

# Nurturing child growth and development through maternal agency

Dear Editor,

Children's physical health is paramount for their growth and development.<sup>[1]</sup> In addition, a vital yet overlooked part of child growth and development is the profound influence of maternal mental health on the growth and development of children. While society mainly focuses on children's educational and physical health, we must recognize the critical role of a mother's mental well-being in shaping her child's future.<sup>[2]</sup> A child's early years are characterized by rapid cognitive, emotional, and physical growth. The parents play a crucial role in ensuring the health and safety of the child. A mother's competence and ability to make deliberate decisions and conduct activities that benefit her child's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development are referred to as maternal agency.<sup>[3]</sup> The maternal agency can influence a child's physical and mental development by making informed nutrition decisions, early learning, health care, emotional support, socialization, advocacy, positive discipline, safety, cultural and individual values, and balancing work and life. Numerous mothers experience postpartum depression, anxiety, and other perinatal mood disorders yearly, yet these conditions frequently go undetected and untreated. Developmental delay is when a child shows a considerable delay in reaching developmental milestones. A few developmental domains are gross motor, fine motor, language and hearing, and social behavior.<sup>[4]</sup> According to research conducted in developed nations, infants whose mothers suffer from common mental disorders, particularly anxiety and mood disorders, perform relatively worse regarding their cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioral development than children whose mothers do not suffer from such conditions.<sup>[5]</sup> Addressing maternal mental health is an investment in the welfare of future generations. We can do so effectively by early intervention. Identifying and treating maternal mental health issues during pregnancy and postpartum and screening children at schools and daycare centers can help identify children at risk due to their mother's mental health issues. Access to maternal mental health issues must ensure mothers can access

all affordable and accessible mental health programs. Community and family support should be educated about the problems of mothers so they can help mothers navigate the various challenges. In conclusion, we must acknowledge the link between maternal mental health and the growth and development of children and the use of maternal agency to overcome the issue. We can develop happier children and build a brighter future for our communities by addressing maternal mental health issues.

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### Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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