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A prospective study of the parent–baby bond in men and women 15 months after birth

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Pages 441-456 | Received 11 Feb 2014, Accepted 17 Aug 2014, Published online: 15 Sep 2014

 Cite this article  <https://doi.org/10.1080/02646838.2014.956301>



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Abstract

Objective: To prospectively examine the impact of parental mental health (PTSD, depression and anxiety), the couple's relationship quality and the infant temperament on the parent–baby bond in first-time mothers and fathers. **Background:** Evidence suggests that poor parental mental health, difficult infant temperament and/or lower quality of the couple's relationship may impede the parent–baby bond. However, little research has included both parents or followed these measures across time. **Methods:** 75 women and 66 men completed questionnaire measures during pregnancy, 3 and 15 months postpartum, assessing mental health symptoms, the parent–baby bond, the couple's relationship and infant characteristics. The response rates at different time-points were 90%, 77% and 70%. **Results:** The parent–baby bond was associated with parental mental health, the couple's relationship and infant characteristics. The most

important predictors of the parent–baby bond three months postpartum for both men and women were the couple’s relationship during pregnancy and their baby’s temperament at three months. At 15 months postpartum, after accounting for the parent–baby bond at 3 months, only concurrent infant temperament remained a significant predictor for women. However, men’s bond with their baby at 15 months was predicted by their relationship with their partner in pregnancy and concurrent affective symptoms. Few significant gender differences were found, apart from women reporting more mental health symptoms than men. Conclusion: This study highlights the significance of the couple’s relationship in pregnancy and the infant’s temperament on the development of the parent–baby bond. Future research is needed to examine this in larger more representative samples.

Keywords:

parent–baby bond mental health longitudinal father(s) mother(s)

Additional information

Funding

Funding. This work was partly supported by the British Academy (LRG-45508).

Related Research Data

[Infants' Temperament and Health Problems according to Maternal Postpartum Depression](#)

Source: Journal of Korean Academy of Nursing

[Perinatal Depression](#)

Source: Obstetrics and Gynecology

[The prevalence of mental health problems in children 1½ years of age – the Copenhagen Child Cohort 2000](#)

Source: Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry

[Paternal postpartum depression, its relationship to maternal postpartum depression, and implications for family health](#)

Source: Journal of Advanced Nursing

Parental perceptions and infant temperament development

Source: Infant Behavior and Development

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