

Abstract

Researchers have explored the relationship between maternal post-partum depression and cognitive development of the offspring, but the results remain inconclusive regarding the presence of a difference in effect based on the child's gender. This study aims to assess the cumulative evidence from the current body of literature on the association between maternal post-partum depression and child cognitive development in boys and girls separately. A search for articles was performed through PubMed, The Cochrane Library, PsycInfo, and Embase, and was supplemented by manual search of the reference lists. Articles exploring the epidemiological association between maternal post-partum depression and cognitive development separately in boys and girls were included. Eight articles were considered eligible for this review; half of them focused on child cognitive development at the preschool age of 3-6 years, 2 articles for the age of 18 months, and 2 articles targeting older children (ages 11 and 16 years). Collective results show lower cognitive development especially among boys of post-partum depressed mothers, and particularly when associated with low social class. This finding appears consistent across all age groups. Further research that target representative populations from developing countries may be important considering the observed role of social class and overall higher rates of maternal depression in those regions.

Keywords: PPD, maternal depression, postpartum depression, postnatal depression, cognitive development, cognitive abilities, IQ, Intelligence.