

**Abstract:**

Background Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) usually follows a catastrophic event. However, the experience of child birth can be severe enough to cause PTSD in some women. The aim of this study is to highlight the prevalence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among a cohort of postpartum mothers. Methods A cross-sectional study was conducted in field clinics of a semi-urban area in Sri Lanka. A pre-tested interviewer administered checklist was used to collect socio-demographic and pregnancy related data. Pre-existing self-administered, validated Sinhalese versions of the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) and PTSD Symptom Scale-Self Report (PSS-SR) were used to assess the presence of Post-Partum Depression (PPD) and PTSD, respectively. Each participant was assessed for PTSD and PPD after one, two and six months following delivery. Scores of PPD > 9 and PSS-SR > 13 were taken as screening positive for the two conditions, respectively. Results Two hundred and twenty-five mothers at the end of postpartum one month were recruited for the study. The response rate at their follow-up visits at the second and sixth months were 95 % (n = 214) and 93 % (n = 211). The prevalence of postpartum PTSD was 2.7 % (n = 6), 0.9 % (n = 2) and 0.5 % (n = 1) after one, two and sixth months respectively. Prevalence of postpartum PTSD was 3.6 % over 6 months. Verbal abuse during labour (p = 0.04) and the presence of postpartum depression (P ≤ 0.001) were significantly associated with postpartum PTSD. There were no significant associations between PTSD and gestational age at delivery, index pregnancy being a planned pregnancy, a history of subfertility, family history of psychiatric disorders, intimate partner violence, receiving antenatal counseling, type and mode of delivery, duration of labour, presence of a labour companion, post-partum hemorrhage, manual removal of placenta, negative birth experience, low APGAR score of the baby at delivery, receiving neonatal and maternal intensive care, birth defects, problems with breast feeding or opportunity to discuss with a health care worker. Conclusions Prevalence of postpartum PTSD in this community-based study is 3.6 %; which is comparable with the overall global prevalence. PTSD was significantly associated with verbal abuse during labour and postpartum depression.