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AWARENESS AND PREPAREDNESS OF PREGNANT WOMEN TOWARD CHILDBIRTH AND EMERGENCY PLAN IN THE WEST BANK

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Abstract

Background: Palestine is currently experiencing a severe maternal health crisis due to ongoing conflict, displacement, and disruption of healthcare services. These conditions have limited access to essential maternal and emergency obstetric care, particularly in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As a result, emergency childbirth in unsafe environments has become more common. In addition, gaps in maternal awareness of labor signs, danger signs, and emergency preparedness further increase risks for mothers and newborns.

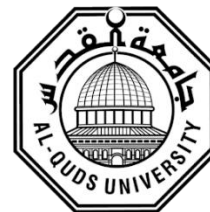
Objectives: This study aimed to assess the level of awareness and preparedness for emergency childbirth among pregnant women in the West Bank. It focused on evaluating women's knowledge of labor signs, awareness of danger signs during pregnancy, preparedness for emergency situations, and identifying barriers to accessing healthcare services.

Methods: A quantitative cross-sectional study was conducted among 251 pregnant women attending antenatal clinics in various regions of the West Bank, including Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho, Ramallah, and Abu Dis. Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire covering socio-demographic characteristics, knowledge of labor and danger signs, preparedness for emergency childbirth, and perceived barriers. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25, applying descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests, and logistic regression analysis.

Results: The findings revealed that pregnant women demonstrated good knowledge of normal labor signs, particularly recognizing labor pain and regular contractions. However, awareness of obstetric danger signs was moderate, with limited recognition of critical symptoms such as fever, severe headache, and blurred vision. Preparedness for emergency childbirth was also moderate, with better planning for normal delivery than for emergencies. Socio-demographic factors were not significantly associated with knowledge levels, except for place of residence, where women in refugee camps showed higher awareness. Major barriers to accessing healthcare included transportation challenges and movement restrictions.



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Conclusions: Despite adequate awareness of normal labor signs, significant gaps remain in recognizing danger signs and in emergency preparedness among pregnant women. Enhancing antenatal education, improving awareness of obstetric emergencies, and addressing structural barriers to healthcare access are essential to improve maternal and neonatal outcomes in the West Bank.

Keywords: Maternal awareness; Emergency childbirth; Pregnancy; Danger signs; Birth preparedness; West Bank; Maternal health.