

*Motivations of Mothers on Using Facebook in Postpartum Depression
and Its Influence on Their Knowledge and Attitude*

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Abstract

Postpartum depression (PPD) is a chronic mental condition that affects mothers of all ages, races, and social classes. One of the ways that receive social support for this condition is by using social networking sites (SNS) like Facebook. Facebook serves as a valuable platform to address their needs. Thus, this research aims to identify the respondents' socio-demographic profile, their frequency of Facebook use, their motivations to use Facebook, and their knowledge and attitude regarding PPD. The correlation among variables was also determined. A survey was conducted in January 2023 among 252 mothers in the Philippines. Data was analyzed using the Frequency Distribution Table, mean, and Pearson Chi-square. Results show that most of the respondents are from ages 28-37 years old, are married, and have one to three children. They are high school graduates and are earning below \$180 or 10,000 pesos a month. The respondents use Facebook for entertainment, personal utility, information seeking, convenience, and altruism regarding PPD. Moreover, they seem knowledgeable about the risk factors and symptoms of PPD. The respondents also appear to have a positive attitude toward the vulnerability, treatment, diagnosis, causes, and effects of PPD. The Facebook use of the respondents is significantly related to their knowledge and attitude on PPD. My findings recommend that government agencies should intensify communication campaigns to increase PPD awareness.

Keywords: Postpartum Depression, Health Communication, Social Media

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Introduction

Postpartum depression is a chronic mental condition that affects mothers of all ages, races, and social classes worldwide (Santos, 2019). It occurs as being a new mother is the most challenging stage in parenthood as it can change women's psychological, social, and physiological aspects and increase their weaknesses in developing mental illness (Shitu et al., 2019). Depression or anxiety during and after pregnancy is also caused by a history of depression, stressful recent life events, and a lack of social support (Ayoub et al., 2020).

The World Health Organization, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, indicates that there is a need to enhance maternal and infant health and well-being. This can be done by providing postnatal care strategies through a human rights-based strategy that strengthens the standard of care for mothers and newborns (World Health Organization, 2022). With this, the Philippines' Department of Health (DOH) implemented a program to ensure Filipino women have complete access to health services to make their pregnancies and deliveries safer. It intends to implement a sustainable and affordable strategy for providing healthcare that guarantees disadvantaged women access to good, high-quality maternal and newborn health services. In this case, one of the platforms for raising awareness and delivering these services is through social media (DOH, 2018).

Social media positively impacts mothers experiencing postpartum depression and gives them emotional, informational, and appraisal support (Stringfellow, 2016). One of the new mothers' ways to receive social support for their physical and mental stress is by using social networking sites (SNS) like Facebook. In this sense, Facebook is a valuable platform to keep their social connection during postpartum depression, make new identities, and look for knowledge and assurance to justify their decision to raise a child (Das, 2017). In addition, there are Facebook pages that help mothers with postpartum depression worldwide. These Facebook pages provide peer support and reliable information for mothers with postpartum depression. Also, these online support groups can provide education and training opportunities that are open to all (Postpartum Support International, 2022).

The role of social media in the health communication practice of mothers with postpartum depression is notable. As such, the researchers aimed to know the motivations of mothers for using Facebook regarding postpartum depression and its influence on their knowledge and attitude. The theoretical assumptions of the Uses and Gratifications Theory served as a guide in the research. In this case, this research aims to understand people's motivations for selecting media and gratifications acquired (Kasirye, 2022). Moreover, it is recognized that media consumers are active participants in their media choices, and they choose based on their personal needs and objectives (Nicdao, 2019; Vinney, 2019). As such, media can be used as tension release for escapism (Kasirye, 2022).

The results of this research can contribute to the literature on media effects on health issues and become the basis for policy recommendations in addressing postpartum depression.

Methodology

The researchers utilized the quantitative approach in this study. Quantitative research focuses on studying and quantifying variables to achieve results. It includes using numerical and statistical techniques to assess data to answer questions (Apuke, 2017). In addition, inferential statistical analysis was used in this study. According to Calvello (2020), inferential

statistical analysis is the process that will be used to get at the conclusions. It enables users to draw conclusions or predict trends about a larger population based on the examined samples. Basically, it uses information from a sample to draw conclusions about a wider population or group. Specifically, to test the hypothesis and the size of the sample population, correlation analysis was employed. It is used to determine the extent to which two factors depend on one another. In essence, this study determines whether there is a significant or low correlation between two variables (Cherry, 2023).

The study was conducted among 232 mothers residing in Mabalacat City which is a local government unit in the Philippines. This study has no specific age range, and mothers of all ages are qualified as respondents whether they have given birth recently or not. In addition, mothers are chosen in this study to be respondents because they are more prone to postpartum depression than men (Saha & Das, 2017). Stratified random sampling was employed in the selection of the respondents. An informed consent form was employed to ensure adherence to ethical standards.

A survey questionnaire that is duly validated and tested was used as the research instrument. The questionnaire contained statements and questions that captured the respondents' socio-demographic profiles, frequency and motivations of Facebook use on postpartum depression, and their knowledge and attitude toward postpartum depression. The researchers used statistical methods such as the Frequency Distribution Table (FDT), mean (average), and Chi-square Test for data analysis.

Results

Table 1. *Socio-demographic Profile of the Respondents*

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
18-27	75	29.8
28-37	83	32.9
38-47	23	9.1
48-57	54	21.4
58-67	16	6.4
68-77	1	0.4
Civil Status		
Single	60	24
Married	152	60
Widowed	40	16
Number of Children		
1-3	178	70.6
4-6	65	25.8
7-9	9	3.6
Educational Attainment		
Elementary Undergraduate	3	3
Elementary Graduate	1.2	1.2
High School Undergraduate	12	12
High School Graduate	4.8	4.8
College Undergraduate	65	65
College Graduate	49	19.4
Monthly Income		
Below 10, 000 pesos	164	65
11, 000 - 20, 999	58	23
21, 000 - 30, 999	30	12

Table 1 presents the respondents in terms of their socio-demographic profile. The majority or 32.9% of the mothers are from ages 28- 37 years old. For the civil status, 60% of the mothers are married. Moreover, 70.6% of mothers have one to three children. In terms of educational attainment, 29.5% of the respondents are high school graduates, For the monthly income, 65% are earning below 10,000 pesos a month.

Table 2. *Frequency of Facebook Utilization of the Respondents regarding PPD*

Sources of Information	Frequency	Percentage
At least once a day	59	23
At least once a week	33	13
A few times a month	33	13
Once a month or less	32	13
Never	95	38

As shown in Table 2, 38% of the respondents have never used Facebook for postpartum depression related concerns. Still, the remaining 62% have utilized it in varying frequencies. To discuss, the 38% of the respondents who have never utilized Facebook on PPD matters could possibly be due to disinterestedness of using the social media platform for PPD or their lack of motives to use Facebook for PPD concerns. These results can be linked to the study of De Choudhury et al. (2014) which stated that mothers do not utilize Facebook in their postpartum period due to its association with negative experiences.

Still, the remaining 62% have utilized it in varying frequencies. Specifically, some (23%) of the respondents are using Facebook at least once a day in relevance with postpartum depression. This indicates that mothers have motives that must be satisfied by using Facebook on a daily basis regarding postpartum depression. Similarly, in the study of Bartholomew et al. (2012) it was established that at nine months postpartum, Facebook use of the majority of mothers is at least once a day. The study also revealed that specific Facebook usage related to sharing images of the child. Mothers who posted images of their children to Facebook stated that the photos were "extremely likely" to "likely" to be acknowledged (i.e., commented on or "liked") by their Facebook friends because it makes them feel happy.

As to the respondents' motivations on using Facebook regarding PPD, they are sometimes using Facebook for entertainment purposes. Entertainment in this case refers to sometimes using Facebook as a form of distraction with a mean of 1.95. They also sometimes watch PPD related videos with a mean of 1.96. Moreover, they sometimes utilize Facebook to look for friends who have experienced PPD with a mean of 1.90. This affirms Archer and Kao's (2018) discussion that mothers use Facebook as their primary social media platform to relax, relieve boredom, stay informed on news, and find information about parenthood.

The next motivation is personal utility. In this instance, personal utility refers to mothers motivation to sometimes use Facebook to join Facebook groups to learn about other's experiences about PPD with a mean of 1.85; to read and know other people's opinions on PPD with a mean of 1.83, and sometimes use Facebook to join conversations (ask and answer questions) about PPD with a mean of 1.89. These results are also similar to the findings in the study of Morris (2014) which stated that mothers used the comment section to discuss the ways they used Facebook for parenting-related goals. These other uses were divided into three major categories as to inquiry, curation, and mommy networking. Moreover, in the research of Gibson and Hanson (2013), it was revealed that mothers utilized

Facebook to ask questions and receive comments from their online social network about infant development and maternal health. In this sense, a benefit from using Facebook is being a platform for support and advice.

The next motivation for Facebook use among mothers is to seek information. Information seeking in this context refers to mothers' sometimes use of Facebook to search for information about PPD with a mean of 1.94. They also sometimes use Facebook to know the latest updates and stories about PPD with a mean of 1.91; and with a mean 1.92, mothers are using Facebook to get free information about PPD sometimes. In connection with the previous results, the respondents' information seeking motivation and behavior can be to know current and updated narratives and trends on PPD. Stringfellow's (2016) research provides additional context that mothers are using social media, specifically Facebook to learn new information about PPD.

Moreover, one of the motivations to use Facebook is convenience. The respondents are sometimes using Facebook because they can get information easily regarding PPD rather than asking people face to face specifically with a mean of 1.97. Also, they sometimes use Facebook because people can answer any time if they have questions with a mean of 1.91. Furthermore, they sometimes use Facebook because the useful information that they need to know about PPD is free with a mean of 1.93. To support the findings, the study of Gibson & Hanson (2013) demonstrates that new mothers considered Facebook as a beneficial platform to retain social connections during the postpartum period, to create an entirely new identity, and to look for the accessible information and assurance needed to justify their decisions and actions in raising a newborn child.

The last motivation to use for the mothers in Facebook is altruism. Altruism refers to helping others who are experiencing PPD on Facebook to which the respondents sometimes with a mean of 1.88. They also sometimes show kindness by motivating those mothers who are experiencing PPD with a mean of 1.86. Also, the mothers sometimes motivate other mothers on Facebook by listening to their experiences on PPD with an exact mean of 1.87. These findings show complementation to the research of Prabhakar et al. (2017) which revealed that mothers are using social media to seek emotional and informational support and they proved the importance of having friends as their support system in postpartum depression.

For the knowledge of the respondents towards PPD, most of the mothers with 71% are knowledgeable about the risk factors of PPD such as civil status, educational attainment, family's monthly income and age, a change in hormone levels and lack of social support. The respondents are also knowledgeable about the symptoms of PPD, such as having trouble concentrating, remembering details, or making decisions with a frequency of 182 (72%). Moreover, most or 85% of the mothers are knowledgeable that PPD is depression that occurs after having a baby or it can occur days or even months after giving birth and can last many weeks or months if left untreated with a frequency of 197 (78%).

These findings affirm the study of Loquero and Galbo (2021) which showed that the respondents' knowledge of PPD, including its risk factors, symptoms, consequences, and therapies, was higher than average. Categorically, the majority of mothers are aware that they can experience PPD during the 1st-3rd month after delivery. In addition, the study of Tobiloba et al. (2022), demonstrated that mothers are knowledgeable about the risk factors of postpartum depression as respondents are aware that poor support from spouse and family can cause PPD.

Meanwhile, the respondents have a positive attitude to the vulnerability of PPD that mothers can experience in their motherhood. The respondents agreed that mothers can experience PPD after their delivery with a mean of 3.18. They also agreed that it can impact all mothers regardless of their delivery with a mean of 3.03. Moreover, they agreed that it can affect mothers even if they have one or more children with a mean of 3.02. In addition, the results of the survey indicated that the respondents believe in the causes of PPD. Regarding this, they agreed that mothers can have PPD if they are experiencing lack of support with a mean of 2.98 and mothers who are taking care of their child alone with a mean of 2.95.

In line with this, in the Philippines, Cabanes (2019) showed that most high-risk women reported having depression symptoms. Social support is believed to facilitate a women's transition to parenthood and is discovered to be strongly related to maternal role development. Moreover, Tobiloba et al. (2022) revealed that poor family and spouse support can be a risk factor for PPD. Nevertheless, in the study of Branquinho et al. (2019) it is believed that the support of family and friends are not enough to beat postpartum depression.

Meanwhile, the respondents agreed in terms of the effects of the PPD to mothers, such as mothers with PPD have no desire to take care of themselves or for their child with a mean of 3.08 and it can be a cause of death among mothers with a mean of 2.92. This implies the respondents' belief in the gravity of PPD as it can be linked to the inefficiency of doing the responsibilities of parenthood, and ultimately, to mother's death. The mothers genuinely recognize the danger caused by PPD.

This is also seen in the study of Schiller et.al (2015) which revealed that mothers who are more sensitive and attentive to their children are more likely to have children with stable attachment, and thus maternal depressive symptoms can lead to the mother being unresponsive, inconsistent, unavailable, or rejecting care toward the child. As a result, depressed mothers are more likely to have colic infants, to be intrusive and harsh with their children, and to exhibit other poor parenting habits, such as lower rates of infant safety practices.

In determining the relationship between the frequency of utilization on Facebook to their knowledge and attitude to PPD, motivation of the respondents on their Facebook use to their knowledge and attitude Pearson chi-square was used. The result revealed that there is a highly significant relationship between the respondents frequency of utilization on Facebook to their knowledge and attitude of PPD with a p-value of 0.00**. Furthermore, the motivation of the respondents on Facebook use and their knowledge and attitude towards PPD is highly significant with a p-value of 0.00**.

As it was previously discussed that the respondents have varying frequency of Facebook use, it still contributed to them being knowledgeable on PPD. This affirms the principle of the Uses and Gratification Theory that particular media consumers take an active role in the media they choose to consume and instead of only consuming media in a passive manner, they are actively engaged and motivated to search for information they need (Vinny, 2019). Moreover, in the study of Schopee-Sullivan et al. (2016), their research indicated significant differences in the use and experience of Facebook among new young mothers. It is also discovered that higher levels of maternal identity confirmation and societal-oriented parenting perfection were associated with increased Facebook activity. As a result, Facebook serves as another medium for mothers, particularly those seeking greater external validation

for their domestic roles, to affirm that they are carrying out motherhood correctly or normatively.

Conclusion

The study's findings presents the respondents' motivation on using Facebook regarding PPD are for entertainment, personal utility, information seeking, convenience and altruism. In terms of knowledge, the mothers are knowledgeable on the risks, causes, symptoms and effects of PPD. In the same way, they believe on the vulnerability of mothers in experiencing PPD and the need to have clinical and medical diagnosis for treatment. In the same way, they believe in the gravity of PPD as it can lead to death among mothers.

In this case, the researchers recommends for concerned government institutions to intensify their communication techniques and campaigns on social media, specifically in Facebook, regarding PPD since it is identified as a useful tool among mothers.

Furthermore, the researchers recommend the conduct of qualitative research particularly in media use for health communication to contribute in understanding the phenomenon of postpartum depression. The results of this research can be used for policy recommendations and program development.

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