



# RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS N° 37

## INFLUENCE OF MATERNAL EDUCATION ON PRENATAL DISTRESS AND MATERNAL-FETAL ATTACHMENT

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According to previous research, maternal education has a relatively low effect on maternal-fetal attachment and prenatal depression, and it has an inconsistent relationship with antenatal anxiety. However, most studies were conducted on small-sized (non-representative) samples.

The aim of this very first analysis is to assess the associations of maternal education with prenatal anxiety, depression and maternal-fetal attachment, also considering participants' age, on a large, nationally representative sample.

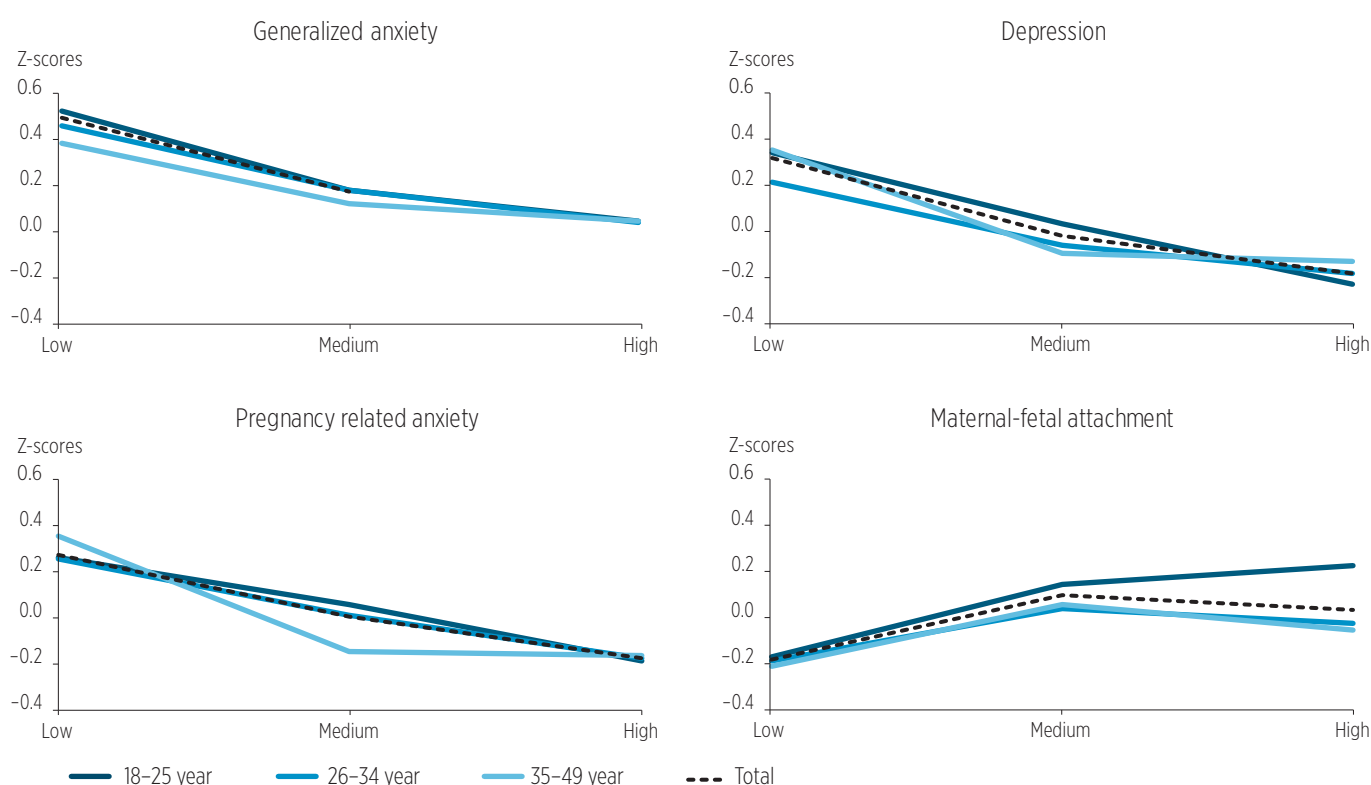
The data come from the first wave of the Cohort '18 survey, a representative longitudinal study of children born in 2018-2019 in Hungary. The sample of our analysis included 7,668 pregnant women 18+ in their third trimester of pregnancy. Their mean age was 29.90 years. 2,279 mothers (29.7%) had low level of education (ISCED levels 0-2), 2,650 (34.6%) had medium level of education (ISCED levels 3-4) and 2,739 (35.7%) had high level of education (ISCED levels 5-6). For the assessments of relevant maternal outcomes, the following self-completed scales were applied: Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)-2 scale, 9 items

from the Pregnancy Related Thoughts scale, 8-items from the Center for Epidemiologic Studies - Depression and the 20-item version of the Maternal-Fetal Attachment Scale.

The standardized means of maternal outcomes are compared by education and age groups. The results - of Oneway ANOVA and Welch and Brown-Forsythe robust tests of equality of means analyses - show that mothers' level of education is associated to their prenatal distress and attachment. Pregnant women with low, medium and high levels of education differ significantly, regarding their level of generalized- and pregnancy-specific anxiety and depression, in each age group. The lower the education level is, the higher anxiety and depression scores are observed. Moreover, women with high and medium level of education have statistically higher levels of maternal-fetal attachment than women with low level of education.

Further analysis should reveal the effects of other possible confounding factors, such as the relationship status and socio-economic status of the mother, or the intendedness and wantedness of pregnancy.

Figure: Results: comparison of standardized means of maternal outcomes by education and age groups



Source: Cohort '18 survey database, first wave, weighted data, own calculation.