5)</sup>. For example maternal smoking and poor weight gain during pregnancy have consistently been shown to increase an infant's risk of low birth weight <sup>(4)</sup>, and smoking increases the risk of complications such as miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, placental abruption and gestational diabetes fetal growth restriction pre-term birth, congenital anomalies and perinatal death <sup>(5)</sup> passive exposure to

smoke is also associated with low birth weight , fetal growth restriction and perinatal death, it turns out that pregnancy can be a good point in life for promotion of healthy eating and physical activity , and it can help preventing over weight and obesity in late life <sup>(6)</sup>, so in order to counteract unhealthy behaviors ,it is of special importance to spread and promote knowledge concerning health behaviors among women in reproductive age and to provide specific recommendation <sup>(7)</sup>.

#### **Objectives of the study**

The aim of our study was to assess the health behaviors pattern among women during pregnancy.

#### **Methodology:**

A descriptive study was carried out to assess the pattern of health behaviors among pregnant women. Randomized sample was selected for (100) pregnant women who attending Baghdad Teaching Hospital. The data were collected through the utilization of interview technique from the period Nov. 2016 to Mar.2017 through an extensive review of relevant literature and previous studies an assessment tool was constructed for the purpose of the study which consists of four parts : Socio-demographic data , reproductive

data , and data regarding the health behaviors during pregnancy by using health practice questionnaire (HPQ)<sup>(8)</sup>. Which consists of 35 items concerning four domain (health diet, exercise , relaxation and sleep , using medication and herbal, and antenatal care ) with minor change were performed on few items and modified to be suitable of the present study . The data of the study were analyzed through the application of the following statistical approaches .Descriptive data analysis

(frequency, percentage , mean of score , standard deviation) ,for assessment the health behaviors among women were select (3) level type of likert scale. The rating score for the questionnaire was [3] for always , (2) for sometimes ,and (1) for never , with cutoff point=2 . The health behaviors rated as the following Good =Equal or more than cut off point (>2) poor =Less than the cutoff point (<2)

#### Results:

**Table (1): Distribution of the study sample according to socio-Demographic characteristics N=100**

Variables	F.	%
Age / years		
< 20	9	9%
21-25	37	37%
26-30	28	28%
31-35	17	17%
36-40	9	9%
<b>Mean Score ± SD 27.1±6</b>		
Level of education		
Read and write	19	19%
Primary graduate	34	34%
Intermediate graduate	12	12%
Secondary gradate	21	21%
College graduate	14	14%
Occupation		
House wife	64	64%
Worker	36	36%

**F.= Frequency , %= Percentage**

**Table (1):**shows that the highest percentage 37% of study sample at age group 21-25 years, while the lowest percentage 9% of then at age less than 20 and at

age group 36-40 years and the mean score of and SD was  $27.1 \pm 6$ . Regarding the educational level of study sample 34% were primary graduated and more than half of the study sample 64% were house wife .

**Table (2): Distribution of the study sample according to reproduction characteristics N=100**

Variables	F.	%
Gravida		
Primigravida	64	64%
Multi gravida	36	36%
Para		
1-2	72	72%
3-4	28	28%
Abortion		
yes	36	36%
No	64	64%

F.= Frequency , %= Percentage

**Table (2)** Shows that the highest percentage 64% of study sample were primigravida and two –third of then 72% have 1-2 children. More than half of study sample 64% have on history of abortion , while only 36% of then have previous history of abortion .

**Table (3): Distribution of Study sample according to their health behaviors during pregnancy .**

Items	Always	Some times	Never	Total	Mean score
*Health diet pattern					
1-Consume adequate amounts of calcium.	39	49	12	100	2.27
2-Consume adequate amounts of milk product .	40	44	16	100	2.24
3-Take re commended vitamins.	52	40	8	100	2.24
4-Consume at least five fruits vegetables each day	38	54	8	100	2.2
5-drinking less of caffeine (Coffe , tea, CoCa )	54	34	12	100	2.42
<b>Grand Mean 2.33</b>					
*Sleep , relaxation and Exercise					
1-Getting at least 8 hours of sleep.	44	41	15	100	2.29
2- Exercising at least 3 times a week	17	35	48	100	1.69
3- Engage in relaxing activities	19	38	43	100	1.76
4- Not taking excessively hot baths .	26	31	43	100	1.83
<b>Grand Mean 1.51</b>					
*Using medications and herbs					
1-Refraining from use of un recommended herbs	60	25	15	100	2.45

2-Refraining from use of unrecommended drugs	22	30	50	100	1.77
3- You discuss any one when you need some supplements	23	31	46	100	1.77
<b>Grand mean 1.97</b>					

**Table (3):** Reveals that the mean of score of all items related to health diet pattern were above of cutoff point and grand mean score was (2.33) which indicates for good health behaviors while the grand mean score of items related to relaxation and exercise was (1.51) lower than cut off point , also concerning using medication , and herbs the grand mean (1.97) was lower than cutoff point which indicates for poor health behaviors during pregnancy .

**Table (4): Distribution of Study sample according for their antenatal care behaviors .**

Items	Always	Some times	Never	Total	Mean Score
<b>*Antenatal care</b>					
1-Avoid smoking	53	15	32	100	2.21
2-Reading food labels	26	43	31	100	1.95
3-Receiving regular dental care	14	47	39	100	1.57
4-Seek to gain an appropriate amount of weight	12	42	46	100	1.66
5-Avoiding exposure to dangerous substances	36	26	38	100	1.98
6-Wearing seatbelt	16	59	25	100	1.91
7-Avoid the risks of toxoplasmosis	25	36	39	100	1.86
8- Avoid carrying heavy things	48	30	22	100	2.26
9-Avoid exposure to communicable diseases	36	46	18	100	2.18
10-The use of health care providers in the event of questions	29	36	35	100	1.94
11-Engage in activities to learn about pregnancy and birth	12	19	69	100	1.43
12-Discuss about pregnancy and birth with others	39	35	26	100	2.13
13-Regnlar attending maternal health centers.	40	27	33	100	2.07
<b>Grand Mean 1.94</b>					

**Table (4):** Shows that the grand mean score (1.94) was lower than cutoff point regarding study sample antenatal care behaviors . Which means poor health behaviors related to this domain .

## Discussion

Many authors deal with the problem of health behaviors and quality of life in women during pregnancy .A change of health behaviors in perinatal period seems to be a crucial point that motivates women to maintain the change in the postnatal period and throughout life <sup>(6)</sup>.

The present study shows that the highest percentage of age ranged from 21-25 years. Primary graduated , more than half of them were house wife , primi-gravida , two –third of than have 1-2 child and on previous history of abortion. While 36% of them had previous history of abortion , and this may be related to some bad behaviors during pregnancy which lead to abortion . In previous study mentioned that the mean age respondents were 29.1 years old, SD=3.4 with higher education there was 88.2% and only 0.7% with primary education <sup>(1)</sup>.

Regarding the health diet pattern domain the present study findings that the grand mean score was above the cutoff point which means that study sample has good health behaviors

related to this domain as shown in table <sup>(3)</sup>. The findings was supported by the result of the study who reported that more than 49% of the women made changes in their diet and vitamin intake during pregnancy <sup>(9)</sup>. Previous studies have confirmed that the health and nutritional status of pregnant women before and during pregnancy that effect on the development of the fetus . Proper nutrition during pregnancy reduces the risk of diabetes , high blood pressure and prevents excessive weight gain . So pregnant food should be balanced and integrated and contains all nutrients because fetal health is linked to maternal health <sup>(10,11)</sup>.

Concerning the other domains, the findings indicates that the grand mean score was lower than cutoff which means poor health behaviors related to relaxation , exercise and using medication , and antenatal care as shown in table (3-4). The results were disagree with the results of the study who stated that more than 49% of women made change in their exercise pattern , smoking habits , and alcohol

use during pregnancy <sup>(9)</sup>. Other study reported that , it is important to continue to exercise during pregnancy and should be able to continue working during pregnancy , but avoid violent movements such as Jumping and hard work especially carrying heavy things because it may lead to abortion , premature birth and abruption placenta<sup>(10)</sup>. The results of the present study were disagree with a study that stated ,the vast majority 95% of women reported that they did not use drugs during their pregnancy <sup>(4)</sup>. Studies confirm the dangers of using herbs without consulting a specialist before taking them and it is best to refrain from using them because some of them act as an activator such as cinnamon because it helps to constrict the uterus and then abortion as well as drinking rose water , parsley , thyme and ring because it drinks lead to abortion <sup>(4)</sup>. Previous studies have confirmed also about the importance of health care during pregnancy . Among the most important things to follow during pregnancy is to avoid smoking and exposure to passive smoking .The risk of pregnant women in the smoker category is higher for fetal loss , preterm labor and increased mortality rate <sup>(12)</sup>.

There is evidence that smoking cessation , particularly with in the first trimester can reduce these risks <sup>(5)</sup>. Research results indicate that obesity is a serious social health problem <sup>(13)</sup>. The main reasons for excessive weight gain are insufficient knowledge concerning healthy eating habits, lack of awareness of possible complications and lack of professional guidance <sup>(14)</sup>. The findings of present study were unsupported with previous studies which pointed to the importance of dental care during pregnancy and should protect it from decay <sup>(11)</sup>. Avoid the risk of infection with toxoplasmosis and stay a wag from chemicals during pregnancy such as pesticides and solvents such as lead cleaners, mercury and paint devices <sup>(14)</sup>. Other studies stated that pregnant women should be informed of their health behaviors during pregnancy , they should read books, watch videos and communicate with other mothers .They can also ask their doctor or care provider about antenatal courses to help her prepare for labor, the studies confirm that different media , schools , hospitals and health centers play a major role in providing mothers with information about care during pregnancy <sup>(15)</sup>.

## Recommendation

The study recommended:-

- 1- Establishment educational program for pregnant women to promote their health behaviors during pregnancy
- 2- Enhance pregnant women's knowledge through MCHC and mass media.

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