

## Research Statement

Women who go through the process of pregnancy/labor and soon to be parents aren't always aware of the effects different forms of births can have on their mental health. Oftentimes undergoing pregnancy can be dangerous for women, but each different form of pregnancy can have a different effect on women. There are different types of birth options, like natural births, water births, and Cesarean births, also known as C sections. Some women aren't aware of their options to choose for giving birth, let alone the birthing methods that may be necessary during times of distress. Cesarean sections, a surgical procedure that is used to deliver babies through incisions in the abdomen and uterus, can be done for a variety of emergency reasons like maternal compromises, fetal malpresentation, prematurity, uterine rupture, etc. (Eneroth, 2010). Cesarean sections are often classified as "elective, urgent or emergency." Roughly one out of every three babies are born through C-sections, according to the CDC. Cesarean sections can have many effects on a woman mentally; which brings me to the question: how do C-sections impact the postpartum experience of a woman mentally?

Postpartum can be a different experience for every female, but each woman can experience similar changes mentally - especially women who undergo Cesarean sections. Postpartum depression can affect approximately 20-25% of women (Galela, 2016). Postpartum depression can be defined as a mental health problem that is associated with maternal suffering and can cause numerous negative consequences for an offspring (McCabe, 2013). A c-section can be very traumatizing to a woman, which can lead to postpartum depression, due to the pain the woman's body undergoes. Oftentimes women are expected to stay admitted in the hospital 3 to 4 days after they have given birth, and it can take up to 6 weeks for their bodies to completely heal. This can lead to depression for a variety of reasons. For example, women who go through C-sections must undergo a surgery (that majority of time is done for emergency reasons), feeling fear while they are in distress due to the numerous worries about what can be wrong with their babies, which can be very traumatic. Women have to deal with numerous pains before, during,

and after pregnancy, changes to their bodies and health, as well as the start of having to raise a new baby. Being a new parent isn't easy, especially after having to undergo a surgery and not being completely healed. During labor, complications can occur while a baby is about to be born. Women can experience complications that can affect the birth option they go through; some women can face serious complications that the form of birth they go through is beyond their control.

Many women aren't aware of not only the options they are entitled to to choose their form of birth, but also the help they can receive if they are experiencing postpartum depression. This is an issue because women should have access to help when they are facing postpartum depression. In society, women who have given birth are expected to raise their children without talking about their mental health after birth. Postpartum depression can affect the way a woman raises her child. Pain and traumatizing experiences can affect the way a parent portrays affection to their child; it can also affect the relationship a mother decides to or not to have with their child as well as the choice to be a present parent or absent parent when raising their child. Postpartum depression can also affect the future mental health of a woman. Women should be provided with resources and access to support groups to not only be aware of their options, but also to know that what they are feeling is something they can talk about and overcome.

Overall, women who experience pregnancy and birth are affected mentally. Women should have access to resources that can help them if they are experiencing postpartum depression, specifically when a C-section is a contributing factor. It's important that women are aware of their options during labor, especially during times of distress. Women who experience Cesarean sections should be able to rest not only physically, but also mentally after going through labor. They should have the support to not only express what they are feeling, but also to heal after having to go through a significant amount of pain and fear, all while raising a newborn.