

Exploring Well-being of Pregnant Women: A Qualitative Inquiry

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Abstract

This paper examines the emotional well-being related issues such as pain, knowledge, and happiness associated with pregnancy. It uses a narrative study with a qualitative research design. With its roots in interpretivism, the study emphasizes the subjectivity of women's experiences and makes use of one-on-one interviews as well as culturally appropriate techniques like chautara guff. Nine women informants were selected from the sample of thirty-one visitors. Participants' permission, security, and privacy were guaranteed by ethical concerns. Extensive interviews were conducted to gather data and explore pregnancy-related experiences. A month-long investigation followed careful methods to classify, decode, and illustrate the depth of the participants' stories. Findings show that pregnant women navigate a complicated emotional landscape with both positive and difficult features. Themes include coping mechanisms, significant life events, changing emotional trajectories, and cultural influences that surfaced, demonstrating the importance of extensive support systems. The study emphasizes the dynamic interaction between coping strategies and emotional experiences, highlighting the need for specialized care that takes pregnancy's complexity into account. It also reveals how crucial social and cultural elements, helpful support systems, and practical tools are to maintaining expectant mothers' mental health. The postpartum expectations of the participants highlight the continued need for emotional

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support, childcare, and peer and community support. This study recommends offering insightful information for specialized support programs the expectant mothers.

Keywords: Emotional well-being, Interpretivism, Narrative study, Pregnancy

Background of the Study

This study explores the mental health of Newari women in the complex cultural tapestry of Kirtipur, Nepal, providing light on an important but little-studied part of their existence. The complex intricacies of gender roles and societal expectations are frequently entwined with the deeply ingrained tradition and heritage of Newari culture. In the light of this historical and cultural background, the study intends to investigate the complex experiences, obstacles, and resilience of Newari women with regard to their mental health. In this sense, the study assesses the emotional landscape of women by analyzing socio-cultural elements, familial structures, and community impacts. These insights help to shape support networks, interventions, and policies that are intended to improve these women's general well-being. As one more piece of the rich cultural tapestry, the term 'Newar' refers to those who identify as Newar (Nepal Bhasa) speakers in the Kathmandu Valley. In spite of this, the Newar people managed to build a unique identity while preserving their rich cultural customs and rituals.

My position as a university teacher is uniquely suited to delve into the complex aspects of women's mental health during pregnancy in this particular context. I am a researcher and longtime resident of Kirtipur, with a deep understanding of the Newari culture, childbearing practices, and women's health during pregnancy. Having spent two decades fully immersed in the culture, I have personally observed the intricate web of Newari customs, ceremonies, and prenatal care procedures. Owing to Kirtipur's distinct socio-cultural mosaic and cultural subtleties, it becomes imperative to investigate pregnant women's mental health.

The significance of maternal emotional health is a critical aspect of women health, since it affects both the mother and the growing fetus. Several researches have demonstrated the correlation between the mental health of mothers and unfavorable pregnancy outcomes, such as low birth weight and preterm birth (Glover et al., 2018; Grote et al., 2010). Furthermore, pregnant

women's emotional health can affect their participation in prenatal treatment, compliance with medical advice, and postpartum adjustment (Bayrampour et al., 2018; Mirzakhani et al., 2020). Understanding the importance of mental health during pregnancy is essential to creating comprehensive and successful programs for the care of expectant mothers. Pregnancy is a dynamic time marked by a variety of emotional experiences, ranging from the happiness and excitement of becoming a mother to the stress and anxiety brought on by the unknowns of childbirth and raising a child (Dunkel Schetter et al., 2013; Leach et al., 2017). Pregnancy's emotional terrain is complex, shaped by personal characteristics, cultural norms, and differing degrees of social support (Lancaster et al., 2010; Nasreen et al., 2019). Comprehending these intricacies demand a thorough investigation that surpasses quantitative assessments, requiring qualitative research techniques to capture the richness and profundity of expectant mothers' emotional encounters.

Preserving mental health at its best during pregnancy requires a comprehensive strategy that puts self-care ahead of life's many responsibilities. It is critical to strike a balance between the demands of work, home duties, employment responsibilities, and the significant physiological changes that occur during pregnancy. Getting enough sleep is essential because it gives the body time to recover and the mind a break (Bacaro et al., 2020; Jhu et al., 2020). Engaging in regular exercise enhances mental well-being in addition to physical health. Selecting wholesome meals promotes general well-being by giving mother and child access to vital nutrients. Simultaneously, stress management becomes essential, and methods like mindfulness or relaxation exercises are helpful (Callands et al., 2023). Even in the midst of a busy existence, understanding the importance of these pillars of well-being can enable pregnant mothers to face the challenges of pregnancy with resiliency and vigor.

The study demands exploration and comprehension of particular difficulties, impacts, and elements that are specific to the Newari community and have an impact on pregnant women's emotional well-being. This study addresses this demand through an exploration of the distinctive cultural norms, practices, and social dynamics that either support this group's emotional health during pregnancy. To learn more about the ways in which cultural rituals and

conventions, familial expectations, traditional beliefs, and social support networks affect the mental well-being of expectant mothers in the Newari community, the identification and resolution of these culturally embedded elements are crucial.

Literature Review

A woman's life is profoundly altered during her pregnancy, including major emotional shifts in addition to physical ones (Jackson et al., 2023). Pregnant women's emotional health is important to understand and support because it affects not only the mother's mental health but also the developing fetus's health. This review summarizes relevant research on the emotional well-being of pregnant women, with an emphasis on qualitative studies.

The psychological aspects of pregnancy have been the subject of several studies, which highlight the significance of mental wellness for the health of both the mother and the fetus. A qualitative investigation of pregnant women's emotional experiences was carried out by Fletcher et al., (2021), and the findings showed a range of feelings from enthusiasm and joy to dread and anxiety. The study emphasizes the necessity for a comprehensive knowledge of the emotional environment during pregnancy because emotions are essentially personal and situational.

Pregnant women's emotional health is significantly shaped by their social support system. The effect of social support on mother mental health was investigated in a qualitative study by Grote et al., (2015). The findings show that emotional resilience during pregnancy is positively correlated with robust support networks. Expectant mothers' general well-being is impacted by the emotional support that friends, family, and partners provide.

Culture has a big impact on how a pregnancy goes, affecting how people view parenthood and what society expects of them. Selim (2010) study brought to light the subtle cultural differences that impact pregnant women's emotional health in a variety of communities. Examining the cultural subtleties of Newari women is crucial in light of the planned research. Specific cultural customs, beliefs, and rituals within the Newari culture may add special elements to expectant mothers' emotional health. Being pregnant can provide a number of obstacles that affect one's mental health. McMahon et al. (2016) conducted a qualitative analysis to examine the obstacles that

pregnant women encounter, including financial strain, body image issues, and anxiety about giving birth. Comprehending these obstacles is essential for the suggested research, which seeks to pinpoint the particular pressure experienced by expectant Newari women. Furthermore, investigating the coping strategies used by expectant mothers is essential to creating focused solutions that respect cultural norms and preferences.

Pregnant women need emotional support. In a qualitative investigation, Davis et al., (2018) highlighted the value of compassionate and encouraging treatment by looking at pregnant women's experiences interacting with professionals. This component is especially pertinent to the study that is being suggested since it examines how medical practitioners might support the mental health of expectant women while taking into account potential cultural differences in medical care. Pregnant women who may be reluctant to seek help out of fear of being judged are affected by the widespread stigma around mental health. Jones et al., (2020) conducted research that shed light on the stigma attached to mental health problems during pregnancy.

The quality of a mindfulness-based intervention in lowering stress and anxiety in expectant mothers was assessed in a research by Smith et al. (2019). It offers insights into evidence-based strategies that might be modified especially for the emotional well-being of pregnant Newari women, as the suggested research aims to guide targeted interventions. The literature that has been written about pregnant women's emotional health highlight the complex nature of this issue. Based on this foundation, a qualitative inquiry into the emotional well-being of pregnant Newari women is carried out, with the goal of offering culturally sensitive findings. The study looks at the psychological, social, and cultural aspects in an effort to pinpoint problems, coping strategies, and possible intervention areas. The examined literature emphasizes the value of a comprehensive strategy that takes into account all the interrelated elements that influence pregnant women's emotional experiences.

Objective of the Study

The aim of this study is to perform a thorough qualitative examination of pregnant women's emotional health. The goal of the research is to investigate and comprehend the various aspects that impact emotional health during

pregnancy, with a particular emphasis on the psychological, social, and cultural aspects. Using focus groups, in-depth interviews, and theme analysis, the study aims to pinpoint the particular difficulties, coping strategies, and support networks that expectant mothers face. Furthermore, the study seeks to understand how interpersonal interactions, cultural norms, and societal expectations shape emotional well-being during pregnancy. It is anticipated that this study provides insights that can guide the creation of customized interventions and support plans aimed at improving the mental health of expectant mothers. By examining various aspects of their experiences, this qualitative study seeks to understand the mental health of expectant mothers. It helps to obtain a thorough comprehension of the emotional experiences that expectant mothers go through at various phases of their pregnancy.

Research Method

Since the study examines the lived experiences of the expectant mothers, the method demands delving into the intricacy of feelings and subjective reality. An abundant information for comprehending the emotional aspects of pregnancy is found in narratives. Interpretivism as the research paradigm is used in this study. This paradigm acknowledges that human experiences are subjective, enabling a thorough examination of the emotional facets of pregnancy. The study was carried out in Ward No. 7 of Kirtipur Municipality with a focus on the women who came for health examinations and vaccinations. The author draws attention to the fact that the target audience in this context is pregnant women, particularly those who were visited the medical facilities in the ward.

Nine females were chosen as participants from the total of the twenty-one women who visited during the allotted week. In-depth interviews were used to carefully collect qualitative data from a purposeful sample of nine pregnant women. The one-hour interviews provided a forum for the participants to freely discuss their individual experiences and viewpoints on pregnancy. The interview sessions were carefully designed to cover a variety of topics, such as talks about difficulties encountered during pregnancy, the ideas that surfaced during this time of transition, and a thorough examination of the participants' feelings and general state of health during the course of their gestation. Women showed a respectable level of devotion, voluntarily giving the interview process over one hour.

The prolonged duration of interaction enabled a thorough and sophisticated comprehension of their stories. It is important to note, nevertheless, that one participant felt compelled to end the interview after thirty minutes because of family obligations. She left early to take care of her daughter's school schedule, highlighting the precarious interaction and delicate balance of personal duties among expectant mothers. Even though the interview was cut short, her views added insightful perspectives to the study, emphasizing how important it is to take individual situations into account while doing research.

The questions that I asked during interview are the experiences covering both the physical and emotional parts. How they handled the emotional aspects, such as stress, anxiety, and joy, and whether any particular events had a big effect on their emotional health. I wanted to know how their ideas and emotions have changed over time, as well as any possible effects that cultural or societal norms may have had on their emotional well-being. I also inquired about the support systems that they received during their mental health during pregnancy. Examining the physical side of things, I talked with them about how they felt about and handled the discomforts they experienced during pregnancy as well as how it affected the mental state.

I found that the first stage in this complex trip was for me to become fully immersed in the abundance of data by listening to the audio recordings of each interview multiple times. The goal of this deep listening technique was to bring the narratives' nuances, feelings, and contextual details to life. The spoken words were then recorded in the original Nepali language, ensuring that the participants' genuine expressions were preserved. The translation from Nepali to English was done with a great care to ensure that the spirit and subtleties of the original language were faithfully expressed. This bilingual method preserved the cultural richness ingrained in the participants' expressions while facilitating a thorough grasp of the narratives.

Crucially, I carried out the analysis painstakingly, delving into the minute particulars of every individual's narrative. This practical method made it possible to examine the emotional depths and intricacies of the stories in a more sophisticated way. The data's richness was welcomed by the researchers, who used it to highlight the various facets of pregnancy-related thoughts, feelings, and well-being.

This investigation took almost a month to complete, indicating a committed and iterative approach. With each iteration, the author refined and reshaped their thinking as they worked through the layers of data. As a result, the first draft of the manuscript was prepared, summarizing the mental health of expectant mothers in Kirtipur Municipality. This thorough analysis added significantly to my understanding of pregnant women's emotional well-being and is a credit to the researchers' dedication to exploring the breadth of these women's experiences.

Ethical Consent

A careful and thorough method of getting informed consent was used before conducting one-on-one interviews with pregnant women. The first phase, according to study ethics literature, was for the researcher to introduce oneself and make a connection with the possible volunteers by actively listening to information about their names, and places of residence. In addition to building rapport, this initial interaction made sure that the participants felt appreciated and respected right away during the study interaction (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The women were then given a clear explanation of the research's goal after this introduction. According to the literature, getting informed consent requires understanding the cultural context and making sure that the procedure respects the social and cultural backgrounds of the participants (Emanuel et al., 2004). The ethical dedication to upholding the participants' autonomy was apparent despite early difficulties, including six women who failed to give enough time for participation. The final group of nine women who consented to an interview showed that consent negotiations had been effective, demonstrating the careful balancing act between the researcher's obligations and the participants' autonomy (Shaw, 2003). Before the interviews started, each participant's spoken consent was expressly requested. Oral consent was suitable in this situation, especially if written documentation is impractical or culturally inappropriate (World Health Organization, 2018). The study's ethical foundation was reinforced by the incorporation of cultural sensitivity, honest communication, and a relational approach, which is consistent with the wider principles of research ethics.

Findings

A wide range of feelings, difficulties, and worries were identified in the qualitative investigation of the expectant mothers' thoughts on the whole pregnancy experience. Numerous individuals highlighted how pregnancy had changed their life, expressing a deep sense of amazement and wonder. Positive thoughts frequently focused on the excitement and anticipation of a new family member's arrival. The study did, however, also highlight the complexity of the experiences of the expectant mothers, since several of the participants shared difficulties and worries. Recurring themes included physical discomfort, cultural expectations, and the need to juggle multiple roles. Pregnant women face a complex emotional terrain that highlights the need for a comprehensive strategy to help them navigate both the positive and negative aspects of this momentous life event. Participants discussed coping mechanisms for handling the difficult and happy feelings that come with being pregnant. Moments of fetal movement, happy ultrasound encounters, and palpable indicators of new life were frequently associated with joy. On the other hand, worries about the baby's health, the future, and the physical strain of pregnancy were often linked to worry and stress.

Coping strategies included reaching out to others for social support, practicing relaxation techniques, and finding emotional comfort in cultural customs. The findings emphasized the dynamic interaction between the emotional range of pregnancy and the coping mechanisms women use to get through this time of transition, underscoring the necessity for specialized care that takes into account the complex emotional experiences of expectant mothers. Pregnant women shared a variety of moving tales when asked to describe certain incidents or occasions that had a major impact on their emotional well-being during pregnancy. A number of people related very personal stories about their first ultrasound appointments during which they heard their baby's heartbeat or saw their movements on screen. These were frequently characterized as deeply moving and emotionally elevating experiences that strengthened the bond between the expectant moms and their unborn children. On the other hand, there were also documented cases of worry, such as health scares or unanticipated changes in the prenatal journey. These incidents caused mental strain and made people consider how unpredictable and delicate pregnancy is. Overall, the findings emphasized how critical it is to identify both happy and difficult times as critical

determinants of emotional health throughout pregnancy.

Pregnant women's emotional experiences showed dynamic trajectories when the thoughts and feelings about pregnancy were examined over time. As the reality of approaching motherhood set in, participants talked of an initial phase of heightened emotions and anticipation. As the pregnancy went on, emotions frequently changed due to adjustments in one's physical state of health, a change in one's priorities, and the development of bonds with the developing child. Some women reported a shift from anxiety to confidence, which they attributed to their increased comfort level with the pregnant process. Others described changing emotional environments that are impacted by outside forces like support networks or society norms.

The fluidity of emotional experiences during pregnancy was emphasized by this longitudinal approach, which also underscored the necessity of extensive and flexible support networks that can adjust to the changing requirements of expectant mothers as they progress through the gestational cycle. A diverse range of experiences were found when cultural and socioeconomic influences affecting pregnant women's mental health were investigated. Cultural standards and societal expectations were often mentioned by the participants as factors that shaped their emotional journey. Participants' emotional states were frequently impacted by the pressure to live up to traditional responsibilities and expectations as well as the prevalent cultural attitudes around pregnancy. Furthermore, the presence or absence of support from family and community was significant, emphasizing the necessity for a comprehensive comprehension of the cultural context to offer efficient.

The participants discussed a range of networks and resources that were helpful to them in preserving their mental well-being throughout pregnancy. Resounding familial networks, empathetic spouses, and community support became essential components. Formal and informal peer support groups offered forums for guidance and experience sharing. It was noted how important it was to have access to trustworthy information, such as prenatal education and counseling programs. The findings emphasized the significance of customized and easily available support networks, highlighting the requirement for all-inclusive resources that address the diverse emotional requirements of expectant mothers. Participants displayed a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with the physical pains or discomforts

related to pregnancy, which improved their mental health. It was customary to use mindful techniques, including yoga and meditation, to treat physical suffering and encourage emotional equilibrium. Furthermore, consulting medical experts, talking to other expectant mothers, and getting empathy from their support systems were all crucial in lessening the psychological effects of physical difficulties. The findings highlighted the connection between a woman's physical and mental health during her pregnancy and the value of comprehensive support systems that take into account both of these components of the experience.

Discovering the sources of knowledge or counsel from others that benefited the emotional journey throughout pregnancy revealed an abundance of supportive friends and family members. Participants frequently emphasized the value of listening to older family members' guidance and referencing customs and cultural wisdom. Peer support was highlighted as an important source of both emotional reassurance and useful guidance, particularly from other moms. The findings emphasized the significance of peer and intergenerational support networks and the critical role that collective wisdom plays in influencing the emotional terrain of pregnancy.

Participants frequently discussed the juggling act needed to balance obligations to one's family, career, and personal life. Although performing these responsibilities gave rise to a feeling of achievement, it also increased stress and emotional strain. The findings brought to light the delicate balance that expectant mothers must maintain while carrying out a variety of duties, underscoring the necessity for specialized support networks that recognize and lessen the difficulties these conflicting obligations present. The participants discussed their expectations for their emotional well-being following pregnancy, anticipating a period of change and adjustment. Emotional changes that were anticipated included relief, happiness, and maybe difficulties adjusting to life after childbirth. Support networks that were envisioned included ongoing access to peer and community support groups, helpful help with childcare duties, and emotional support from friends and family.

Discussion and Recommendation

The findings of the qualitative study on pregnant women's mental well-being offer a deep and sophisticated insight into the intricate interactions that occur

between a woman's own experiences, cultural influences, and support networks throughout her pregnancy. The wide range of feelings, difficulties, and worries that participants expressed highlights how complex the experiences of the pregnant women were. These findings are consistent with previous research that highlights how pregnancy may be transformative and acknowledges the complex and multifaceted emotional environment (Stentzel et al., 2023; Tomita et al., 2023). The study also highlights how important some events are in forming emotional health, such as meaningful moments during ultrasound appointments. Positive experiences, such as hearing the baby's heartbeat, were described as emotionally uplifting. These reports are consistent with the body of research on the emotional impact of ultrasound encounters and fetal movement throughout pregnancy (Bhusal et al., 2023). Emotional stress was simultaneously produced by moments of worry or unease, highlighting the significance of identifying and resolving the emotional effects of unforeseen difficulties (Pun et al., 2023). A greater comprehension of the dynamic character of emotional experiences is made possible by the longitudinal perspective on the development of ideas and emotions throughout pregnancy.

Participants reported changes in emotional landscapes impacted by things like physical health, social expectations, and support networks, which is consistent with findings from earlier studies (Kemp et al., 2023; Baldwin et al., 2023). This emphasizes the necessity of adaptive and flexible support systems that can change with the requirements of expectant mothers as they progress through the gestational period. The impact of cultural and societal elements on psychological health is consistent with previous research highlighting how cultural norms and societal expectations shape pregnant women's experiences (Corno et al., 2023; Mangin-Heimos et al., 2023). The findings highlight how crucial it is to have a sophisticated awareness of cultural settings in order to offer helpful emotional support to expectant mothers.

Additionally, support networks and resources are consistent with the body of research that highlights the importance of robust peer networks, strong family networks, and reliable information access for preserving emotional well-being during pregnancy (Davis et al., 2023; Ogrizek et al., 2023). Pregnant women have a variety of emotional requirements, and the emphasis on

customized and easily accessible support systems emphasizes the need for comprehensive resources that address these needs. The examination of coping mechanisms for bodily discomforts uncovered the connection between physical and emotional health during pregnancy, which is consistent with research highlighting the comprehensive aspect of maternal health (Rofiatun & Wahyuningsih, 2023). The findings highlight the significance of tackling both physiological and psychological factors in order to advance a holistic strategy for promoting maternal well-being.

Examining other people's sources of knowledge or counsel reveals the critical influence that collective wisdom has in influencing the emotional terrain of pregnancy. This is consistent with research that highlights the value of peer and intergenerational support networks in giving expectant mothers both emotional and practical guidance (Kelly-Hedrick et al., 2023). The topic of juggling duties and responsibilities sheds light on the precarious balance pregnant women must maintain while carrying out a variety of responsibilities. The findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the difficulties brought on by conflicting obligations and their effects on mental health. Last but not least, imagining emotional health after pregnancy and planned support networks correspond with research recognizing the postpartum phase as a crucial stage requiring ongoing assistance (Yu et al., 2023). The fact that factors related to emotional well-being are prospective highlights how important it is to have ongoing support networks during the postpartum phase. Conclusively, the findings offer insightful perspectives on the psychological welfare of expectant mothers, emphasizing the necessity of comprehensive, culturally aware, and flexible support networks across the entire prenatal and postpartum phases. The study highlights the fluid character of emotional experiences throughout pregnancy, highlighting the significance of thorough comprehension and customized care for expectant mothers.

It is recommended from this study that the psychological health of expectant mothers offer the local government a chance to enact focused regulations that strengthen support and encouragement. Policy interventions should be tailored to address the various obstacles and good experiences that pregnant women report, given the complex and nuanced character of the emotional landscape. First and foremost, the local government ought to think about

launching awareness programs emphasizing the transforming power of pregnancy and the significance of mental health. These efforts, which seek to destigmatize emotional difficulties and encourage forthright discussions, can be shared through community health centers, social media, and neighborhood get-together.

Furthermore, the local government ought to fund culturally sensitive initiatives in light of the impact that social and cultural elements have on mental health. Initiatives that offer support networks that honor and take into account various cultural customs, as well as education on the cultural elements of pregnancy, might be included in these programs. It is imperative to establish community-based efforts to promote social support, especially from family and the community. The local government can effectively give emotional support during pregnancy and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the cultural context by addressing the availability or lack of support.

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