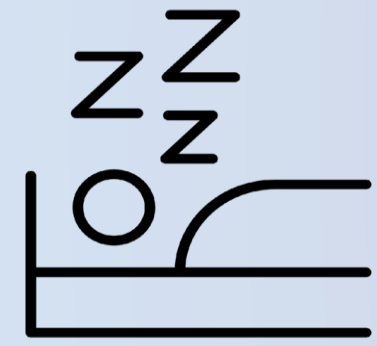


Pregnant during the Pandemic: Pregnancy Distress and COVID-19 Stress in Relation to Current and Anticipated Subjective Sleep Quality



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Introduction

- Stress, prenatal anxiety/worry, and sleep disturbances during pregnancy have been linked to the onset of post-partum depression.
- Compared to objective measures of sleep, subjective sleep assessments have been shown to be more strongly correlated with emotional distress in pregnant samples (Bei et al., 2010; Volkovich et al., 2016).
- The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant changes in both sleep and emotional distress. Pregnant women represent a unique population to study because of the health risks associated with pregnancy.
- The current study addressed two research questions:
 - Do measures of distress during pregnancy predict perceptions of current or anticipated sleep quality?
 - Do measures of COVID-19-related stress (i.e., trauma symptoms and contamination) predict perceptions of current and anticipated sleep quality?

Method

Participants

- N = 571 pregnant women (18 years old or older) in the U.S.
- Sample characteristics:
 - 69.9% white
 - 81.6% non-hispanic
 - 53% earn under \$50,000 per year (TOTAL income)
 - 38.4% no children
 - 43.1% in their third trimester

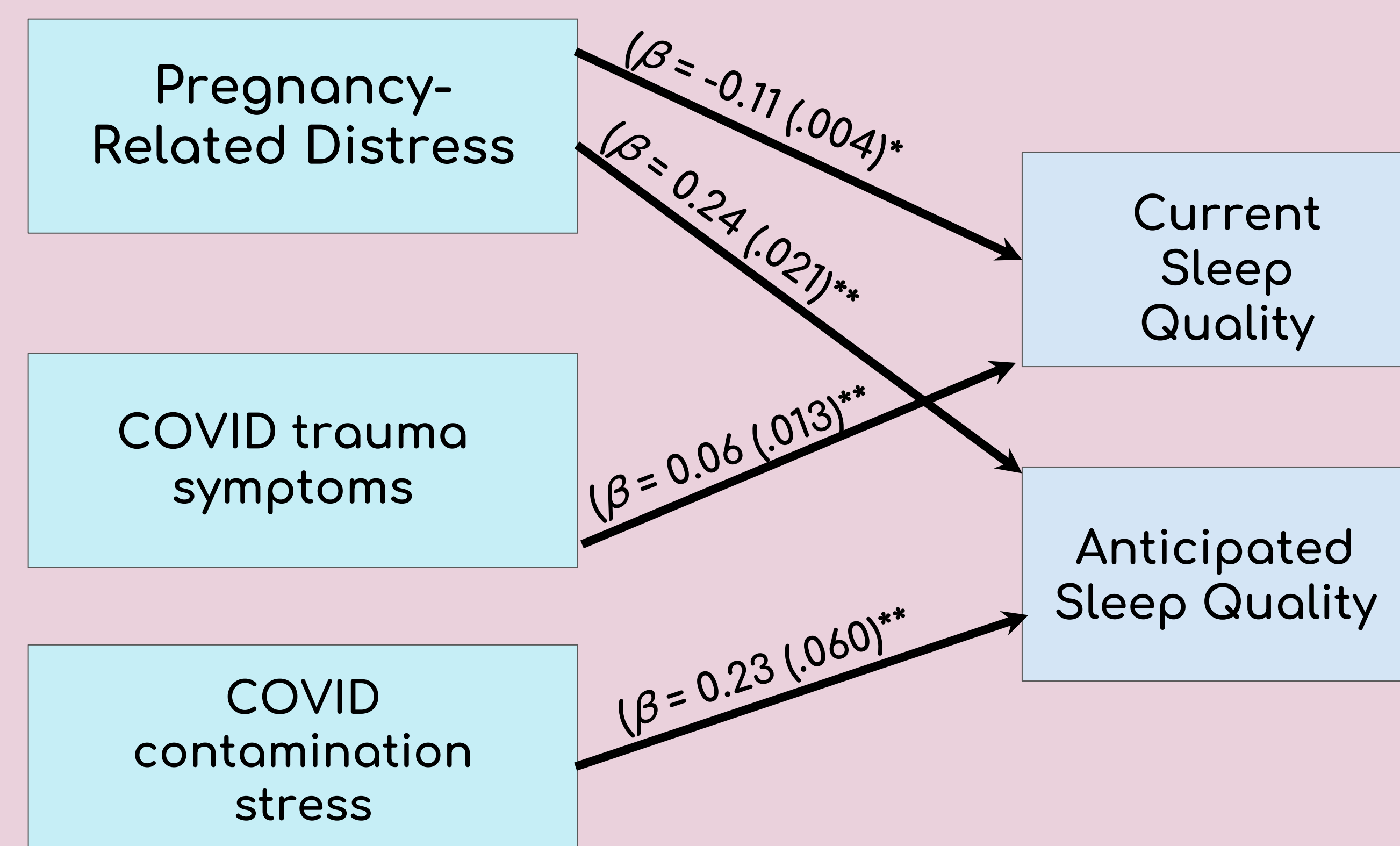
Measures

- Covariates:** age, household income, # of children, trimester
- Pregnancy Distress:** 12 items from Pregnancy Distress Questionnaire (Levine et al. 2017); E.g., *“Physical symptoms of pregnancy, such as nausea, vomiting, swollen feet, or backache, irritate me”*

Method Cont'

- COVID-19 stress:** 10 items from the 36 item COVID Stress Scale (Taylor et al. 2020); E.g., *“Disturbing mental images about the virus popped into my mind against my will”* (Trauma subscale); *“I am worried that if I touched something in a public space, I would catch the virus”* (Contamination subscale)
- Current Sleep Quality:** Single-item from the PSQI (Buysse et al., 1989); *“During the past month how would you rate your sleep quality overall?”*
- Future Sleep Quality:** 7 items adapted from Insomnia Severity Index (Morin et al., 2011) for predictions about anticipated sleep quality after giving birth (e.g., *“Difficulty staying asleep”*)

Results



Discussion

- Pregnancy-related distress predicted worse current sleep quality.
 - Increasing severity of physical, emotional, and interpersonal changes of pregnancy may negatively affect mood, and, in turn, affect sleep.
- Greater pregnancy-related distress predicted worse anticipated sleep quality
 - Anticipated anxieties about infant sleep habits may put strain on parental sleep quality.
 - Physical, emotional, and interpersonal changes during pregnancy may persist in unique ways after giving birth, which may have negative implications for sleep.
- Contamination stress from COVID-19 predicts worse anticipated sleep quality
 - Potentially capturing “high worry” and uncertainty around COVID.
- Trauma symptoms from COVID-19 predict better current sleep quality
 - Unexpected finding, given the link between negative emotionality and poor sleep.
 - Higher perceived COVID-19 trauma symptoms may facilitate higher social support.
- Future directions: More racially-diverse samples; subjective and objective measures of sleep; explore the role of social support and other protective factors as moderators; longitudinal data to assess actual sleep post-birth.

References

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