
Postpartum depression in single mothers who abandoned their children: a clinical study of four cases in the state of Chlef (Algeria)

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Abstract:

This study aims to detect postpartum depression among single mothers who abandoned their children at an early age due to special circumstances. We started from the following problematic question: Do single mothers who abandoned their children suffer from symptoms of postpartum depression? We used the clinical approach based on the case study method on a research group that included four cases of single mothers who were deliberately selected by the Family and Social Cohesion Service in Chlef State, aged between (30 and 40 years). We applied the semi-directed clinical interview and the Edinburgh Postpartum Depression Scale to them. The results of the study showed that single mothers who abandoned their children at an early age suffer from symptoms of postpartum depression to varying degrees.

Keywords: Postpartum depression; motherhood; single mother.

The problem of the study:

This era is witnessing many problems and social deviations and an increase in their pace from one society to another due to the rapid social and cultural changes, in addition to the change that occurred as a result of the break between traditional and contemporary society and the lack of awareness, which made it difficult for us to evaluate them. Studying them requires us to pay intensive and in-depth attention to such social phenomena, especially if it concerns a large and marginalized group in society such as the phenomenon of single mothers. Algeria, like other countries in the world, is witnessing a spread and increase in the percentage of single mothers, as Algerian government statistics indicate the registration of 2,887 children outside the institution of marriage during 2007, and the average number of single mothers annually is 3,500 single mothers in Algeria (Meliouh Khalida, 2012). These statistics are increasing from year to year and vary from one country to another as a result of multiple factors and special circumstances, which was indicated by the results of previous studies such as the study of Mahfouz Boucebcı in Algeria (Boucebcı. 1978), where he confirmed that the phenomenon of single mothers is nothing but the result of many circumstances and reasons that contributed to its spread and found it related to social and economic changes (Boucebcı, 1978: 156). This makes the single mother suffer from family problems and conflicts that sometimes lead to marginalization and begging, not to mention social stigma. The situation becomes more dangerous if she is separated from her infant as a result of the aforementioned factors, which affects her psychological and emotional life and makes her vulnerable to the emergence of

psychological disorders such as postpartum depression. Postpartum depression is one of the psychological disorders that appear in women after childbirth, as the mother shows a clinical schedule rich in psychopathological symptoms such as mood disorders, feelings of sadness and severe distress with constant and continuous anxiety about the infant, especially if we talk about the category of single mothers.

The single mother goes through psychological problems and pressures, whether with her family members or society, which negatively affects her internal psychological life, so she shows various psychological disorders, whether in her relationship with the infant, such as disorders in the relationship (mother-child) or what is known as attachment disorders, or they appear in the form of depressive symptoms after childbirth, such as: self-blame; Fear and anxiety, in addition to the negative view of her, whether from her family or society, are symptoms that can affect her psychological and emotional life. In this regard, a study by (Meliouh, 2012) confirmed that single mothers live a complex psychological process as a result of being rejected by their family and marginalized by society, which makes them live an unhappy life, which is reflected in their internal life (Meliouh Khalida, 2012: 364). Therefore, postpartum depression is a mood disorder that appears in single mothers after childbirth, specifically during the first weeks following childbirth. It is classified among emotional disorders characterized by a clinical schedule rich in psychopathological symptoms such as sadness and pessimism, as well as in terms of the duration of symptoms. (COOPER & et al) (1988) indicated in their study that half of his depressed sample had stages that lasted between 4 and 8 months, and for most researchers, half of those affected do not recover before a year, and there is a high risk of relapse in the next birth, at a rate of 30% to 50% and may reach 62% (HUET. 2005: 06), and this percentage increases to 90% if there is a personal history of family history or factors that trigger postpartum depression (GUATIER, 2007: 30). Where (LEMPERIERE) sees "depression as a condition in which psychological, physical and endocrine symptoms are intertwined", and the most important symptoms are mood and temperament disorders, such that the depressed person is characterized by permanent sadness (Bashir Pasha Rabia, 2009: 22). This is what Ortzbasov (1987) confirmed in her study that the single mother becomes more susceptible to psychological disorders such as; Depression, despair and helplessness due to the low level of optimism and the level of expectations in life, which necessitates making efforts to avoid negative outcomes for mothers who belong to low social and economic levels, as they are often characterized by a low educational level and few ambitions and lack prevention services, which contributes to the deterioration of their quality of life (Shuayel Samia, 1994: 13), which requires the intervention of psychological and social specialists in order to provide care and psychological and social support, especially and intensively for this segment. This is what the study (STIFFMAN et al, 1990) indicated that single mothers need assistance, social support, educational services and work, all of which helps them to enhance the confidence and strengths they possess (Lakron Naima, 2011).

It is clear to us that postpartum depression is considered one of the mood and emotional disorders that appear in mothers starting from the third month after giving birth. It appears in the form of psychopathological symptoms such as fear of the infant's death and unusual anxiety, false ideas and beliefs about the gender and lineage of the infant and her belief that it has been changed... etc. These symptoms are indicators that suggest to us the beginning of the mother's entry into the record of postpartum depression. These symptoms become more severe if the infant is abandoned in the first

years, whether this abandonment of the child is at the mother's request or due to family, social or legal circumstances. This abandonment results in his placement in one of the state institutions and centers concerned with taking care of these children from several psychological, educational and social aspects called emergency childhood institutions. These are institutions whose goal is to take care of children starting from the date of abandonment of the child and the issuance of a judicial order to place him in the institution, which may be from birth until the age of 18, whether temporarily or permanently in the event of the infant being abandoned permanently (Bouzar Youssef, 2017). This abandonment of the child, in addition to the aforementioned factors, is considered in itself as a shock of separation between the mother and her infant, which is likely to negatively affect her personality and mood, causing her to develop what is called attachment disorders, which in turn leads to the clinical schedule of postpartum depression appearing in her. Based on the above and considering the topic of the single mother as worthy of research and attention, this study came to reveal postpartum depression in single mothers. Therefore, we raised the following problematic question:

- Do single mothers who abandoned their children in early years suffer from symptoms of postpartum depression?

-Study hypothesis:

-Single mothers who abandoned their children suffer from high levels of postpartum depression symptoms.

2-Setting the study concepts:

-Postpartum depression:

It is one of the major current concerns of early childhood specialists, and we refer to this term to the various depressive mood disorders that occur to the mother in the first year after childbirth. Nicole Kidney defines it as “major depressive disorders or a low depressive stage, occurring from the beginning of the second month after childbirth until the end of the first year” (Sahiry Zainab, 2010: 67). Regarding the onset of the disorder, both (Kumer & Robson) (1984) observed several cases, and found that there are three critical stages for the onset of postpartum depression, which are 3 months, 6 months, and 12 months after childbirth (Sahiry Zainab, 2010: 67)

From a procedural perspective, we can measure postpartum depression through the score obtained by the single mother on the (EDPS) scale for postpartum depression.

-Single mother:

Shuwail (1994) defines a single mother as a woman who carries From a man without a marriage contract who keeps her illegitimate child after birth (Shuayel Samia, 1994: 13). It means a free woman who does not have a husband and has no status in her society, and since she has multiple sexual relationships, she cannot determine the name of her son who will carry her name (Boucebci, 1978: 14)

From a procedural point of view, we mean by a single mother in this study the woman who gives birth outside of marriage as a result of illegitimate sexual relationships and abandons the newborn in the first year of birth due to many psychological, familial and social circumstances.

3-Objectives and importance of the study:

This study aimed primarily to reveal the psychological and mood disorders that appear in single mothers who abandoned their children due to special familial, social and legal circumstances, trying

to identify psychological and mood disorders such as postpartum depression in these mothers after their separation from their children at an early age.

The importance of this study in itself lies in its psychological and social subject because it is considered taboo in Algerian society in general and the Algerian family in particular, because talking about it is considered unacceptable, so we are trying to learn more about this category and identify the most important psychological disorders and social problems that single mothers suffer from, and as psychologists, we are trying to raise awareness and educate girls about the seriousness of this phenomenon in order to reduce it and try to find effective ways and methods to ensure it, whether it concerns the mother or the child.

4 -Study limits:

Spatial limits: This study was conducted at the level of the Family and Social Solidarity Service affiliated with the Directorate of Social Activity and Solidarity in the state of Chlef, which is a service concerned with taking care of various social issues related to the family (such as single mothers, women victims of violence and those in a difficult social situation, families wishing to take care of children deprived of a family, etc).

Temporal limits: This study extended during the year 2019, during which the study tools were applied.

Human limits: The study included 04 cases from the category of single mothers.

-Study Methodology: The subject of our study is an in-depth clinical study of one of the topics of pathological psychology. We used the clinical method based on the case study method. SILLAMY defined it as "a method that aims to understand human behaviors by identifying everything that is qualitative and individual in a person in a limited situation" (SILLAMY, 2003: 58). The clinical method is therefore concerned with studying a case in its individuality, and this is in specific circumstances and through pre-determined means, based on the case study method, which requires accurate observation and description of the case. This is what we tried to do in this study, which is to collect as much information as possible regarding our research group, which is the category of single mothers.

6-Study sample: The study group included 04 cases of single mothers who were chosen intentionally. Among the criteria for selecting the research group are the following:

- The mother must be single and have given birth to a child outside of marriage.
- The newborn must have been abandoned at an early age, i.e. in the first years after birth.
- Age: Their age should be between (30 and 40 years)
- The mother should not be suffering from a specific organic disease to avoid its effects on her psychological life.

-The single mother should have submitted a request to abandon the child to state institutions, especially the place of birth of the child or at the level of the Family and Social Cohesion Service in the state of Chlef.

Table (01): shows the characteristics of the research group.

Cases	Age	Educational level	Occupation
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Case 1 (Katya case)	33 Years	Intermediate	stay home
Case 2 (Fawzia case)	37 Years	Secondary	stay home
Case 3 (Rabia case)	40 Years	Secondary	Working in a company
Case 4 (Salma case)	30years	Secondary	She works in management

We note from Table No. (01) that all members of the research group are between (30 and 40 years old) and their educational level is between intermediate and secondary, and as for the profession, they are between employees and housewives.

7-Study tools: In this study, we relied on the following tools: Clinical interview, postpartum depression scale on our research group.

7-1-Clinical interview:

The interview is a tool that the clinician resorts to in order to get closer to the case and understand the individual's psychological condition, so we relied on the semi-directed clinical interview, which is a method of collecting data with the respondents that is done face-to-face in which the examiner leaves some freedom for the examinee to answer the questions, as it is defined as "a verbal interaction that takes place through a confrontational situation in which the person conducting the interview tries to elicit information, opinions or beliefs from another person or other persons to obtain some objective data" (Safari Lubna and Safari Maryam, 2017: 330). In this type of interview, the examiner's intervention is purposeful. We used a guide containing a set of questions directed to the respondents. This guide included the following main axes:

The first axis was specific to personal information about the case. The second axis included the respondent's family and relational life. The third axis included the psychological, social and family circumstances during the birth of a child. The fourth axis addressed the psychological disorders of the case after the abandonment of the newborn.

7-2- The Edinburgh Post Natal Depression Scale: It is one of the most widely used psychological measurement tools in the world for diagnosing postpartum depression. It was designed by (Cox; Holden; Sagovsky) in (1987) at the health centers in Livingston and Edinburgh and was named after this area. It is easy to scroll and score, as the woman is asked about how she felt in the previous 07 days and is given four (04) options, in which she scores from 0 to 3 points. It consists of 10 items scored from 0 to 30 points. The total score that is above 10 points indicates the actual presence of postpartum depression. Studies and research confirm the possibility of applying it to different cultures and countries. (Hiscok & Wake, 2001:13-18)

The researcher (Saheri Zainab, 2009) adapted and translated the scale from English to Arabic, where the following results indicate: 0-4 no depression, 5-7 moderate non-severe, 8-15 moderate depression, more than 16 severe, and she calculated the internal validity (specificity and sensitivity of the scale) and external validity (through positive predictive value and negative predictive value) using Pearson's correlation coefficient and reached ($r=0.71$), and regarding the stability of the scale, she used two methods (calculating the stability through the split-half estimated at (0.81) and through Cronbach's alpha estimated at ($\alpha=0.76$) (Saheri Zainab, 2010: 109)

8- Presentation and discussion of the results:

8-1-Presentation of case results:

-Presentation of the first case (Katia case): Katia is 33 years old, her educational level is average and she stays at home and does not suffer from any health problems. She is the eldest sister in her family. Her relationship with her family members is unstable due to conflicts and problems. There is no family stability as she lives moving with her relatives due to ongoing family disputes. She has been a single mother since she was 28 years old, as a result of relationships with a friend who wanted to marry her according to her statements. After that, she was abandoned and in turn, after giving birth to the child, she abandoned him completely and he was placed in one of the emergency childhood institutions (0-6 years). She had previously witnessed running away from home due to the event she was exposed to, which was an illegitimate relationship and pregnancy. Her psychological state is unstable as it appeared to us, according to her expression: "I am very worried. I hate the dangers of thinking about whether to marry or change countries. The whole house does not tolerate me." In addition to problems and difficulties in sleeping such as repetitive thinking, self-blame and reproach, and sometimes crying.

-Presentation and interpretation of the results of the postnatal depression scale for the case: Katia scored 18 points on the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale, and returning to the scoring scale shows us that the case has severe postnatal depression.

-Presentation of the second case (Fawzia case): Fawzia is 37 years old, her educational level is secondary, she stays at home, she used to live with her family normally, but after the birth of the child, her family's view of her changed and she began to have unstable relationships with her family members. She has been a single mother since she was 33 years old, according to her statements, she had a relationship with a young man she met years ago, before the birth of the child she had previously run away from home for fear of punishment and shock from her family even after the birth of the child. She too was abandoned (female) because that young man refused to marry her and in turn denied the relationship that had bound him to her. Fawzia lived through difficult social and family circumstances where she was expelled from the house.

She was received by our services for the purpose of psychological and social care, as there is a girl in danger and in a difficult social situation. A psychological and social investigation was conducted in order to transfer her to a reception center for women victims of violence and those in a difficult social situation. During the interview, she was disorganized in terms of appearance, hesitant to speak, and sometimes tended to cry.

- Presentation and interpretation of the results of the postpartum depression scale for the case: Fawzia obtained 20 points on the Edinburgh Postpartum Depression Scale. Returning to the scoring scale shows us that the case has severe postpartum depression. Returning to the scoring scale shows us that the case has severe postpartum depression.

- Presentation of the third case (Rabia case): Rabia is 40 years old, her educational level is secondary, she used to work as an assistant in an administrative institution, she lives with her family, their social and economic status is average, she has been a single mother since she was 38 years old, according to her statements that she had a desire to keep the newborn (a male gender temporarily), despite the family conflicts and problems she experienced after the event, but due to legal circumstances, the child was temporarily abandoned. Rabia is still in legal problems regarding the

child's lineage in order to settle the child's situation and her situation (i.e. marriage) with that man, she describes her life to us with many problems and sorrows that negatively affected her psyche such as mood swings and instability, lack of desire to live, crying and anxiety, pangs of conscience...etc., as she describes her life to us with suffering and distress, which appeared to us in her expression: "I hated that I have no luck, the problems of the world are falling on my head."

- Presentation and interpretation of the results of the postpartum depression scale for the case: Rabia scored 16 points on the Edinburgh Postpartum Depression Scale. Returning to the scoring scale, it shows us that the case has postpartum depression that tends to be severe.

-Presentation of the fourth case (Salma case): Salma is 30 years old, has a secondary education, works in management, lives with her family, she is the youngest sister, her relationship with her family is good, as she says that she receives support and assistance from all family members, whether parents or siblings. She is a single mother at the age of 29 with her ex-fiancé before separating from him due to problems and misunderstandings. According to her, she experienced difficult psychological conditions, especially during pregnancy and after separating from him. She was forced to file a complaint with the judicial authorities about the child's lineage. She also received support and assistance from her family: "My brothers and sisters helped me with the problem that happened to me. If it weren't for them, we wouldn't be like this." She expresses her level of satisfaction with her life as average, despite experiencing some symptoms of fatigue, mood swings, and loss of appetite as an expression of depressive symptoms.

- Presentation and interpretation of the results of the postpartum depression scale for the case: Salma scored 09 points on the Edinburgh Postpartum Depression Scale, and by returning to the scoring scale, it shows us that there are transient symptoms of postpartum depression in the case.

8-2-Interpretation and discussion of the results:

The study hypothesis states that single mothers who abandoned their children suffer from symptoms of postpartum depression to a high degree. By returning to the results of the postpartum depression scale with the study group, we found a difference in the scores, as they ranged between 09 and 20 points, which we explain in the following table.

Table (2): Shows the results of the cases on the postpartum depression scale.

Cases	Postpartum Depression Scale Results	Interpretation of the Score Obtained
Case 1 (Katya case)	Her score is 18 points	Reflects severe postpartum depression
Case 2 (Fawzia case)	Her score is 20 points	Reflects severe postpartum depression
Case 3 (Rabia case)	Her score is 16 points	Reflects postpartum depression that tends to be severe
Case 4 (Salma case)	Her score is 09 points	Reflects transient symptoms of postpartum depression

It is clear to us from Table No. (2), which shows the results of the cases on the Edinburgh Postpartum Depression Scale, that there is a difference and variation in the scores obtained, as we recorded the presence of severe postpartum depression in each of the cases of Katia (18 points); Fawzia (20 points), because her scores exceeded the average according to the scale's scoring criteria,

and because she expressed their inability to laugh and be optimistic with sadness, lack of happiness, and feelings of anxiety, confusion, fear, and panic without reason. The results of this study are consistent with what Shuwail Samia (1994) indicated that single mothers tend to isolate themselves, refuse to communicate, and are easily aroused. The study by Melioh (2012) also indicated that single mothers suffer to a great extent from symptoms of anxiety, fear, and introversion. PITT (1968) also confirms that the symptoms of postpartum depression are atypical and are mainly characterized by anxiety, agitation, and phobia that overwhelm depression. BECK (1992) also indicated in his study of the life experiences of women with postpartum depression, where he identified many symptoms such as isolation, obsessive thoughts, anxiety attacks, loss of control, a sense of guilt, and loss of interest in hobbies and goals (Sahiry Zainab, 2010: 73). We also concluded that The presence of moderate to severe postpartum depression in Rabia's case (16 points), which was confirmed to us through the clinical interview with the cases; where we recorded the presence of anxiety symptoms, rapid mood swings, and the desire to commit suicide in the case of (Katia), and we recorded in the case of (Fawzia) frequent crying during the interview, instability, hesitation in answers, feelings of guilt, and remorse. As for the case of (Rabia), we recorded symptoms of postpartum depression during the interview with the case, where we noticed the case's tendency to cry and anxiety, remorse, feelings of distress, and loss of hope in life are explicit symptoms of postpartum depression. The results of the case are consistent with what was reached by (Ortzbasov, 1987), where she indicated that the single mother becomes more susceptible to psychological disorders such as: depression and despair due to the low level of optimism and the level of expectations in life (Shuwail, 1994: 13). As for Salma's case, we recorded mild depression, which is the presence of transient symptoms of postpartum depression (09 points), which we reached through the clinical interview with the case, where the role of the family appeared in its participation and sharing of the events and problems that (Rabia) experienced, in addition to the role of personal factors that contributed to the decrease in the degree of postpartum depression in her. In this regard, (OLSON) believes that a healthy and balanced family can form a protective envelope against the problems and crises that befall a person (Haj Qwaider Rafika, 2016). From this, it can be said that the hypothesis that states that single mothers who abandon their children suffer from symptoms of postpartum depression has been achieved.

Conclusion:

We conclude from the above that the phenomenon of single mothers is due to multiple family and social factors, and that single mothers suffer from various psychological disorders such as postpartum depression, feelings of fear and anxiety about their future, as well as feelings of remorse, which is what we reached through this study that single mothers who have separated from their children suffer from varying degrees of symptoms of postpartum depression, which are embodied through frequent crying, mood instability, loss of importance and value, a sense of the absence of a social role, and a deterioration in their quality of life, in addition to the fact that the separation of the mother from her son and placing him in a shelter has dire consequences on the mother's psyche and on the child in the future, and accordingly we decided through this study to present the following suggestions and recommendations:

- The necessity of psychological and social care for single mothers.
- Establishing specialized centers and institutions aimed at caring for the category of single mothers.

-Creating or finding a job for a single mother to cover her needs and the needs of her newborn, especially cases rejected by the family.

-Raising awareness of the seriousness of the phenomenon and preventing it, by mobilizing the audio and visual media as well as the role of active associations in the field, or by organizing study days and awareness-raising outings.

-Conducting an epidemiological study on the prevalence of single mothers and abandoned children in Algerian society.

- Training psychological specialists interested in family treatments, and the need to use family mediation in such cases.

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