



The Childbirth Experience of COVID-19-Positive Women Compared to COVID-19-Negative Women at a Tertiary Hospital in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

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Introduction

COVID-19 is a major global health threat. Multiple studies have shown that the diagnosis of COVID-19 during pregnancy is associated with increased rates of preterm birth, ICU and NICU admission. The anxiety and fear of childbirth frequently faced by pregnant women has been magnified by COVID-19. This research aimed to investigate the effect of COVID-19 diagnosis on women's labor and delivery experience.

Materials and methods

A cross-sectional study following a stratified sampling technique was conducted at a tertiary hospital in Jeddah, KSA except under the age of 18. Data was obtained through phone calls using the Questionnaire for Assessing the Childbirth Experience, Vaginal Birth or Caesarean (QACE). It assessed the four areas of relationship with staff, emotional status, first moments with the newborn, and feelings at one month.

Results

A total of 81 responses were collected (response rate = 60.4%). The COVID-19 positive group comprised 53.1% of the subjects ($n = 43$). The mean age was 31 years ($SD \pm 6$ years), mean BMI was 29.73 ($SD \pm 5.62$). The experience of childbirth had a median of 9 (IQR = 4) out of ten. Women who were COVID-19 positive generally felt more confident ($p = 0.006$).

Moreover, they found it to less likely to see their babies for the first time in a satisfactory manner, or to hold their babies for the first time when they felt like it or that it corresponded with what they had imagined prior to giving birth, with statistical significances of $p = 0.001$, $p = 0.000$, and $p = 0.002$, respectively. At a p value of 0.186, the status of COVID-19 diagnosis at birth and childbirth experience showed no statistically significant association.

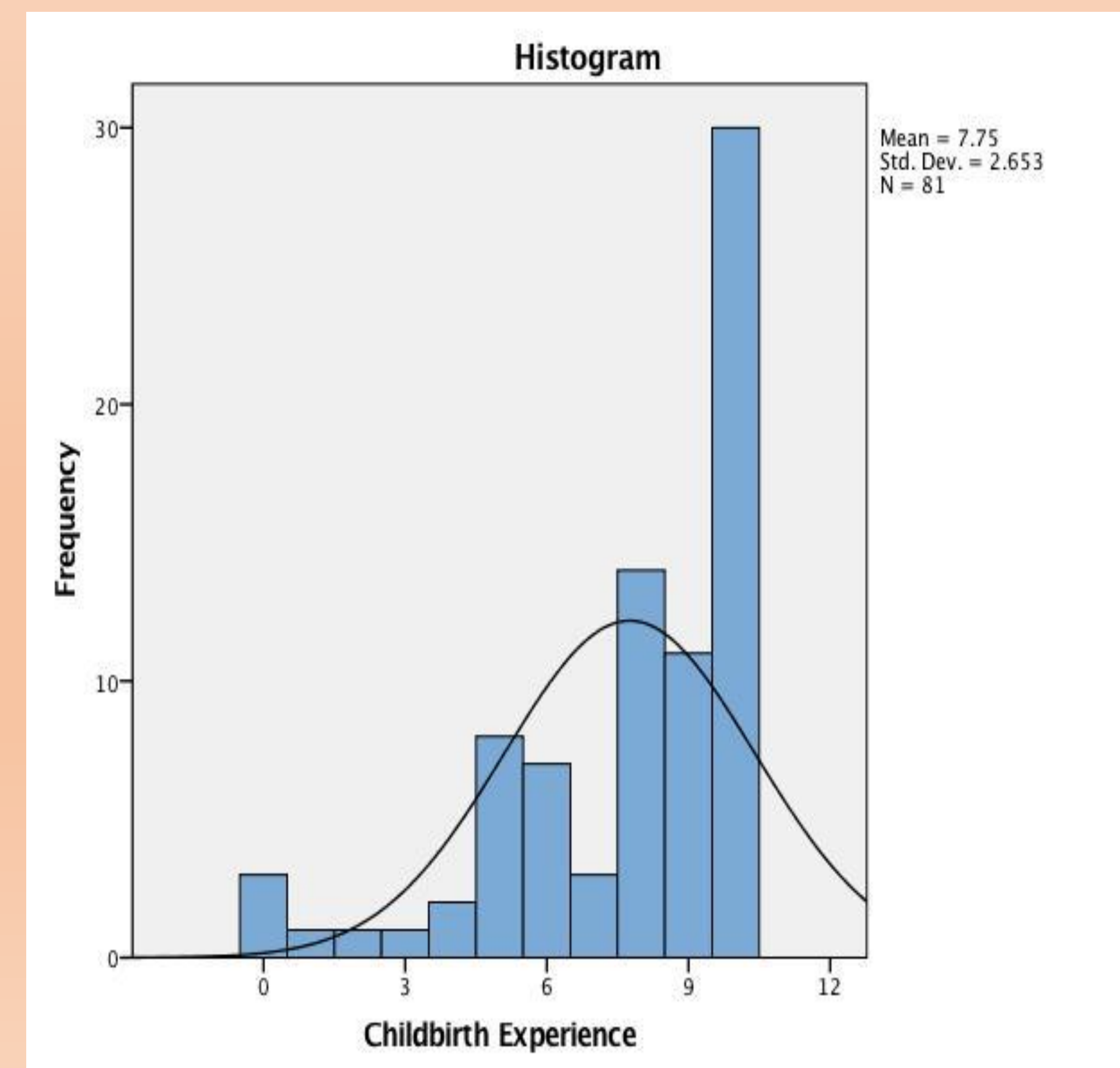


Table 1 - Demographic and obstetric data of the participants ($n = 81$)			
	COVID-Positive $n = 43$ (53.1%)	COVID-Negative $n = 38$ (46.9%)	p value***
Chronic Disease	10 (23.3)	7 (18.4)	0.785
Psychiatric Disorder	----	2 (5.3)	0.217
Delivery Number	First	14 (32.6)	9 (23.7)
	Second	8 (18.6)	10 (26.3)
	Third	9 (20.9)	10 (26.3)
	Fourth	4 (9.3)	5 (13.2)
	Fifth	4 (9.3)	2 (5.3)
	Sixth	3 (7.0)	----
	Seventh	1 (2.3)	1 (2.6)
	Eighth	----	1 (2.6)
Abortion History	17 (39.5)	7 (18.4)	0.051
Delivery Mode	SVD*	23 (53.5)	21 (55.3)
	Instrumental	4 (9.3)	1 (2.6)
	C/S**	16 (37.2)	16 (42.1)
Labor Induction	13 (30.2)	13 (34.2)	0.813
Episiotomy	8 (18.6)	7 (18.4)	1.000
Antenatal Complications	13 (30.2)	11 (28.9)	1.000

* Spontaneous vaginal delivery ** Cesarean section *** Fisher's Exact Test

Conclusion

COVID-19 diagnosis had no statistically significant association with women's childbirth experience, nor overall psychological states during and after childbirth. However, it had a positive association with feelings of confidence and a negative association on the moments shared with newborns after birth, including the first moments of seeing and holding the newborns. Further research is recommended to explore the aftermath of the lack of early newborn bonding.