

“What, Me? Worry?”: Thematic Analysis of Anxiety Expressed in Pregnancy-focused Reddit Communities

Stella Rocchi, OMS-3; Claire Nguyen, OMS-3; Anita Nelson, MD. Western University of Health Sciences

INTRODUCTION

- Purpose: identify themes in anxiety during pregnancy from relatively anonymous and unfiltered Reddit communities frequented by pregnant women.
- Current literature relating to perinatal anxiety focuses on prevalence, course, and management, but does not examine experience from the affected women.¹

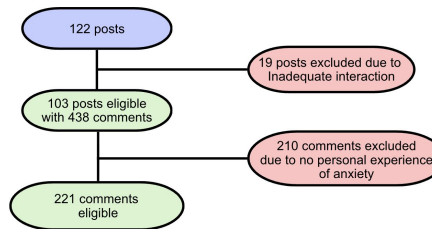
METHODOLOGY

- The initial search term “pregnancy anxiety” revealed Subreddits with the highest frequencies of public posts discussing experience of anxiety in pregnancy.
- Subreddits searched: r/BabyBumps, r/CautiousBB, r/pregnantover35, r/PCOSandpregnant
- These Subreddits were searched with the term “anxiety” to reveal relevant posts.
- Posts detailing relevant personal experiences that had at least 10 combined upvotes and comments were chosen.
- Comments detailing personal experience were included.
- 10 consecutive eligible comments revealed no new themes indicated thematic saturation.
- Themes were identified using a mixed methodology combining prior anticipation of themes, and letting themes emerge throughout data collection.
- Individual posts/comments could contain multiple themes and were therefore coded into more than one category.

RESULTS

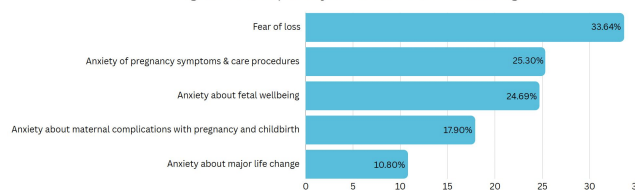
- Of the 122 posts and 438 comments from the search, 103 posts and 221 comments met criteria (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Post & Comment eligibility flowsheet.



- The most unexpected finding is that concerns about finances were not seen.
- Fear of loss was the most frequent theme (33.64%). Anxiety of pregnancy symptoms & care procedure is second at 25.30%, followed by anxiety about fetal well being (24.69%). Anxiety about maternal complications with pregnancy and childbirth is at 17.90%, followed by anxiety about major life changes (10.80%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Frequency of Themes in Percentage



Example quotes:

“I felt like something was wrong my entire pregnancy and catastrophised a lot. Every little thing I blew up mentally and would keep myself up at night over it.”

“I had constant anxiety this pregnancy after two different losses. Like debilitating, absolutely losing my mind anxiety.”

DISCUSSION

- With this approach, we contribute deeper understanding of patients’ lived experience of anxiety in pregnancy.
- This can be used to inform future research on screening tools for anxiety during prenatal care.²

CONCLUSION

- Many commented about how this anxiety consumed the majority of their pregnancy and contributed to patient dissatisfaction.
- Findings highlight some significant patient-derived themes that are not captured by standard anxiety screening tools.^{2, 3}

References:

- ¹Viswasam K, Eslick GD, Starcevich V. Prevalence, onset and course of anxiety disorders during pregnancy: A systematic review and meta analysis. *J Affect Disord*. 2019 Aug 1;255:27-40.
- ²Bayrampour H, Hohn RE, Tamana SK, Sawatzky R, Janssen PA, Bone JN, Fairbrother N, Joseph KS. Pregnancy-Specific Anxiety Tool (PSAT): Instrument Development and Psychometric Evaluation. *J Clin Psychiatry*. 2023 Apr 19;84(3):22m14696.
- ³Waqas A, Koukab A, Meraj H, Dua T, Chowdhary N, Fatima B, Rahman A. Screening programs for common maternal mental health disorders among perinatal women: report of the systematic review of evidence. *BMC Psychiatry*. 2022 Jan 24;22(1):54.

Acknowledgements: We would like to thank all of the contributors on Reddit who gave us this valuable firsthand insight that allowed us to complete this project.