

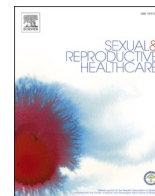


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## Response to the letter to the editor in response to “Women’s experiences with being pregnant and becoming a new mother during the COVID-19 pandemic”

Dear editor, Dear Dr. Tsz Chung Yow,

We appreciate your interest in our article detailing the experiences of pregnant women and new mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic in Belgium. We observed indeed diverse mixed and interconnected experiences. The reason why coexisting contradictory experiences, such as fear and peace, could not be further explored is related to the chosen methodology of our study. This study was part of a longitudinal study on women’s health-related quality of life during the pandemic. An open-ended question, in an online survey, questioned women’s experiences during the perinatal period. As stated in the limitations of the study, interviews might have been more appropriate to gain a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest. This study was a first exploration of women’s experiences.

Recently, Swedish pregnant women’s experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic were cryptically defined as ‘feeling in the shadow of the unknown, where the pandemic could at times overshadow their pregnancy, while at other times, rays of sunlight pierced through the clouds’ [1]. Likewise, Australian pregnant women, retained resilience and optimism despite feelings as uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic [2]. New mothers in Germany and Switzerland felt challenged in defining their new role but welcomed the slowdown in the rhythm of life [3]. Being more often at home clearly facilitated breastfeeding for some women in Belgium, while others suffered from anxiety and stress due to concurrent childcare responsibilities [4].

Despite the fact that our reported contradictory experiences are also described in literature, future studies are warranted to explore the interrelations of coexisting experiences in the perinatal period to gain deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

### Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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