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## **Views of Young Expectant Women Aged 16-35 Years Regarding Their Psychological Body Changes during Pregnancy and Their Influence on Maternity Wear Selection**

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### **Abstract**

Pregnancy period in human beings is divided into three trimesters. During this period expectant women experience psychological changes as a result of changes in their physical body. These changes are so vivid to an extent of triggering different feelings to some women. With the wide variety of body silhouette, psychological changes occur differently for every pregnant woman. Psychological changes like joy, fear, anxiety, stress and depression occur during the first trimester. At the start of the second trimester the emotions of the first trimester become stable and the exciting changes of this trimester begin. Despite an increasing interest in fashion and clothing, researchers in Kenya have conducted limited study about dressing and adorning the pregnant body. This leaves pregnant women with minimal sources of reference thus relying on trial and error or copying what other pregnant women wear. This study deals with the views of young expectant women aged 16-35 years regarding their psychological body changes during pregnancy and their influence on maternity wear selection. Psychological body changes were measured in terms of joy, fear, anxiety, stress and excitement.

**Keywords:** Psychological body changes; Pregnancy; Trimester; Maternity wear selection.

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The psychological changes in relation to joy, fear, anxiety, stress and excitement of the 90 young expectant women in the first (30), second (30) and third (30) trimester was determined. The study was limited to young expectant women attending antenatal clinic at Kenyatta National Hospital, Nairobi Kenya. The views of the young expectant women regarding these physical changes and their influence on maternity wear selection was determined from the answers given by the respondents during the interview.

## **1. Introduction**

Pregnancy is an experience full of growth, change, enrichment and challenge [5]. The author further explains that this is a time when expectant women deal with fears and prospects about the change in their body. Reference [2] highlighted that alterations in the size and shape of the expectant women's bodies elicit different feelings and thoughts of unreality of the emerging issues. Reference [13] states that many young women are depressed, anxious and stressed as a result of the change in the physical body. On the other hand some women regard pregnancy as a joyful and exciting experience [10].

Psychological changes like joy, fear, anxiety, stress and excitement occur during the first trimester [1]. At the start of the second trimester the emotions of the first trimester become stable and the exciting changes of this trimester begin [5]. Reference [6] explains that the feelings might be less intense but equally troubling. Many women begin to feel self-conscious about the weight they are putting on, and these feelings can lead to low self-esteem [9]. Some women wonder whether they are still considered beautiful by their partners thus becoming more dependent on them [5].

These psychological changes influence the way expectant women select their maternity wear. [8] describes it to be a time when expectant women select maternity wear with an aim of creating different subjectivities. For instance, the feelings of expectant women on the physical body change during pregnancy determine their presentation through the clothes they select [5]. Reference [7] state that psychological changes during pregnancy makes expectant women select maternity wear that is either suitable or not. Reference [12] suggests that the maternity wear selected during this time should not only satisfy the young expectant women's subjectivities but also provides comfort, fit and style.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

The target population for this study was drawn from expectant women attending ante-natal clinic at the reproductive health department, Kenyatta National Hospital. Convenience method of sampling was used to select 90 respondents (30 from each trimester) who participated in the study.

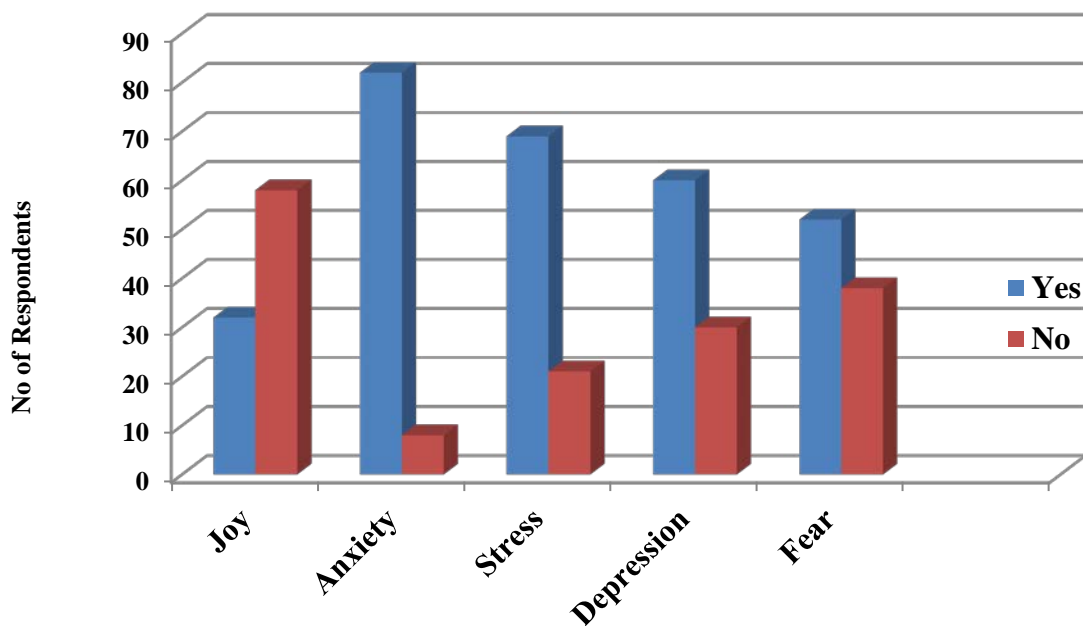
The researcher met with the nurse on duty prior to the recruitment process to explain the purpose of the study. With prior arrangement with the nurse on duty, the researcher explained to each selected young expectant woman the purpose of the study after which an interview was conducted and questionnaires filled. This enabled the researcher to collect data from expectant women in the first trimester, then second and finally third. To make the respondents more comfortable the researcher motivated them through good communication and maintained good rapport.

### 3. Results

To establish views of young expectant women regarding their psychological changes during pregnancy, the respondents were asked to state whether they had experienced the outlined psychological changes. They were then asked to explain whether they were happy or unhappy with the psychological changes that they had experienced.

#### 3.1 Psychological Changes Experienced by Young Expectant Women

The following figure shows the psychological changes experienced by young expectant women during pregnancy.



**Figure 1:** Distributions of Respondents by Psychological Changes

From Figure 1 above, the most outstanding psychological change experienced by the young expectant women was anxiety accounting for 82 respondents, followed by stress (69), depression (60) and fear (52).

This was as a result of emotional changes that occurred in trimester one plus striking physical body changes that occurred in the second and third trimesters.

On the other hand 32 young expectant women were joyful due to the emotional changes that occurred in trimester one plus the vivid physical changes in trimester two and three.

This was as a result of the need to get children since they were married. This made the young expectant women to positively deal with the changes through selection of maternity clothes that was fitting and comfortable.

### 3.2 Views of Expectant Women Regarding the Psychological Changes

Table 1 below shows the young expectant women’s views towards the psychological changes.

**Table 1:** Views of Expectant Women Regarding the Psychological Changes

Psychological Changes	Views of Expectant Women			
	Positive		Negative	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Joy	32	36	58	64
Anxiety	33	37	57	63
Stress	34	37	56	63
Depression	0	0	90	100
Fear	27	37	63	53

From the Table 1 it was found that 32, 33, 34 and 27 respondents were happy with the psychological changes like joy, anxiety, stress and fear respectively. The respondents explained that they were worried about the change in their body size and shape and being positive helped them work hard to avoid the alteration in their body shape and size. In addition they described the pregnancy as wanted and this made them to have a positive view towards the body changes that came along with the pregnancy. The respondents also explained that their positive feeling towards the pregnancy made them select maternity wear that was fitting and comfortable so as to maintain their body image.

However most of the respondents were not happy with the changes that had taken place in their mind. The respondents explained that this was due to the extensive change in their physical appearance. In addition the respondents described the pregnancy as unwanted thus having a negative feeling about the changes that come along with it. The respondents highlighted that their negative feeling towards the emotional changes during pregnancy made them select clothes that were ill-fitting, oversized and uncomfortable.

To answer the research question on the issues that affected the young expectant women regarding the way they perceived pregnancy, the respondents were asked to state the issues that came along with them perceiving pregnancy either positively or negatively. The findings indicated that 34 (38%) of the respondents perceived the pregnancy positively thus describing the pregnancy as appropriate as it defined their fertility and femininity. On the other hand 56 (52%) respondents perceived the pregnancy negatively stating that they felt heavy, awkward and unattractive.

### 4. Discussion

From the questionnaires, it was observed that most of the respondents were married, had at least one child and were aged between 18-35 years. During the interview on views of young expectant women regarding psychological changes, the respondents confirmed that they experienced emotional aspects like joy, anxiety, stress, depression, and fear with the most outstanding psychological change being anxiety 82 (91%) (Figure 1). This was associated with emotional changes that occurred in trimester one plus striking physical body changes that occurred in the second and third trimesters.

Most women who were anxious, stressed, fearful and depressed confirmed that they were not ready to lose their original body shape and size as a result of the physical body changes. It was also evident from the findings that the need to remain young and fashionable made the young expectant women to develop negative emotional aspects since they believed that maternity wear made them big and not fashionable. This implied that the young expectant women were guided by their negative emotions in selecting maternity wear that would create the kind of look they want. This finding is supported by [5] who earlier on described pregnancy as a time when expectant women deal with fears and prospects about the change in their physical body. Findings by [2] also indicate that alterations in the size and shape of the expectant women's bodies make them possess different emotional feelings of unreality.

On the other hand the few young expectant women who were joyful confirmed that they were aware that the physical body changes might cause a change in their body size and shape. This made them to take it positively and select maternity wear that could not transform their body size and shape. This implied that the young expectant women selected maternity wear that reflected their emotional feelings with an aim of dealing with the physical body changes. These findings are in line with research conducted by [3], and [8] reporting that expectant women experience emotional changes during pregnancy which is translated in the clothes they select and the different subjectivities they want to create. However, [12] cautioned young expectant women not to select maternity wear that only satisfies and reflects their feelings but also provide proper sizing and fit.

While the findings in Figure 1 showed that young expectant women develop different psychological changes, it was evident from Table 1 that young expectant women experience both positive and negative views regarding these changes. A few respondents viewed the psychological changes positively because they perceived the pregnancy to be appropriate as it defined their fertility and femininity. This increased their self-confidence to an extent of being able to cope with emotional changes as a result of extensive change in their physical appearance. As a result, the young expectant women selected maternity wear that would increase their self-confidence. This finding concurs with [4] who stated that expectant women choose clothes that reflected their emotional feelings in order to curb despair during pregnancy.

However most of the respondents had a negative view towards the psychological changes. This was attributed to the effect of the physical and psychological changes to their bodies, which made them feel heavy, awkward and unattractive. This made the young expectant women to have low self-esteem making them select maternity wear that was either ill-fitting or oversized. This finding therefore disagrees with [4] who stated that expectant women choose clothes that reflected their emotional feelings in order to curb despair during pregnancy.

The finding will provide literature on the views of young Kenyan women who are expectant regarding psychological changes. It will also give an understanding on how these views on physical changes influence maternity wear selection.

The results on views of young expectant women regarding psychological changes during pregnancy coincide with the fact that the choice to sustain a pregnancy ushers in tremendous emotional transformation [6]. For example [5] explains that pregnancy is a time when expectant women deal with fears and prospects about the

change in their body image. Many young women are stressed, depressed and anxious because of the changes in their physical bodies [13]. On the other hand some women regard pregnancy as a joyful and exciting experience [10]. Reference [2] highlighted that alteration in the size and shape of expectant women's bodies makes them possess different feelings and thoughts of unreality. This as a result makes them select maternity wear that depicts their feelings and thoughts as highlighted by [4]. However the maternity wear might be suitable or not suitable since the young expectant women's feelings and thoughts might be positive or negative.

## **5. Conclusions**

The study concluded that most young expectant women were not happy regarding the psychological changes which were as a result of dramatic body changes. The need to satisfy their desire to maintain their body size and shape with an aim of looking young and fashionable was so high enough to warrant selection of ill-fitting maternity wear.

## **6. Recommendations**

Fashion design institutions and organizations should offer training to fashion designers and marketers in maternity wear on views on physiological changes and their influence on maternity wear selection among expectant women. This would aid them in giving advice to expectant women on selection of maternity wear that is fitting, comfortable and fashionable and in relation to their physiological and psychological changes. On the other hand they will also be in a position to design and sell maternity wear that can make the young expectant women look young, fashionable and attractive. This will as a result reduce the gap in knowledge on dressing and adorning the pregnant body.

The ante-natal clinics in Kenya should consider including lessons on expectant women's views on physiological and psychological changes and their influence on maternity wear selection in their program. This will help the Kenyan young expectant in understanding and accepting these changes

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