

Original Research Article

## Parental Factors Associated with Pregnancy Outcome With Reference to Spontaneous Abortion

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To assess the role of environmental, occupational and lifestyle factors among women with history of spontaneous abortion (SAb Cases) with respect to women without such history (bearing child - Controls).

**Methods:** A total of 406 (203 SAb and equal number of control subjects) were enrolled from Gynecology department, Civil hospital, Ahmedabad and personal demographic information, medical, occupational, lifestyle and reproductive history especially details of number of SAb, duration of last SAb, number of child etc. were collected on predesigned proforma.

**Results:** The mean BMI of SAb subjects and their partners was significantly higher as compared to BMI of control group. Area of residence appeared to have no impact in the pregnancy outcome. More number of women with SAb was employed as compared to controls. With respect to lifestyle habits among women, it was found that the proportion of chewers (mixture containing tobacco or areca nut as main compound) were more in SAb subjects as compared to control, this difference was statistically significant. With regards to impact of paternal lifestyle factors on spontaneous abortion, it was also noted that number of male subjects with habit of tobacco chewing or smoking or alcohol consumption was higher in SAb case group as compared to control group (NS). The results of logistic regression analysis indicated that the BMI of female subjects was significantly associated with risk of SAb. One unit elevation in the BMI increases the risk of SAb by 1.093 times (OR-1.093, 95% CI-1.026 to 1.161). Also, working women were at more risk for SAb (OR-1.86%, 95% CI-1.041 to 3.355).

**Conclusion:** The study indicated that working women, higher BMI and women with tobacco chewing habits have significant risk of SAb than housewives, normal BMI and women without habit of tobacco chewing. No such significant impact of paternal exposure was found with respect to risk of spontaneous abortion.

**Keywords:** Spontaneous abortion, Lifestyle, Occupation, Area of residence, BMI, Tobacco chewing.

### INTRODUCTION

Various exogenous and endogenous factors are involved for attaining the successful pregnancy and its outcomes. Spontaneous abortion is defined as a clinically recognized pregnancy loss before the 20<sup>th</sup> week of gestation. Spontaneous abortion is also affected at least in part by exogenous causes such as environmental,

occupational and lifestyle factors in addition to the various other factors such as higher age, miscarriage history, obesity, diabetes, thyroid problems etc, and exposure to tobacco smoke, drug or alcohol use etc. Both maternal and paternal factors may also pose threat for spontaneous abortion which might depend upon time, duration, time and intensity of such exposure. Spontaneous

abortion (SAb) is an extremely emotional issue for the couples as well as to their family. Most of the SAb are caused due to genetic or biological reasons (~50%); however, many SAb are still remain idiopathic (~40%).<sup>[1]</sup> Hence, it is desirable to understand the cause of such SAb.

Exposure to certain chemicals may have a role in elevated reproductive disorders in both the sexes; which might also be associated with elevation in SAb/recurrent spontaneous abortion (RSA). The number of women at the workplace is increasing worldwide steadily in recent decades and a considerable of them are in reproductive age.<sup>[2]</sup> Hence they may be exposed to certain occupational factors. Exposure to some of the persistent chemicals has been reported to cause disruption in the fetal development and cause adverse pregnancy outcome. It is recognized that fetus is more vulnerable to minute concentration of toxic chemicals as compared to same magnitude of exposure to such chemicals in adulthood. These exposures might also be responsible for altered gene expression; and in turn associated with SAb/RSA. However, information on relation between specific exposure of reproductive toxicants and spontaneous abortion is scanty. Earlier Weselak *et al.* reported that close to 30% of all pregnancies end up in spontaneous abortion. Although about 60% of spontaneous abortions are thought to be due to genetic, infectious, hormonal, and immunological factors. Pregnancy involves a delicate balance of hormonal and immunological functions, which may be affected by various toxic substances and this exposure may disrupt this equilibrium. This might also exaggerate the problem of spontaneous abortion.<sup>[3]</sup> Later Tan *et al.* conducted a case-control study to assess the association between maternal life style factors and risk of threatened miscarriage. They found a positive association between threatened miscarriage with second hand tobacco smoke exposure, excess computer, mobile usage and caffeine consumption and

fish oil consumption reduced the risk of threatened miscarriage.<sup>[4]</sup> Recently Kim *et al.* investigated the relationship between job type and the risk for spontaneous abortion in the workers in the semiconductor industry. They observed risk for spontaneous abortion in female semiconductor workers was not significantly higher for fabrication and packaging process workers than for clerical workers. However, when they stratified by time period, the odds ratio for spontaneous abortion was significantly higher for packaging process workers who became pregnant prior to 2008 when compared with clerical workers before automation in the industry.<sup>[5]</sup>

The present study was conducted to assess the role of both maternal and paternal environmental, occupational and lifestyle factors with respect to spontaneous abortion.

## METHODS

A total of 406 women (203 SAb cases and 203-control subjects) were enrolled from the Gynecology department, Civil hospital, Ahmedabad, India. An informed written consent was obtained from each study participant after explaining the aim and objectives of the study and benefit of the study to the community as a whole. This paper is a part of a major project entitled "Relationship between spontaneous abortion and occupational, environmental exposure" for which ethical approval of the study was obtained from the institutional human ethical committee, NIOH, Ahmedabad, India.

The personal demographic information, medical history, occupational history, lifestyle history and reproductive history especially details of number of SAb, duration of last SAb, number of child etc. were collected through questionnaire interview of the SAb and control subjects in their language and recorded on predesigned and pretested proforma.

### Statistical Analysis

The data obtained were computerized in excel program and analyzed to draw inference. The

significance between the two groups (SAb and control) of different variables studied was determined. The p value < 0.05 was considered as statistically significant.

Logistic regression of male and female subjects' variables was done to assess the risk associated with SAb. The data were presented and depicted in table 1-4.

**RESULTS**

**Table 1 : Study Characteristics of female subjects**

Subject Characteristics	SAb subjects (n=203) n (%)	Controls (n=203) n (%)	P value
Educational Status			
Illiterate (n=59)	27 (45.76)	32 (54.24)	0.57
Literate (n=347)	176 (50.72)	171 (49.28)	
Area of Residence			
Industrial (n=40)	22 (55.00)	18 (45.00)	0.50
Residential (n=339)	164 (48.38)	175 (51.62)	
Agricultural (n=27)	17 (62.96)	10 (37.04)	
Occupational History			
Employed (n=67)	42 (62.69)	25 (37.31)	0.031
Unemployed (n=339)	161 (47.49)	178 (52.51)	
Lifestyle Habits			
Chewer (tobacco / areca nut)(n=22)	16 (72.72)	06 (27.27)	0.04
Never Chewer (n=384)	187 (48.69)	197 (51.30)	
Mean Age (years)	25.94±0.28	26.30±0.26	0.361
BMI Category			
Mean BMI (kg/m <sup>2</sup> )	22.18±0.28	20.87±0.22	<0.000
Underweight (n=81)	35 (43.21)	46 (56.79)	0.580
Healthy (n=259)	121 (46.72)	138 (53.28)	
Overweight/ obese (n=66)	47 (71.21)	19 (28.79)	

**Table 2: Demographic, Lifestyle paternal variables among male subjects**

Variables	Controls (n=203)	SAb subjects (n=203)	P value
Age and BMI			
Mean Age	29.50±0.30	29.18±0.31	0.45
Mean BMI	22.30±0.18	22.88±0.22	0.04
Residential area			
Industrial (n=40)	18 (45.0)	22(55.0)	0.50
Residential (n=339)	175 (51.6)	164(48.4)	
Agricultural (n=27)	10 (37.0)	17(63.0)	
Educational Status			
Illiterate (n=36)	18 (50.0)	18(50.0)	0.85
Primary (n=79)	47 (59.5)	32(40.5)	0.41
Secondary* (n=167)	89 (53.3)	78(46.7)	-
Higher secondary (n=72)	30 (41.7)	42(58.3)	0.12
Graduate and above (n=52)	19 (36.5)	33(63.5)	0.03
BMI category (Kg/m <sup>2</sup> )			
Under weight (<18.5) (n=19)	09 (47.4)	10 (52.6)	0.81
Healthy (18.5-24.9) (n=318)	164 (51.6)	154 (48.4)	
Over weight (25-29.9) (n=69)	30 (43.5)	39 (56.5)	0.23
Smoking Habits			
Nonsmoker (n=371)	189 (50.9)	182 (49.1)	0.28
Smoker (n=35)	14 (40.0)	21 (60.0)	
Chewing Habits			
Nonchewer (n=199)	102 (51.3)	97 (48.7)	ns
Chewer (n=207)	101 (48.8)	106 (51.2)	
Alcohol Use			
Yes (n=59)	24 (40.7)	35 (59.3)	0.15
No (n=347)	179 (51.6)	168 (48.4)	

\*considered as reference category for Chi square test

The mean BMI of SAb subjects was significantly higher statistically as compared to BMI of control group. However, the

mean age of the two groups (SAb and control) was more or less similar. Further, the SAb cases were significantly higher in

the overweight/ obese female subjects (fig 1). No significant role of education and area of residence with respect to SAb were found between SAb and control groups. More number of women with SAb was employed as compared to controls. This difference was statistically significant between the two groups. With respect to lifestyle habits among women, it was observed that the proportion of chewers (mixture containing tobacco or areca nut as main compound) were more in SAb subjects as compared to control, and this difference between SAb and control groups was also statistically significant (Table-1 and Fig 2).

The mean age was more or less same among the male partners of the two groups.

The mean BMI of male partners of SAb subjects was significantly higher as compared to partners of controls (fig 1). With regards to impact of paternal lifestyle factors on spontaneous abortion, it was found that number of male subjects with habit of tobacco chewing or smoking or alcohol consumption was higher in SAb case group as compared to control group. However this difference was statistically non-significant with all the variables. Paternal other variables such as area of residence, role of education, dietary habit and employment history also do not have any significant relationship with respect to SAb in their partner (table-2).

**Table 3: Paternal Occupational details of subjects**

Categories of Variables	Control (n=203) %	SAb subjects (n=203) %	P value
Occupation			
Manual Labour* (n=105)	52 (49.5)	53 (50.5)	NS
Industrial Workers (n=64)	34 (53.1)	30 (46.9)	0.764
Business/Shopkeeper (n=43)	19 (42.9)	24 (57.1)	0.603
Farmer (n=15)	08 (53.3)	07 (46.7)	NS
Office Workers (n=33)	17 (51.5)	16 (48.5)	NS
Others (taxi driver, auto driver, constable, services job etc) (n=146)	73 (50.0)	73 (50.0)	-
Categories of Workers			
Unskilled worker (n=130)	71 (54.6)	59 (45.4)	0.26
Semiskilled worker* (n=203)	97 (47.8)	106 (52.2)	-
Skilled worker (n=34)	17 (50.0)	17 (50.0)	0.85
Clerical/shopowner/farmer (n=32)	15 (46.9)	17 (53.1)	NS
Semi Profession (n=06)	02 (33.3)	04 (66.7)	0.68

\*considered as reference category for Chi square test

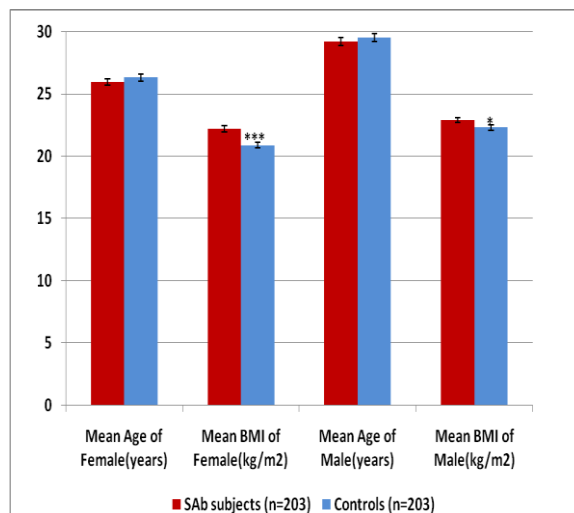
**Table 4: Logistic Regression of demographic variable of male and female subjects modeled together for the risk of SAb**

	B	p value	Odd Ratio Exp(B)	95% C.I. for OR EXP(B)	
				Lower	Upper
Industrial area	0.284	0.426	1.329	0.660	2.675
Agricultural area	0.765	0.085	2.149	0.901	5.125
Age of male partners	-0.015	0.704	0.985	0.912	1.064
BMI of male partners	0.061	0.095	1.063	0.989	1.141
Educational score of male	0.140	0.152	1.150	0.950	1.392
Occupational score of male	-0.013	0.918	0.987	0.765	1.273
Smoking habit of male	0.480	0.229	1.617	0.740	3.533
Chewing habit of male	0.119	0.596	1.127	0.724	1.754
Habit of alcohol consumption	0.239	0.445	1.270	0.688	2.344
Upper Lower SE Class	-0.080	0.750	0.923	0.563	1.513
Upper middle SE class	0.152	0.674	1.164	0.574	2.363
Age of female	-0.037	0.406	0.964	0.884	1.051
BMI of female	0.089	0.004	1.093	1.029	1.161
Educational score of female	0.107	0.281	1.113	0.916	1.352
Employment status of female	0.626	0.036	1.869	1.041	3.355
Chewing habit of female	0.903	0.085	2.467	0.883	6.889
Habit of caffeine intake female	0.444	0.163	1.559	0.835	2.912
Constant	-3.304	0.013	0.037		

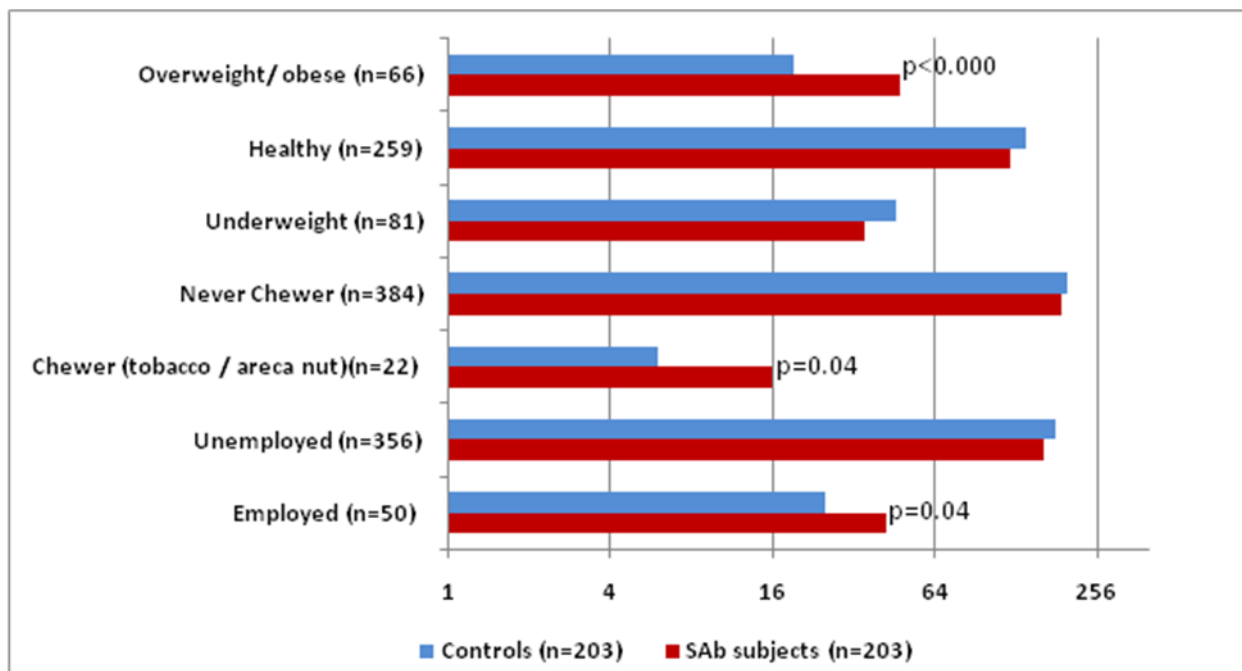
a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Area of residence, Age of Male and Female, actual BMI of male and female, Smoking habit of male, Chewing habit of male and female, Habit of alcohol consumption of male, Caffeine consumption habit of female. Socio economic class, Educational profile of both partners, and Occupational Score of male and employment status of female

The paternal occupational detail of SAb and control subjects is depicted in table 3. The data with regards to occupations indicated that the partners of SAb subjects were slightly higher among manual labors and business/ shopkeepers. The data with regards to occupation as well as category is statistically non significant.

Table 4 depicted the Logistic regression analysis of demographic variables related of male and female subjects. The results reflected that the BMI of female subjects was significantly associated with risk of SAb. As one unit of BMI elevates, the risk of SAb increases by 1.093 times. Also, working women were at more risk for SAb (OR-1.86%,  $p < 0.036$ , 95% CI-1.041 to 3.355) as compared to housewives.



\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  based on independent student's t test  
 Fig 1: Mean Age and Mean BMI of study population



p values based on Chi square test  
 Fig 2: Distribution of female subjects with respect to occupational status, lifestyle (areca nut/tobacco chewing) habits and categories of BMI.

## DISCUSSION

Area of residence with regards to industrial and agricultural has no difference in the proportion of SAb cases and control subjects when compared to proportion of SAb subjects residing in residential area. However, more number of women with SAb was working women as compared to controls. This suggest that working women may have more risk for SAb than non-

working women and various occupational factors such as physical, chemicals, stress at work place may also be associated with the occurrence of SAb in the study. There are several reports which indicated the role of occupational associated factors/exposure in SAb. Earlier Geshev reported the highest frequency of SAb was encountered in women working in the chemical industry, such as in pharmaceutical industries, light

and heavy metallurgy, plastics, and the railway industry. The lowest frequency was found in those women employed in offices. They also found an obvious correlation between the level of stress and the rate of spontaneous abortions. [6] Later Wong *et al.* found a reduced risk of miscarriage for women working in jobs with either light or medium physical activity during the first trimester of pregnancy and over all pregnancies as compared to women employed in sedentary jobs. However, frequent crouching during the work was associated with elevated risk of SAB. [7] Recently, Zheng *et al.* mentioned that generally women with lower Socio Economic Status (SES) had a higher risk of SAB. Lower income and educational attainment were inversely associated with the risk of SAB. Women with agricultural and related work also had a significantly higher prevalence of SAB. They further suggested that interventions could be targeted more on women with low SES. However, no role of education or area of residence was found to be associated with SAB in the present study. [8] Earlier al-Nuaim *et al.* found a direct statistically significant relationship between maternal age, level of education, parity and a history of previous abortion with respect to spontaneous abortions. [9] Recently Catak *et al.* reported that four factors namely educational status of women, employment status of women, exposure to physical violence and non-receipt of antenatal care (ANC) are associated with independent risk on spontaneous abortions. [10]

The mean BMI of SAB subjects was significantly higher while mean age of the SAB and control was more or less similar. Rochebrochard and Thonneau found that the risk of miscarriage was higher if the women age was greater than or equal to 35 years. They further reported that risk of an adverse pregnancy outcome was highest if both partner were in advanced in age. [11] However, in the present no considerable differences in age was observed between spontaneous abortion and control subjects as

age matched control were enrolled in the study. Earlier Wang *et al.* examined the relationship between BMI and risk of SAB in subjects receiving infertility treatment. The effect of BMI was significant on the risk of SAB. Compared with reference group (healthy BMI), underweight women and overweight/ obese women were at risk of SAB. [12]

Further, there are several reports on various toxicants and life style factors such as ambient air pollution, [13-15] exposure to phthalates, [16,17] tobacco smoking and environmental tobacco smoke, [18-20] metals-mercury, lead [21,22] caffeine intake [23,24] alcohol consumption [25-27] may have some role in occurrence of spontaneous abortions. In the present study also more number of women with SAB was employed as compared to controls indicating various job related factors may be responsible for spontaneous abortion. Earlier Anttila and Sallmén reported that epidemiological studies indicate that paternal exposure to lead or mercury might be associated with the risk of spontaneous abortion and for maternal exposure, no clear conclusion could be drawn. In particular, paternal occupational exposure levels to metals were substantial compared with population values. They further reported that even though there are shortcomings in the present knowledge, protective goals for paternal exposure to lead and mercury are warranted. [21] In addition, Lindbohm reported that maternal high exposure to solvents may increase the risk of spontaneous abortion. Suggestive associations of spontaneous abortions have also been observed with some particular solvents especially for toluene. Evidence on the effects of paternal exposure to solvents on pregnancy outcome is limited and inconsistent. Suggestive results link paternal exposure to spontaneous abortion, congenital malformation, and low birth weight or preterm birth. [28] In addition, role of consanguinity and inbreeding on spontaneous abortion was also reported earlier by Hussain and mentioned that both

consanguinity and inbreeding were independent risk factors for spontaneous abortion despite undertaking control for other biological and socio-demographic factors that could confound the association. The combination of fetal and parental inbreeding led to a greater likelihood of a pregnancy ending in spontaneous abortion than one generation of inbreeding alone. [29] Further, Mills et al., found that diabetic women with good metabolic control are no more likely than nondiabetic women to lose a pregnancy, but diabetic women with elevated blood glucose and glycosylated hemoglobin levels in the first trimester have a significantly increased risk of SAb. [30]

The data available and coupled with the present findings it can be inferred that maternal life style factors advanced age, higher BMI, work as well as occupational/ environmental exposure to certain toxicants such as air pollutants, certain heavy metals, phthalates, solvents, tobacco smoke, etc. may have some role in SAb. Further, well plan studies are needed to pinpoint specific factors or toxicant responsible for SAb.

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**Conflict Of Interest:** None

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