

A Study on Challenges faced by Mothers and the Coping Strategies adopted by them during the Postpartum Period

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ABSTRACT

Postnatal period begins immediately after the birth of the newborn and extends up to 6 weeks. It is significant for the mother, for the baby, and for the family as it is a time of physiological adjustment for the mother and the baby and emotional and social adjustment for all involved in the care. A descriptive study was conducted among 500 mothers on challenges faced by mothers and the coping strategies adopted by them during the postpartum period at Justice K.S. Hegde Hospital, Mangaluru, Karnataka, India, by purposive sampling, and the study results indicated that almost all the mothers had a good adaptation toward motherhood.

Keywords: Coping strategies, Mothers, Postpartum challenges.

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INTRODUCTION

Postnatal period begins immediately after the birth of the newborn and extends up to 6 weeks. It is significant for the mother, for the baby, and for the family as it is a time of physiological adjustment for the mother and the baby and emotional and social adjustment for all involved in the care. During this period, the woman has to make major adjustments as this may in turn be crucial for her present and future ability to function. This period is also the challenging period in her reproductive life. The transition from a nonmother to a mother, or from being a mother of one child to becoming a mother of two children, calls for changes in a woman's role relationships

and/or alteration in her behavior and in herself in the social context.¹⁻⁴

OBJECTIVES

- To determine the challenges faced by postpartum mothers
- To find the coping strategies adopted by them,
- To find an association between challenges faced by postpartum women with selected demographic variables,
- To find an association between coping strategies adopted by postpartum women with selected demographic variables, and
- To compare the differences between challenges faced by primi-mothers and multimothers, and their coping strategies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A quantitative descriptive survey design was utilized, and the sample size was 500 postnatal mothers which was through purposive sampling technique in postnatal wards of the Department of OBG at Justice K.S. Hegde Hospital by using structured rating scale for postpartum challenges and for coping strategies. Structured checklist of 25 items was used.

RESULTS

The demographic characteristics were as follows: 45.8% were in the age group of 25 to 29 years and 2% were in age group of 18 to 20 years. Most of the participants were of Hindu religion (66.4%) (Table 1). Regarding literacy, 39% studied up to high school and only 0.4% were Christians. Most of the participants were nonworking (84.6%). Regarding family income, 35.4% were between 5,001 and 10,000 INR, and 22% were having an income of more than Rs. 15,000. About 53.2% had more than one child, and 46.8% had one child. Most of the participants had normal vaginal delivery (62%). With regard to gestational age at delivery, 29.2% delivered at 39 weeks and 4.2% more than 40 weeks. 52.8% delivered male baby and 47.2% female baby. Regarding weight of the baby, in 81.4%, the baby weighed more than 2.5 kg. With regard to physiological challenges, most of the mothers had positive adaptation. About 34.2% had pain at the suture site sometimes, and

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Table 1: Demographic characteristics (n = 500)

		Frequency	Percentage
Age (in years)	18–20	10	2
	21–24	155	31
	25–29	229	45.8
	30–34	84	16.8
	35 and above	22	4.4
Religion	Hindu	332	66.4
	Muslim	152	30.4
	Christian	16	3.2
Educational status	Illiterate	2	0.4
	1–7	115	23
	8–10	195	39
	PUC	127	25.4
	Degree	58	11.6
	Postgraduation	3	0.6
Occupation	Working	77	15.4
	Nonworking	423	84.6
Family income	≤5,000 INR	117	23.4
	5,001–10,000 INR	177	35.4
	10,001–15,000 INR	96	19.2
	>15,000 INR	110	22
Parity	1	234	46.8
	2 and more	266	53.2
Type of delivery	Normal	310	62
	Cesarean	187	37.4
	Others	3	0.6
Gestational age	37 weeks	97	19.4
	38 weeks	99	19.8
	39 weeks	146	29.2
	40 weeks	137	27.4
	More than 40 weeks	21	4.2
Sex of the baby	Male	264	52.8
	Female	236	47.2
Weight of the baby	<2.5 kg	93	18.6
	≥2.5 kg	407	81.4

14.2% of the participants never felt pain. About 36.8% were fatigued sometimes and 36.8% were never able to rest comfortably. About 28.8% had sleep disturbance sometimes and 51.4% had no breast engorgement. About 50.8% never had abdominal pain after delivery. Under emotional challenges, most of the mothers were able to cope up positively with challenges and had good adaptation, and some participants were unable to adapt positively. About 87.8% of mothers never had persistent feelings of not being a good mother. About 64% of mothers were not depressed due to exhaustion. All the mothers had positive feeling toward the sex of the baby. About 72% were not anxious at all always, and 76.4% of the mothers were joyful. About 74% of the mothers were never depressed due to the physical changes of pregnancy and childbirth. About 89% were

never disturbed by the sex of the baby. About 74% had positive feeling toward sex of the baby. With regard to environmental challenges, 55% were not distressed with the physical setup and only 10.2% felt most of the time the environment was distressing. About 56.2% never felt that visitors were a hindrance. Only 4.6% felt that there was noise in the ward always. Only 25.6% felt that privacy was maintained always, whereas 36.4% felt that privacy was never maintained, and only 14.8% felt that privacy was maintained most of the time. Only 85.2% were extremely happy with breastfeeding, whereas only 2% were never happy with breastfeeding. 56% had no latching difficulty; 24% expected breastfeeding assistance sometimes and 44.8% never expected breastfeeding assistance. About 89.8% of mothers were never reluctant to

feed. With regard to communication challenges, 52.2% expressed that all the health professionals communicated to them always and 6.4% felt that all the health professionals never communicated with them. About 37.8% felt that proper communication by the midwives and student midwives eased their discomfort always, and 13% felt that student midwives were involved in their care always and 27.4% sometimes. Regarding newborn challenges, 73.2% were never irritated when the baby was crying and only 5.2% were irritated always when the baby was crying. About 31.8% were never aware of the newborn care and 35.4% were totally aware of the newborn care always. About 30% of mothers never had the difficulty in pacifying the elder sibling. Regarding employment, 75.6% of the participants were homemakers. Regarding family support, 71.2% of the mothers felt their family members were supportive always and only 4.8% felt never supportive.

About 73.2% felt that their in-laws were caring always and 93.4% felt that their spouse was caring always. A structured checklist with yes/no categories was used to assess coping strategies, and it was found that almost all the mothers were able to cope up well. About 98.8% expressed that they were able to console the baby appropriately when the baby was crying. About 94.8% were able to take care of the child and 94.4% did not react hastily or emotionally. There was significant association between physiological challenges and selected demographic variables, such as occupation (0.061, $p < 0.05$) and family income (0.001, $p < 0.05$). Regarding association with breastfeeding and selected demographic variables, such as age (0.074, $p < 0.05$), educational status (0.024, $p < 0.05$), family income (0.021), parity (0.000), gestational age (0.026), and sex of the baby (0.087, $p < 0.05$), there was significant association. The data presented in Table 2 shows that there is association

Table 2: Association between breastfeeding challenges and demographic variables (n = 500)

Demographics	Breastfeeding challenges		Chi-square	
	≤median (10)	>median (10)	Value	p-value
Age (in years)	18–20	7	3	8.463 0.074 $p < 0.05$ S
	21–24	94	61	
	25–29	118	111	
	30–34	36	48	
	35 and above	12	10	
Religion	Hindu	195	137	11.505 0.003 $p < 0.05$ S
	Muslim	66	86	
	Christian	6	10	
Educational status	Illiterate	1	1	11.659 0.024 $p < 0.05$ S
	1–7	47	68	
	8–10	109	86	
	PUC	74	53	
	Degree	33	25	
	Postgraduation	3	0	
Occupation	Working	46	31	1.485 0.633 $p > 0.05$ NS
	Nonworking	221	202	
Family income	≤5,000 INR	67	50	9.698 0.021 $p < 0.05$ S
	5,001–10,000 INR	81	96	
	10,001–15,000 INR	49	47	
	> 15,000 INR	70	40	
Parity	1	159	75	39.498 0.000 $p < 0.05$ S
	2 and more	109	158	
Type of delivery	Normal	158	152	2.891 0.410 $p > 0.05$ NS
	Cesarean	107	80	
	Others	2	1	
Gestational age	37 weeks	58	39	10.985 0.026 $p < 0.05$ S
	38 weeks	54	45	
	39 weeks	63	83	
	40 weeks	77	60	
	More than 40 weeks	15	6	
Sex of the baby	Male	130	134	4.177 0.087 $p < 0.05$ S
	Female	137	99	
Weight of the baby	<2.5 kg	47	46	0.376 0.566 $p > 0.05$ NS
	≥2.5 kg	220	187	

S: Significant; NS: Not significant

Table 3: Association between emotional challenges and demographic variables (n = 500)

Demographics		Breastfeeding challenges		Chi-square	
		≤median (57)	>median (57)	Value	p-value
Age (in years)	18–20	7	3	4.162	0.389 p>0.05 NS
	21–24	83	72		
	25–29	133	96		
	30–34	45	39		
	35 and above	16	6		
Religion	Hindu	189	143	2.460	0.312 p>0.05 NS
	Muslim	83	69		
	Christian	12	4		
Educational status	Illiterate	1	1	8.063	0.120 p>0.05 NS
	1–7	61	54		
	8–10	103	92		
	PUC	76	51		
	Degree	40	18		
	Postgraduation	3	0		
Occupation	Working	47	30	2.823	0.204 p>0.05 NS
	Nonworking	237	186		
Family income	≤5,000 INR	80	37	12.010	0.007 p<0.05 S
	5,001–10,000 INR	93	84		
	10,001–15,000 INR	45	51		
	>15,000 INR	66	44		
Parity	1	138	96	2.917	0.409 p>0.05 NS
	2 and more	146	120		
Type of delivery	Normal	158	152	12.312	0.002 p<0.05 S
	Cesarean	123	64		
	Others	3	0		
Gestational age	37 weeks	57	40	9.113	0.058 p<0.05 S
	38 weeks	61	38		
	39 weeks	70	76		
	40 weeks	80	57		
	More than 40 weeks	16	5		
Sex of the baby	Male	139	125	4.752	0.060 p>0.05 S
	Female	145	91		
Weight of the baby	<2.5 kg	55	38	0.255	0.644 p>0.05 NS
	≥2.5 kg	229	178		

S: Significant; NS: Not significant

with breastfeeding and selected demographic variables, such as age, religion, educational status, family income, parity, gestational age, and sex of the baby ($p < 0.05$). There was significant association between communication challenges and coping strategies (0.017, $p < 0.05$). There was significant association between emotional challenges and selected demographic variables, such as family income (0.007, $p < 0.05$), type of delivery (0.002, $p < 0.05$), gestational age (0.058, $p < 0.05$), and sex of the baby (0.060, $p < 0.05$). Table 3 depicts there was significant association between emotional challenges and selected demographic variables, such as family income, type of delivery, gestational age, and sex of the baby. There was significant association between employment challenges and selected demographic variables, such as educational status (0.000, $p < 0.05$), occupation (0.000, $p < 0.05$), and parity (0.000, $p < 0.05$). There was significant association between environmental challenges and selected demographic variables, such as educational status (0.029, $p < 0.05$) and type of delivery (0.035, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4 depicts there was significant association between environmental challenges and selected demographic variables, such as educational status and type of delivery. There was significant association between newborn challenges and selected demographic variables, such as age (0.000, $p < 0.05$), educational status (0.026, $p < 0.05$), occupation (0.024, $p < 0.05$), and parity (0.000, $p < 0.05$). Table 5 depicts there was significant association between newborn challenges and selected demographic variables, such as age, educational status, occupation, religion, and parity. Table 6 depicts there was significant association between physiological challenges and selected demographic variables, such as family income and occupation. Table 7 depicts that there was significant association between coping strategies and demographic variables, such as occupation (p -value = 0.020; $p < 0.05$; S) and gestational age (p -value = 0.04; $p < 0.05$; S). Table 8 depicts that there is difference in the mean in the areas, such as breastfeeding challenges, newborn challenges, and employment status.

Table 4: Association between environmental challenges and demographic variables (n = 500)

Demographics	Environmental challenges		Chi-square		
	≤median (13)	>median (13)	Value	p-value	
Age (in years)	18–20	6	4	5.414	0.249 p>0.05 NS
	21–24	85	70		
	25–29	112	117		
	30–34	43	41		
	35 and above	16	6		
Religion	Hindu	176	156	0.541	0.791 p>0.05 NS
	Muslim	79	73		
	Christian	7	9		
Educational status	Illiterate	2	0	11.237	0.029 p<0.05 S
	1–7	50	65		
	8–10	105	90		
	PUC	68	59		
	Degree	37	21		
	Postgraduation	0	3		
Occupation	Working	37	40	0.947	0.729 p>0.05 NS
	Nonworking	225	198		
Family income	≤5,000 INR	62	55	1.638	0.654 p>0.05 NS
	5,001–10,000 INR	94	83		
	10,001–15,000 INR	45	51		
	>15,000 INR	61	49		
Parity	1	130	104	4.309	0.139 p>0.05 NS
	2 and more	132	134		
Type of delivery	Normal	153	157	6.609	0.035 p<0.05 S
	Cesarean	109	78		
	Others	0	3		
Gestational age	37 weeks	49	48	3.075	0.548 p>0.05 NS
	38 weeks	57	42		
	39 weeks	70	76		
	40 weeks	76	61		
	More than 40 weeks	10	11		
Sex of the baby	Male	141	123	1.981	0.396 p>0.05 NS
	Female	121	115		
Weight of the baby	<2.5 kg	46	47	0.395	0.566 p>0.05 NS
	≥2.5 kg	216	191		

S: Significant; NS: Not significant

Table 5: Association between newborn challenges and demographic variables (n = 500)

Demographics	Newborn challenges		Chi-square		
	≤median (6)	>median (6)	Value	p-value	
Age (in years)	18–20	10	0	24.537	0.000 p<0.05 S
	21–24	126	29		
	25–29	141	88		
	30–34	50	34		
	35 and above	15	7		
Religion	Hindu	241	91	9.839	0.007 p<0.05 S
	Muslim	89	63		
	Christian	12	4		
Educational status	Illiterate	69	48	9.211	0.026 p<0.05 S
	1–7	132	63		
	8–10	93	34		
	PUC	48	13		
	Degree	0	0		
	Postgraduation	0	0		
Occupation	Working	63	16	5.589	0.024 p<0.05 S
	Nonworking	279	142		

(Cont'd...)

(Cont'd...)

Demographics	Newborn challenges		Chi-square	
	≤median (6)	>median (6)	Value	p-value
Family income	≤5,000 INR	81	36	2.200 0.532 p>0.05 NS
	5,001–10,000 INR	114	63	
	10,001–15,000 INR	69	27	
	>15,000 INR	78	32	
Parity	1	223	11	169.572 0.000 p<0.05 S
	2 and more	119	147	
Type of delivery	Normal	214	96	1.288 0.787 p>0.05 NS
	Cesarean	126	61	
	Others	2	1	
Gestational age	37 weeks	62	35	2.653 0.622 p>0.05 NS
	38 weeks	70	29	
	39 weeks	96	50	
	40 weeks	99	38	
	More than 40 weeks	15	6	
Sex of the baby	Male	181	83	0.007 1.000 p>0.05 NS
	Female	161	75	
Weight of the baby	<2.5 kg	68	25	1.177 0.323 p>0.05 NS
	≥2.5 kg	274	133	

S: Significant; NS: Not significant

Table 6: Association between physiological challenges and demographic variables (n = 500)

Demographics	Physiological challenges		Chi-square	
	≤median (16)	>median (16)	Value	p-value
Age (in years)	18–20	4	6	4.659 0.327 p>0.05 NS
	21–24	96	59	
	25–29	120	109	
	30–34	49	35	
	35 and above	12	10	
Religion	Hindu	189	143	0.643 0.727 p>0.05 NS
	Muslim	82	70	
	Christian	10	6	
Educational status	Illiterate	0	2	4.941 0.416 p>0.05 NS
	1–7	59	56	
	8–10	109	86	
	PUC	78	49	
	Degree	23	25	
Occupation	Postgraduation	2	1	4.771 0.061 p<0.05 S
	Working	37	40	
Family income	Nonworking	244	179	16.442 0.001 p<0.05 S
	≤5,000 INR	71	46	
Parity	5,001–10,000 INR	93	84	3.462 0.263 p>0.05 NS
	10,001–15,000 INR	41	55	
	>15,000 INR	76	34	
	1	136	98	
Type of delivery	2 and more	145	121	2.953 0.387 p>0.05 NS
	Normal	170	140	
	Cesarean	109	78	
Gestational age	Others	2	1	4.235 0.378 p>0.05 NS
	37 weeks	62	35	
	38 weeks	50	49	
	39 weeks	78	68	
	40 weeks	79	58	
Sex of the baby	More than 40 weeks	12	9	0.972 0.712 p>0.05 NS
	Male	153	111	
Weight of the baby	Female	128	108	0.401 0.564 p>0.05 NS
	<2.5 kg	55	38	
	≥2.5 kg	226	131	

S: Significant; NS: Not significant

Table 7: Association between coping strategies and demographic variables (n = 500)

Demographics		Coping strategies		Chi-square	
		≤median (19)	>median (19)	Value	p-value
Occupation	Working	33	43	7.801	0.020 p<0.05 S
	Nonworking	236	188		
Gestational age	37 weeks	59	37	9.788	0.04 p<0.05 S
	38 weeks	44	55		
	39 weeks	72	74		
	40 weeks	84	54		
	More than 40 weeks	10	11		

S: Significant

Table 8: Levene's test for equality of variance among primi- and multimothers

Challenges	Parity	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error of the mean	t-value	p-value
Physiological total	1	234	15.09	4.625	0.302	1.284	0.200
	2	266	15.68	5.660	0.350		
Emotional total	1	234	54.02	7.988	0.522	0.442	0.659
	2	266	54.34	7.850	0.485		
Environmental total	1	234	13.02	2.528	0.165	1.169	0.243
	2	266	13.30	2.779	0.172		
Financial total	1	234	7.45	2.719	0.178	1.578	0.115
	2	266	7.06	2.798	0.173		
Diet total	1	234	8.82	2.510	0.164	0.223	0.824
	2	266	8.87	2.807	0.173		
Breastfeeding total	1	234	9.35	2.182	0.143	5.316	0.000 p<0.05 S
	2	266	10.34	1.960	0.121		
Communication total	1	234	8.26	2.963	0.194	0.276	0.783
	2	266	8.19	2.970	0.183		
Newborn total	1	234	3.94	1.676	0.110	17.545	0.000 p<0.05 S
	2	266	6.89	2.058	0.127		
Employment status total	1	234	1.52	2.357	0.154	3.419	0.001 p<0.05 S
	2	266	0.85	1.929	0.119		
Family support total	1	234	8.17	1.262	0.083	0.811	0.418
	2	266	8.07	1.542	0.095		
Coping total	1	234	19.10	3.587	0.235	0.425	0.671
	2	266	18.95	3.917	0.242		
Breastfeeding total	1	234	9.35	2.182	0.143	5.316	0.000 p< .05 S
	2	266	10.34	1.960	0.121		
Newborn total	1	234	3.94	1.676	0.110	17.545	0.000 p< .05 S
	2	266	6.89	2.058	0.127		
Employment status total	1	234	1.52	2.357	0.154	3.419	0.001 p< .05 S
	2	266	0.85	1.929	0.119		

S: Significant

CONCLUSION

Findings of the study revealed that majority of the women had a positive adaptation toward various postnatal challenges, and also they were able to cope well during the postpartum period. It may be assumed that in Indian settings the support system of the family members is relatively sound, thus indicating that majority of women are able to cope up with the postpartum challenges. Family members, especially the mothers and the grandmother of

the postnatal woman, play a major role in bringing about a positive feeling toward motherhood.⁵⁻⁸

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