



# Maternal Love: Psychological Insights into Care, Identity, and Well-Being

Deepankar V\*

Department to Psychiatry, N.C. Medical College & Hospital, India

\*Corresponding author: Dr Versha Deepankar, Department to Psychiatry, N.C. Medical College & Hospital, India, Tel: 9058026553; Email: versha.psych@gmail.com

Received Date: December 16, 2024; Published Date: December 30, 2024

## Editorial

Maternal love as a universal emotion can be the strongest as well as the most sounding trait of a human relationship. It is widely idealized as an untainted love, the deepest respect, a selfless action, and an instinct to guard. But from the behavioural perspective maternal love is far more intricate than that which is often presented in culture and literature there is a constant interaction of genes dominance, attachment hierarchy, individual's perceptions and the culture. These components may be both genetic and environmental. In this editorial, I will discuss different dimensions of maternal love, the psychological factors behind it and the effects that its presence entails for mothers as well as for children.

## The Biological Basis of Maternal Love: A Deep-Rooted Instinct

Maternal love is fundamentally biological. According to evolutionary psychologists, our innate need for survival is the basis for maternal-child attachment. The child survival and the social cohesion of the family are guaranteed by the mothers innate desire to shield, care for and connect with her child. Often referred to as the "love or bonding hormone", research shows that oxytocin is essential for the development of maternal love. Oxytocin which is released during breastfeeding, childbirth and skin-to-skin contact fosters emotions of warmth, empathy and affection—all of which are essential elements of maternal attachment.

In animal's maternal behaviour like feeding, protecting and nurturing is also instinct-driven demonstrating that the act of nurturing is not exclusive to humans. However human

maternal love is unique due to its multifaceted psychological aspects that go beyond basic survival instincts. Human bonds are moulded by emotional and cognitive experiences that evolve over time.

## Attachment Theory and the Formation of Maternal Bonds

There is a lot that can be learned about maternal love from the life of John Bowlby, and his attachment theory. Bowlby explains that an infant mother bond attachment is critical in the subsequent emotional social and cognitive development of the child. How children construct their self-image form associations with others and respond to stress during their life is determined by the intensity of the relationship with the mother.

To appreciate maternal love in relation to child development, there is the need to grasp the concept of secure attachment, that is, a phenomenon in which the child has the freedom to interact with the environment but returns to the mother as the point of safety. Research has shown that Children who have a secure attachment style as infants are more likely to be growing up as strong emotionally balanced and even tempered adults. On the other hand insecure attachment which frequently results from irregular or insufficient maternal care can cause a number of psychological issues such as anxiety depression and trouble establishing positive relationships as an adult. It is important to understand that flawless care is not always a sign of maternal love. Motherhoods difficulties including mental health issues financial strain and social isolation can sever the strong bond that the attachment system is meant to foster. In these

situations the realities of providing care complicate the ideal of maternal love as an effortless unconditional connection.

### **The Psychological Impact of Maternal Love on Mothers**

Although the impact of maternal love on children has been the subject of much psychological research, mothers emotional and psychological reactions are just as important. Being a mother can be a rewarding but mentally exhausting experience. A woman's identity, roles as well as relationships under-go a significant change, as she enters motherhood, which can cause emotional disruption.

Parental identity, in simple terms, can be defined as the way women internalize the self-role of being a mother. For some women this can be quite overpowering while for others it can be quite encouraging. In this context maternal love is a negotiated experience in which a mothers identity is frequently entwined with her child welfare rather than merely a result of instinct. The sensation of maternal affection has been noted in the past to instill a sense of satisfaction and joy however it has the potential of inducing low self-esteem and anxiety as well. This holds especially true for women struggling with anxiety and postnatal depression which subsequently gets aggravated by the expectations placed by society on women to be the perfect mother one with love and compassion.

In many cultures having to sacrifice themselves physically through expectations of motherhood is expected from a woman. This can result in a psychological burden where mothers feel inadequate or resentful when they can not live up to these social expectations combined with the great responsibility of maternal love. At this point of time there is a more widespread recognition of maternal mental health literacy in psychology studies that allow for a fuller understanding of mothers as a person and a primary importance that cannot be removed about motherly love has to come after mother's love for herself.

### **Cultural Influences and the Idealization of Maternal Love**

Cultural norms and expectations greatly influence how mothers experience and express their love. Many cultures view the mother-child bond as the epitome of selflessness and unwavering love. Because it puts mothers under unreasonably high pressure to live up to these standards this idealization can be harmful frequently to their mental health. For example, the dominant supermom myth, which suggests that mothers can effortlessly balance their personal, professional, and family lives, often renders it challenging to

identify the challenges or complexities that go with being a mother.

Societal and cultural frameworks according to cross-cultural research affect the experience of maternal love that is not universal. In collectivist societies for instance, extended families are often crucial for providing care while the maternal bond is often intertwined with the larger family or community. While in other more individualistic cultures, the nuclear family is often the main focus of maternal love, mothers usually carrying the bulk of the responsibility. Beyond determining how maternal love is manifested, these different cultural expectations also determine what is expected of it.

### **Moving Forward: A More Comprehensive Understanding of Maternal Love**

Maternal love must be understood in a more precise manner as psychology matures. Instead of romanticizing maternal love, as always selfless or natural, it should be acknowledged as a rich dynamic interaction shaped by culture, biology, attachment, and psychological conditions. Since a comprehensive grasp of maternal love takes into account the burdens of motherhood in psychological terms, the emotional impact of motherhood, and social pressures, this must be the next step.

Creating an environment that serves mothers and their children is likely to involve the cooperation of psychologists, legislators, and public opinion. This means both emphasizing the needs of mothers for mental health and challenging irrational social expectations about mothers in addition to enabling the promotion of practical assistance for mothering. We therefore can assist mothers and children through their development more optimally, ultimately building healthier families and communities around them as we learn more about maternal love.

### **Conclusion**

Maternal love is one of the most complicated and intense aspects of human psychology. It arises from a blend of biological instincts, early attachment dynamics, personal psychological identity, and societal expectations. While the concept of maternal love has very often been glamorized as totally self-less and condition-less, it is essential to appreciate its diverse range and interplay of influences. In contemplating such complexities, we can view not just the positives of maternal affection on children but also the equally profound emotional and psychological effect on mothers. A deeper understanding of maternal love can help us better address the challenges and joys of motherhood, fostering stronger connections and promoting the overall

well-being of families.

## References

1. Bowlby J (1982) Attachment and Loss: Volume 1. Attachment. 2<sup>nd</sup> (Edn.), pp: 32-45.
2. Harlow HF, Zimmermann RR (1959) The development of affectional responses in infant monkeys. Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 103(3): 424-431.
3. Beck CT (2002) The effects of postpartum depression on maternal-infant interaction: A meta-analysis. Nursing Research 51(5): 383-393.
4. Chodorow N (1978) The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender. University of California Press, pp: 32-45.