“WHAT IF YOUR STORY IS SHAPING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH FETUS DURING PREGNANCY?” PREDICTION OF PRENATAL ATTACHMENT IN EXPECTANT MOTHERS

Gulada G. 1, Gökler Danışman I. 2

1Psychology Department / Ege University
2Psychology Department / TED University

Key Words: prenatal attachment, childhood trauma, parenting experience, readiness to maternity, preparedness to delivery

Background and aims: Prenatal attachment is defined as establishing mental and emotional relationship with fetus during pregnancy. This relationship may be accepted as preparation phase to establish reciprocal relationship or attachment style after birth. Nowadays, research findings suggest that mother-fetus interaction and prenatal attachment is substantial; since there is a relationship between prenatal attachment and postnatal attachment. From this perspective, it can be stated that prenatal attachment may help to establish a secure attachment between infants and mother after birth. The goal of this study was to examine the role of parenting style of own mother, childhood trauma and readiness to birth in predicting prenatal attachment among women in 2nd and 3rd trimester of the pregnancy.

Methods: Sample consisted of 150 expectant mothers (M= mean 27.68, S.D.=4.73) with gestational ages between 12 to 38 weeks. Survey method was used to assess the prenatal attachment and the questionnaire consisted of four different scales including Lederman Prenatal Self-Evaluation Inventory, Childhood Trauma Inventory (CTQ), Shortened Perceived Parental Rearing Styles Form (EMBU) and Prenatal Attachment Inventory.

Findings: Results showed that educational level of the mother and her spouse educational level, gestational age, primipara/multipara, types of conception, emotional warmth, over protection, physical neglect, emotional neglect, preparedness to delivery, and the relationship with spouse significantly predicted prenatal attachment level in the last model of the hierarchical regression analysis (R²=0.40). Moreover, demographics including gestational age and being primiparaous/multiparous significantly predicted prenatal attachment level of expectant mothers. For example, increased gestational age was among the important factor to explain increased prenatal attachment level.

Conclusions: These findings may provide clear understanding for psychological perspective of prenatal process and form the basis of establishing healthy relationships in the postpartum period.