Reading in Political Economy

Volume 60 · Issue 2 · 2026
Pages 1305–1308

ISSN 0079-9874 (Print) · e-ISSN 0305-814X (Online) politonomia.org.ua/rpe

Acupressure and Labour Pain Relief

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Received: 22/03/2026 | **Accepted:** 19/07/2026 | **Published:** 27/10/2026

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews acupressure and labour pain relief as a complementary-care topic. It outlines the rationale for studying acupressure, considers published evidence, discusses implementation and safety, and identifies priorities for future research. The discussion focuses on pregnant people, people in labour, or postpartum patients. Relevant outcomes include pain intensity, nausea, comfort, anxiety, and patient-reported experience. This is a narrative literature-based draft, not a report of a newly conducted clinical trial. It does not present original participant data or new statistical analysis. Existing reviews suggest that results vary by condition and protocol, and methodological limitations affect confidence in findings. Acupressure should be considered, where appropriate, only as a possible adjunct to usual care and not as a replacement for diagnosis or established treatment.

Keywords: acupressure; acupressure and labour pain relief; complementary care; symptom management; evidence review; patient safety

INTRODUCTION

Acupressure is a non-invasive practice in which pressure is applied to selected points on the body. It is commonly discussed within traditional East Asian health systems and is also studied as a complementary approach for symptom management. Popularity alone does not establish effectiveness, so its possible benefits should be assessed against clinical evidence, safety, and patient priorities. For acupressure and labour pain relief, the central question is whether a clearly described protocol can produce a meaningful and reproducible change in pain intensity, nausea, comfort, anxiety, and patient-reported experience. Studies should define the target population as pregnant people, people in labour, or postpartum patients, specify comparison conditions, and distinguish immediate response from longer-term outcomes. A change observed in one setting cannot automatically be transferred to another. Where evidence is uncertain, the appropriate conclusion is uncertainty rather than an assumption of effectiveness.

Research quality depends on transparent methods, prespecified outcomes, adequate sample sizes, and balanced reporting. Reviews should distinguish randomized trials from observational work and should consider both clinical significance and statistical uncertainty. Patient preferences and feasibility also matter, but they do not substitute for evidence of benefit.

CONCEPTUAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Acupressure is commonly described as applying manual pressure to points also used in acupuncture, without inserting needles. Protocols differ in point selection, pressure, duration, frequency, and practitioner training. These differences matter because the label can cover interventions that are not identical. A clear description is essential

How to cite: Rossi (2026). Acupressure and Labour Pain Relief. Reading in Political Economy, 60(2), 1305–1308.
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for interpretation and replication. For acupressure and labour pain relief, the central question is whether a clearly described protocol can produce a meaningful and reproducible change in pain intensity, nausea, comfort, anxiety, and patient-reported experience. Studies should define the target population as pregnant people, people in labour, or postpartum patients, specify comparison conditions, and distinguish immediate response from longer-term outcomes. A change observed in one setting cannot automatically be transferred to another. Where evidence is uncertain, the appropriate conclusion is uncertainty rather than an assumption of effectiveness.

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POSSIBLE MECHANISMS AND THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS

Proposed explanations include sensory stimulation, modulation of attention and pain processing, relaxation responses, and contextual effects. Traditional meridian explanations are part of the historical framework, but should not be presented as established biomedical mechanisms. Studies need suitable comparison groups and measurements to distinguish mechanisms. For acupressure and labour pain relief, the central question is whether a clearly described protocol can produce a meaningful and reproducible change in pain intensity, nausea, comfort, anxiety, and patient-reported experience. Studies should define the target population as pregnant people, people in labour, or postpartum patients, specify comparison conditions, and distinguish immediate response from longer-term outcomes. A change observed in one setting cannot automatically be transferred to another. Where evidence is uncertain, the appropriate conclusion is uncertainty rather than an assumption of effectiveness.

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REVIEW OF RESEARCH EVIDENCE

Reviews report promising findings for selected outcomes, including some pain conditions, nausea, sleep-related symptoms, and stress-related measures. Findings differ by condition and protocol, and evidence quality varies. Methodological limitations can include small samples, inconsistent intervention descriptions, and difficulty blinding participants. Results should not be generalized to all illnesses. For acupressure and labour pain relief, the central question is whether a clearly described protocol can produce a meaningful and reproducible change in pain intensity, nausea, comfort, anxiety, and patient-reported experience. Studies should define the target population as pregnant people, people in labour, or postpartum patients, specify comparison conditions, and distinguish immediate response from longer-term outcomes. A change observed in one setting cannot automatically be transferred to another. Where evidence is uncertain, the appropriate conclusion is uncertainty rather than an assumption of effectiveness.

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PRACTICAL APPLICATION AND PROTOCOL CONSIDERATIONS

Clinical or educational discussions should specify who applies pressure, which points are used, the pressure and duration, session frequency, and whether usual care continues. Pressure should not cause bruising, numbness, or worsening symptoms. Protocols should be adapted to individual circumstances and delivered within an appropriate professional scope. For acupressure and labour pain relief, the central question is whether a clearly described protocol can produce a meaningful and reproducible change in pain intensity, nausea, comfort, anxiety, and patient-reported experience. Studies should define the target population as pregnant people, people in labour, or postpartum patients, specify comparison conditions, and distinguish immediate response from longer-term outcomes. A change observed in one setting cannot automatically be transferred to another. Where evidence is uncertain, the appropriate conclusion is uncertainty rather than an assumption of effectiveness.

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SAFETY, ETHICS, AND LIMITATIONS

Acupressure is non-invasive but is not automatically risk-free or suitable for everyone. People with unexplained severe symptoms, significant injury, bleeding risks, fragile skin, or complex medical conditions should seek qualified advice. It should not delay diagnosis or replace evidence-based treatment. Human-participant research requires appropriate ethics and adverse-event reporting. For acupressure and labour pain relief, the central question is whether a clearly described protocol can produce a meaningful and reproducible change in pain intensity, nausea, comfort, anxiety, and patient-reported experience. Studies should define the target population as pregnant people, people in labour, or postpartum patients, specify comparison conditions, and distinguish immediate response from longer-term outcomes. A change observed in one setting cannot automatically be transferred to another. Where evidence is uncertain, the appropriate conclusion is uncertainty rather than an assumption of effectiveness.

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IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies would benefit from adequately powered randomized designs, transparent registration, standardized reporting, credible comparison conditions, and patient-relevant outcomes. Researchers should report benefits and adverse events, follow participants long enough to assess durability, and consider feasibility across settings. Clinicians should communicate uncertainty honestly. For acupressure and labour pain relief, the central question is whether a clearly described protocol can produce a meaningful and reproducible change in pain intensity, nausea, comfort, anxiety, and patient-reported experience. Studies should define the target population as pregnant people, people in labour, or postpartum patients, specify comparison conditions, and distinguish immediate response from longer-term outcomes. A change observed in one setting cannot automatically be transferred to another. Where evidence is uncertain, the appropriate conclusion is uncertainty rather than an assumption of effectiveness.

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CONCLUSION

The literature suggests acupressure may have a role as a complementary approach for selected symptoms, but evidence is not uniform across conditions. It should be evaluated as a defined intervention, not a universal treatment. Responsible practice requires attention to safety, patient preference, and access to appropriate medical care. More rigorous research is needed. For acupressure and labour pain relief, the central question is whether a clearly described protocol can produce a meaningful and reproducible change in pain intensity, nausea, comfort, anxiety, and patient-reported experience. Studies should define the target population as pregnant people, people in labour, or postpartum patients, specify comparison conditions, and distinguish immediate response from longer-term outcomes. A change observed in one setting cannot automatically be transferred to another. Where evidence is uncertain, the appropriate conclusion is uncertainty rather than an assumption of effectiveness.

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