

Internet Addiction and the Postpartum Depression in Pandemic

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Abstract: *Internet addiction has spread across the globe, affecting individuals of all ages and social groups. Postpartum depression is often caused and intensified in situations of isolation—whether social, medical, residential, or professional. An individual's perception of isolation varies from person to person, and the consequences largely depend on the degree of frustration, induced by specific forms of deprivation. Mothers experiencing postpartum depression often feel a sense of injustice with their destiny, believing they deserve more in life. This dissatisfaction can lead to emotional instability, manifesting as sadness, anxiety, indecisiveness, shame, helplessness, and ultimately, depression. In severe cases, postpartum depression can lead to dismissive behaviour, such as quitting one's job, career, distancing from extended family, friends, or even their own partner. These actions are often caused by a fear of rejection or not wanting to upset the people around them. A major challenge for researchers and therapists lies in the difficulty of accurately defining the subjective experiences, measuring and correlating them with patient's actions and evaluating the consequences reported by the patients. For many women, depression marks the moment when they feel they have lost the "bet with destiny." In such times, their child often becomes their main source of existential motivation to move forward. This is particularly common among mothers with a family history of psychological vulnerability. In some cases, the idea of postpartum depression leads women to rationalise and justify their behaviours, as they struggle with their internal conflicts. The difficult journey from denial to awareness, and eventually to acceptance and reconciliation, can be made possible through specialised support, focused on helping the mother come to terms with her past and adapt to her new life.*

Key words: *addiction, internet, pandemic, postpartum depression.*

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Introduction

The uncertainty, the shortages, the daily variation of social rules, of the working rules, and the permanent appearance of events that are disturbing the free time can lead to the voluntary or involuntary readjustment of the reality which becomes fragmented for the mother which must respond to the challenge of new family roles. The mother is the person from which the others are requiring to be the anchor, and the shore in the pandemic and her duty is to bring the peace and happiness in the family, and the expectations from her are that she too became a balanced and quiet person, as also a prudent, calm, and confident person (Luca et al., 2020; Baroiu et al., 2021). There are existing divergent opinions about the utilisation of the internet, because the internet permits connexions, which in other situations would not be possible, between people with similar ideas and conceptions about life, but which in their social microgroup are not finding people with the same ideas, but on the other hand, it is lost the valuable time for the interactions face to face with other people.

The fathers can also have postpartum depression, in a percentage of 4-25%, the fathers are expressing more anger and fear rather than sadness (Melrose, 2010; Radulescu et al., 2020). Sometimes the parents of a child can confront the onset of a chronic disease of their child, against which they feel powerless. The psychologic therapy addressed to the mothers, which use the internet and cognitive-behavioural therapy, will combat the maladaptative behaviours, and will bring the correction of some wrong beliefs and convictions, and the interpersonal psychotherapy. The women avoid seeking help because they have fear of being badged, because of this diagnosis. The therapy will help the women to process their visions with negative impact about what maternity is, and the role as a mother seems to overwhelm them. In fact, a negotiation is made as also the loss processing and the confrontation, which the mother learns to do with her proper person and her proper ambivalence (Fonseca et al., 2019). The patients with postpartum depression have a modification of the psychic tonus, dysphoria, and have emotional oscillations, sleep disorders, going to insomnia, confusing states of different intensities and anxiety, which can go up to panic attacks, feelings of guilt towards the child and towards the partner, and the anxiety not to cope with the familial and social roles. There are also suicidal thoughts in this patients, and 50% of this women do not adress to a psychiatrist to seek help (Sakakihara et al., 2019; Letourneau et al., 2007).

Objectives: We want to show the unseen face of the suffering mothers, who take refuge on the internet, generated by their personal history, by her anxieties, by taboos, inadequate support, perturbed social and family roles. The support of these adrift women protects the child and the whole family.

Results: The mothers no longer have the support of the extended family that often disappears due to the pandemic (protection from the grandparents of the child, which cannot come in contact with the family, because of the danger of taking the virus), the mother will seek help in the virtual space. The mother will try to get information from internet, from parent groups, to learn how to raise how she knows better her child, to keep him out of the hospital (where she and her child can get infections, and the hospital is the place where she will get a PCR test, and she is not sure if the consequences will not be the isolation of her and her family). The pandemic is complicating the contact with relatives and friends, together with the problems at the job, of both the father and mother, can lead to alienation, and so the mother will lose the support from the person she needed most, her husband. The harsh reality is that she will try to counteract, by looking for words of wit on the internet to strengthen her, to go through the pandemic and overcome the difficulties of her child's newborn age. Because of the excessive utilisation of the phone, internet, and TV, she will neglect her child and she will lose the interaction, which can put her in a good light before her family and the self-worth in one's own eyes. If there are observations and critics in the family, the feelings of guilt of the mother will grow, and the greatest guilt she will have is thinking that she has borne a child in hard times, and she will feel guilt also towards the husband, because she cannot be a good mother and a good wife. The mother will distance towards her colleagues and friends, because she will try to put a mask over her suffering, and she will try to communicate with other people on the internet to comfort her. The women who use the internet to ask about information about birth and child's education are 66-75%. There are risk factors on which it is very hard to act, such as life history, the previous depressive episodes that load it with an even higher risk, the environment of origin. Many women will avoid seeking help, because of postpartum depression and other problems, which the woman cannot manage and in this way fear may arise about the exposure to the authorities (Drozd et al., 2015). The excessive utilisation of the internet from mothers and the disruption of the sleep program of the child - that's why children become confused and angry and are exposed to the psychical and physical abuse from the mothers. The internet is used by some persons to counterbalance the feelings of guilt and helplessness, because of their own poor management of their lives and the way they are perceived by the society (Sakakihara et al., 2019). Other therapies which can rebalance the women with postpartum depression, compared to conventional ones, and internationally accepted, according to the actual guidelines, are the white light of 10.000 lux, up to 30 minutes per day. The postpartum depression intervenes when the child still depends on the quality of interactions with the adults. The children of depressive mothers can develop

retardation in mental acquisition (verbal, motor), as also retardation in the social interactions (Dennis, Brown, & Brown, 2019). The figure 1 shows how the facts can escalate from tensions and depression to violence.

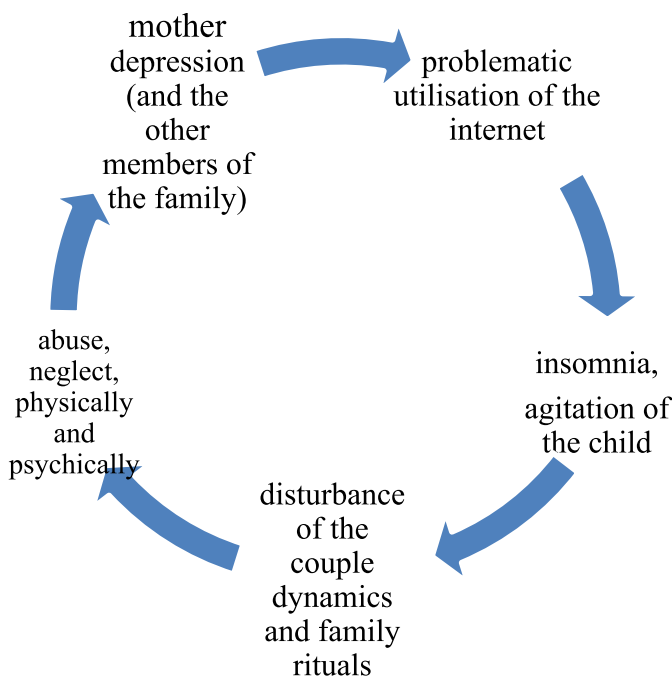


Figure 1. The cycle of violence after Sakakihara et al. (2019)

So where? The role of the multidisciplinary team is to intervene in this situation of balance, which can evolve to real crisis, and the role of the team is to offer to the mother safe and secure alternatives, for a dialogue with meaningful sense and direction, with the purpose to help her to slide elegantly through the hardships of daily life, and so the mother can feel she is part of the social life, and that she is still a woman, which is appreciated, understood, and that she is a secure base of attachment for her child. We want to offer a model of intervention for the mothers in difficulty in the pandemic, and we want to prevent the development of major depressive episodes in the postpartum period which can have as a consequence the endangering the harmonious development of the child, and the damage of the mental health of the mother on long term.

Discussions: The Program ADI-ADDS-W (Internet Addiction and Depressions In Women) designed by our team, is a new instrument to combat the addiction on internet for the depressed women:

- ✓ the mothers will complete a questionnaire for the inclusion in the study, as also they will make (if they wish) a voice registration of their needs, because written answers can differ from the information given by voice registration and so we will have a more spontaneous information production
- ✓ the internet can become a good tool to combat even the addiction on internet, and the mothers postpartum depression- because we can generate working groups on internet and whatsapp- therapeutic groups for mothers, or even individual therapy, with permanently renewed audiovisual media with the purpose to interact with the beneficiaries (Luca et al., 2020; Pandelet al., 2021; Grigoras & Ciubara, 2021).
- ✓ the therapist can accompany the mother in the precious time spent with her child
- ✓ counseling from the neonatologist, who is part of the team
- ✓ creating a neurologist-neonatologist-psychologist, trinomial to discuss each case

Conclusions:

Indifferent of what kind of protocol is used for the rehabilitation of the mothers with different addictions, as also the addiction of inadequate use of the internet, the basic principles are the family support, the social and educational insertion, and the interdisciplinary vision of specialists, with the maintenance in the pandemic of a secure remote, so that the mothers can feel that every moment they are understood, protected and supported.

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