

Exploring the Influence of Social Media on Postpartum Mothers: Support Systems and Psychological Implications

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Abstract:

After childbirth, postpartum depression (PPD) is a serious mental health concern that can affect both mothers and their children for a long time. A woman's job status is one of the social factors that may influence the chances and severity of PPD. This study aims to compare the prevalence and intensity of postpartum depression in working and non-working women and to explore the related psychological and demographic factors. The goal is to investigate the connection between postpartum depression and social media use among working and non-working women in Mumbai. Researchers will look at social media usage patterns, emotional responses, and psychological health indicators such as the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) to determine if social media acts as a coping strategy or contributes to postpartum mental health issues. The results can help shape policy recommendations, raise awareness, and create more supportive online spaces for new mothers.

Keywords: Postpartum depression, new mom, mental issues

Introduction:

The postpartum period is a critical time in a woman's life, marked by significant emotional, physical, and social changes. While this phase often brings joy, many women also face emotional challenges, such as postpartum depression (PPD). This serious mental health issue includes feelings of sadness, fatigue, anxiety, and inadequacy. According to the World Health Organization, PPD affects about 10 to 15 percent of women worldwide. Research in India shows even higher rates due to social pressures and limited access to mental health services. In recent years, the rise of social media has added a new dimension to the postpartum experience. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and parenting websites expose new mothers to idealized images of motherhood, which can lead to unrealistic expectations. Although these sites provide chances for connection, advice, and emotional support, they can also lead to negative self-comparison, anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy—particularly when women feel that they must conform to perceived societal expectations. Mumbai provides a unique context for analysing this phenomenon because it is one of India's most urbanized and technologically connected cities. Mumbai women, particularly working mothers, bear the dual burden of balancing childcare and work obligations with minimal institutional assistance. Outside of providing care, working women's counterparts, non-working women, may also experience loneliness or a lack of identity. Social media may have an effect on both of these groups—either as a coping mechanism or as something that causes emotional distress.

Literature review:

Neethu Varma (2024) reported that a considerable proportion of mothers had postpartum depression. Postpartum depression should be considered a disorder of public health significance due to its high prevalence in community settings. Routine screening is necessary for early intervention.

Hoda AlshikhAhmad(2021), recommended combined mental health care alongside maternal care services during the postpartum period. Providers of maternal health care need to be aware of and receive suitable guidance on psychological issues when providing care for pregnant and delivered women.

Objectives:

- 1) To investigate the association between social media use and postpartum depression in working and non-working women in Mumbai
- 2) To find out whether social media is a coping mechanism or a causative agent for postpartum mental health issues
- 3) To provide awareness campaigns, policy advice, and create more helpful online environments for new mothers.

Methodology:

The Research aims at examining the differences in postpartum depression (PPD) between working and non-working women residing in Mumbai. The target population was a married woman who delivered a child a few years back. Purposive sampling method was used, and primary data was collected via structured questionnaire with sample size 100. The questionnaire was organised into three sections. The first section addressed demographic details, the second section studied social media usage and its impact at the end the final section was on psychological support. Data was collected and analysed using descriptive statistical tools like frequency, percentages, bars and graphs as well as inferential statistics like z-test and chi-square test.

Hypothesis:

H0: Majority of mothers believe that social media platforms should promote more realistic portrayals of motherhood.

H1: Majority of mothers do not believe that social media platforms should promote more realistic portrayals of motherhood.

Result and Discussion:

This segment of the paper represents an analysis and interpretation of data collected from married women - both employed and unemployed - who have given birth in recent years, in accordance with the objectives of the study. The following provides a detailed overview and summary.

Out of a total of 100 respondents, the majority of them approx 66% were working women and the remaining were the house wives. All are married falling in the age range 30 to 50 years with at least one child and educational qualification varying from graduation to PhD.

The Social media section of the questionnaire revealed that almost all mothers are using social media especially whatsapp, instagram and youtube followed by facebook, twitter and Parenting

Apps as in fig. 1 with majority spending 1-2 hrs daily shown in fig.2. With regards to the types of content consumed on social media, majority responded for Health and wellness content, parenting advice followed by influencer mothers/lifetime bloggers, emotional group and comparison content illustrated in fig.3.

If yes, which platforms do you use frequently? (Select all that apply)

100 responses

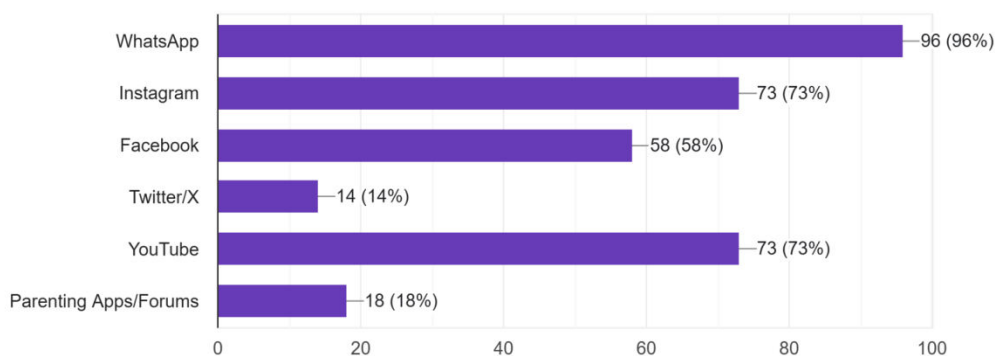


Fig.1 Social media platforms

Average time spent on social media daily:

100 responses

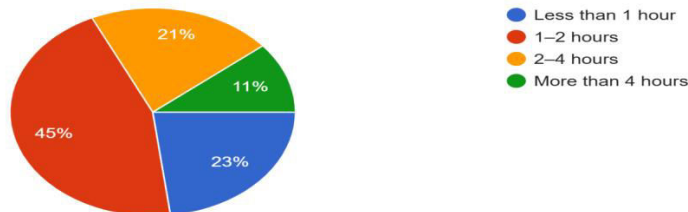


Fig. 2 Time spent on social media

What do you usually view related to motherhood on social media? (Select all that apply)

100 responses

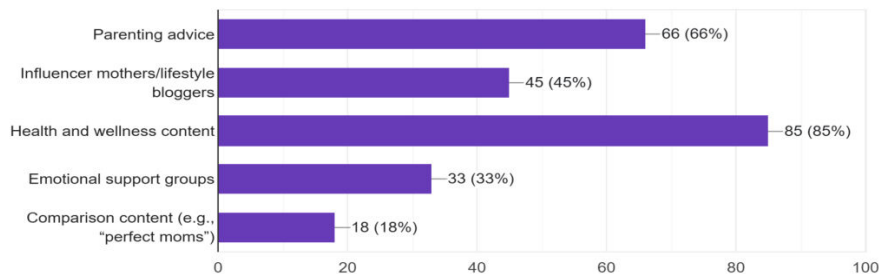


Fig.3 types of contents consumed on social media

For the next segment on social media and its impact, the question was related to psychological feelings after viewing social media and the responses shows that mothers never compare themselves with others rather, they are getting inspired, motivated and genuine support through social media depicted in fig. 4. Followed by the question on the effect of social media on their emotional well-being after childbirth and the results indicated that majority of them are feeling the impact as shown in fig.5.

After viewing social media, how often do you feel the following?

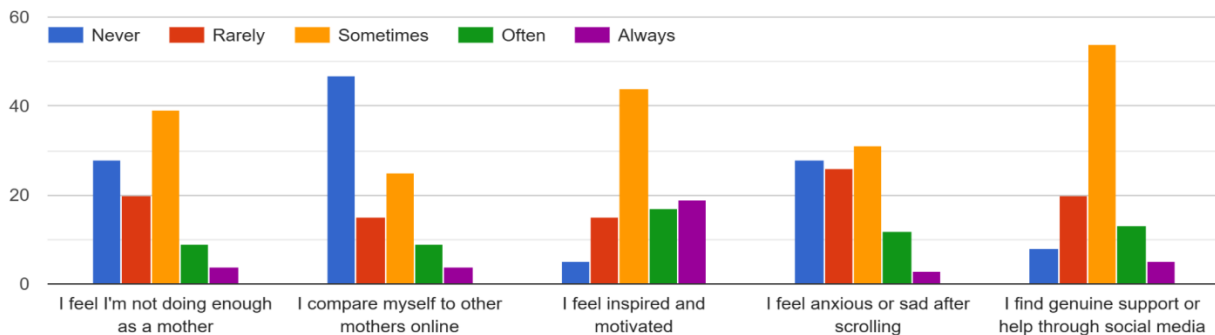


Fig. 4 The Psychological effects of social media on motherhoods

Do you believe social media affects your emotional well-being postpartum?

100 responses

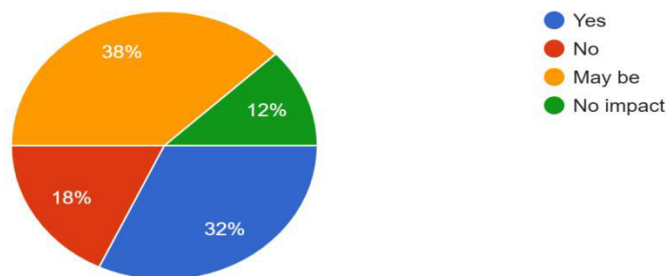


Fig. 5 The influence of postpartum emotional wellness through social media

Table 1 represents the Likert scale calculation of mean and standard deviation further the ranks were allotted accordingly for various psychological effects caused to mothers via social media. Based on the results found it can be stated that after childbirth the social media posts related to motherhood gives them more inspiration and motivation leading them to feel genuine support

and help furthermore, they are not at all feeling sad or anxious as they are not comparing themselves with other mothers.

Table 1: Evaluation of Psychological impact of social media on motherhood post childbirth

	Never	Rarely	Some times	Often	Always	Mean	Mean^2	Std dev	Rank
I feel I am not doing enough as a Mother	28	20	39	9	4	2.41	7.03	2.15	3
I compare myself to other mothers online	47	15	25	9	4	2.08	5.76	1.92	5
I feel inspired and motivated	5	15	44	17	19	3.3	12.08	2.96	1
I feel anxious or sad after scrolling	28	26	31	12	3	2.36	6.78	2.10	4
I find genuine support or help through social media	8	20	54	13	5	2.87	9.07	2.49	2

For the next section on support for postpartum emotional struggles 61% agreed that they are getting the support indicated in fig. 6 followed by a question on whether the social media platforms should promote more realistic portrayal of motherhood and the results are as shown in fig. 7

Did you seek help or support (online or offline) for postpartum emotional struggles?

100 responses

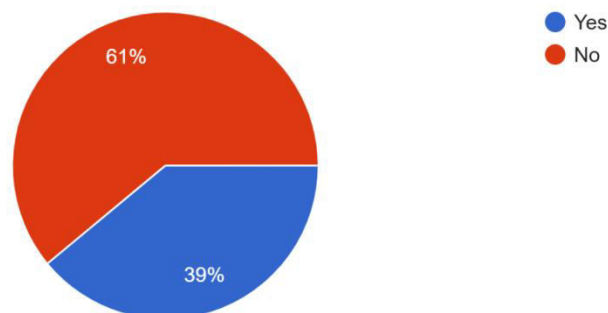


Fig 6 support for postpartum emotional struggle

Do you believe social media platforms should promote more realistic portrayals of motherhood?

100 responses

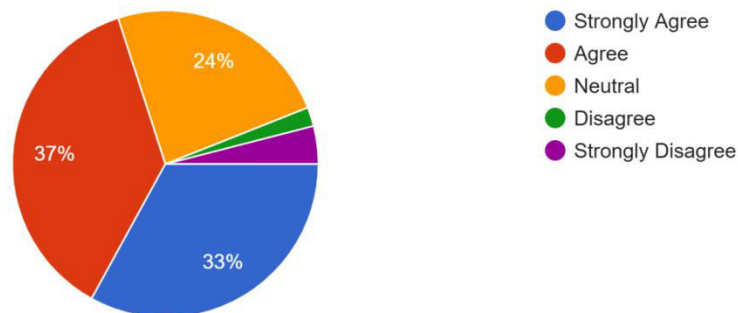


Fig. 7 promotion by social media

Testing of Hypothesis:

Using z-test for population proportion:

$H_0: P_0 > 0.8$

$H_1: P_0 \leq 0.8$

Form data, $P = 70/100 = 0.7$

$$Z = \frac{p - p_0}{\sqrt{p_0 q_0 / n}}$$

$$= \frac{0.7 - 0.8}{\sqrt{0.8 \times 0.2 / 100}}$$

$$= -2.5$$

Absolute value of $z = 2.5 < 2.58$

Hence at 5% level of significance for two tailed test,

H_0 is accepted that is,

The majority of mothers believe that social media platforms should promote more realistic portrayals of motherhood.

Conclusion:

The study highlighted how postpartum depression (PPD) is becoming a crucial psychological problem and has a severe impact on urban mothers, specifically those who live in Mumbai. Based on the analysis, the use of social media is almost ubiquitous. Most mothers were using this social media platform approximately one to two hours daily. Some are even more than that every day. Though the unwavering benefit of getting health-based information, advice for parenting, gaining motivation, and getting emotional support. Most of the mothers really feel anxiety and are sad when faced with enormous content to finalize the decision to consider for themselves. Social media is a tool for coping, but unfortunately, it can worsen this postpartum period. To investigate the qualitative findings, a hypothesis test using a z-test for population proportion was carried out. The null hypothesis ($H_0: P_0 > 0.8$) against the alternative ($H_1: P_0 \leq 0.8$) considered the claim that the social media population of mothers is dominated by those promoting motherhood in a positive light. With $p = 0.7$ (70 of 100 mothers), $z = -2.5$, and $|z| < 2.58$ at 5% level of significance, H_0 was not rejected, which means that most mothers are in fact supporting

relatable and realistic portrayals of motherhood in social media. To conclude social media is providing emotional support to the mothers with postpartum Depression.

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