

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**PREVALENCE OF POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH  
HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AND ITS ASSOCIATED  
FACTORS AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN ATTENDING  
AN URBAN PUBLIC MATERNAL AND CHILD  
HEALTH CLINIC IN SELANGOR, MALAYSIA**

**MOHD FARID BIN ABD HAMID**

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for degree of  
**Master of Medicine (Family Medicine)**

**Faculty of Medicine**

**November 2023**

## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Perinatal depression and anxiety are prevalent, but professional mental health help-seeking remains low, resulting in a lack utilization of mental health services. This study aimed to determine the prevalence of positive mental health help-seeking behaviour (MHHSB) among pregnant women and its associated factors. **Methods and Material:** This is a cross-sectional study conducted at an urban public maternal and child health clinic (MCHC) in Selangor. 296 pregnant women were recruited. The Malay version of the MHHSB, Edinburgh Postnatal-Depression Scale (EPDS), Self-Stigma in Seeking Psychological Help (SSOSH), and Mental Health Literacy Scale (MHLS) questionnaires were used for data collection. Factors associated with positive MHHSB were identified through multiple logistic regression analyses. **Results:** The mean ( $\pm$ SD) age was 30.06 ( $\pm$ 5.14) years and more than two third (61%, n=181) were multiparous. More than half (57.4%, n=170) were in their second trimester, while 15.9% (n=47) and 21.3% (n=63) had probable depression and anxiety, respectively. The prevalence of positive MHHSB was 73.6% (95% CI: 0.68, 0.78), yet the prevalence of probable getting professional assistance was 22.6% (95% CI: 0.18, 0.28). Two factors were associated with positive MHHSB. These were probable anxiety [odds ratio (OR)3.86, 95% CI: 1.80, 9.15] and MHLS [OR 1.05, 95% CI: 1.03, 1.08]. **Conclusions:** Positive MHHSB was prevalent among pregnant women, yet the possibility of seeking professional assistance is low. This study emphasizes the importance of mental health literacy in influencing this behaviour. Further research should delve into the unique connection between probable anxiety and mental health help-seeking behaviour discovered in this study.

**Keywords:** Depression; Anxiety; Mental Health Help-seeking behaviour; Pregnancy; Malaysia.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Suraya Abdul Razak, whose guidance, support, and expertise have been invaluable throughout this research journey. Your mentorship and encouragement have shaped not only this thesis but also my growth in this post-graduate study. I am equally indebted to my co-supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Salina Mohamed, whose insights and constructive feedback have significantly enriched the depth and quality of this work.

My appreciation goes to all my respected primary care lecturers, family medicine specialists, and medical officers who aided during this study conduct.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my parents, Abd Hamid Mansor and Saharifah Md Salleh, as well as my parents-in-law, Abdul Kashaf Hanafi and Khalida Amnah, for their unwavering love, sacrifices, and endless encouragement. Their belief in me has been the cornerstone of my academic pursuit, and I am forever grateful for their unwavering support.

To my beloved wife, Nur 'Afeena Al Fahmi Abdul Kashaf, your patience, understanding, and unwavering support have been my pillar of strength. Your constant encouragement and sacrifices made it possible for me to dedicate myself to this endeavour. I am deeply thankful for your presence in my life. I am also grateful to my sons, Waafi Al Fahmi, Wajdi Al Fahmi, and Waiez Al Fahmi, for their boundless enthusiasm, love, and understanding during this demanding phase of my academic journey. Your smiles and support were my motivation to persevere.

Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to my siblings, extended family and friends for their encouragement and belief in my abilities. Their support provided me with the necessary motivation to overcome challenges and excel in my academic pursuits.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you very much.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS .....	i
AUTHOR’S DECLARATION.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	viii
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: MATERIALS AND METHODS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Study Design and Setting .....	4
2.2 Study Population .....	4
2.3 Sampling and data collection .....	4
2.4 Ethical consideration .....	5
2.5 Study Tools .....	5
2.5.1 Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS).....	5
2.5.2 Self-Stigma of Seeking Psychological Help (SSOSH).....	6
2.5.3 Mental Health Literacy Scale (MHLS).....	6
2.5.4 Assessment of Mental Health Help-Seeking Behaviour (MHHSB).....	7
2.5.5 Sample Size.....	10
2.5.6 Statistical Analysis.....	10

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Depression and anxiety are common mental health issues in pregnancy. Women are vulnerable to mental health issues due to the physical and physiological changes during pregnancy.(1) Globally, between 1% and 37% of pregnant women have common mental illnesses; among them, depression and anxiety, with approximately 30% and 26% respectively. (2) Antenatal anxiety and depression are on the rise in Malaysia in which the prevalence of depression has risen from 13.8% in 2016 to 20.2% by 2021.(3, 4) Similarly, the prevalence for anxiety was 18.8% in 2016 and has risen to 28.8% by 2018. (5, 6)

Maternal mental health issues are known to be linked to poor pregnancy outcomes. Depression during pregnancy is associated with unfavourable mother behaviours such as decreased attention to prenatal care, poor attendance at antenatal clinics, and a greater risk of drug addiction.(7) Furthermore, it raises the risk of premature birth and low birth weight.(8) Perinatal depression also has been shown to impair toddlers' emotional, behavioural, and cognitive development.(9) Similar impacts have been documented for pregnant women with anxiety in which smaller gestational age, smaller head circumference, preterm delivery and low birth weight are further consequences of prenatal anxiety.(10) In addition, pregnant women who experience anxiety have a greater chance of passing it on to their offspring.(11) It is also critical to emphasise that if mental health problems are not appropriately addressed during pregnancy, they may remain or worsen postnatally, that substantially impacts the care of their children. As a result, these women tend to abuse and neglect their babies.(2)