

# A Phenomenological Study of Pregnant Women's Experience : COVID-19 Lockdown Period

Sheela Upendra<sup>1</sup>, Seeta Devi<sup>2</sup>, Jasneet Kaur<sup>2</sup>, Shital Waghmare<sup>2</sup>, Sheetal Barde<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assoc. Professor, <sup>2</sup>Asst Professor, Symbiosis College of Nursing, Symbiosis International (Deemed University), Pune

## Abstract

**Introduction and objective:** Pregnant women are facing challenges with the restrictions during the lockdown period. Advices/instructions from husband and support system contribute to anxiety. The objective of the study includes describing pregnant women's experiences during COVID -19 lockdown period. **Material and Method:** Qualitative Research Approach and Descriptive Phenomenological as research Design were used. Sample size was four Pregnant women from Urban community during COVID -19 lockdown period .The investigator collected the data on lived experiences of pregnant women through in-depth interview, which was lasted for 45-60 minutes. Qualitative rigor was done, researcher 'Bracketed' her own feelings and experiences about the content under investigation. Triangulation was applied and member checking was done. To ensure credibility the investigator had co researcher review the data. Dependability is achieved by clearly laid down the steps and also in analysis process to ensure that anyone wishing to conduct study can easily follow and carry out the steps. Transferability of the study was ensured by the exhibition of a dense narration of the samples research context and setting. The quality of data collected was significant. **Finding:** Four themes were emerged: Unknown fear, Anxiety, inclination towards Spirituality and State of Dilemma. **Conclusion:** Most of the participant reported a negative overall experience but very much appreciated the support of husband and other family members. Shown strong peer relationships creating an environment which is supportive in nature. An unknown fear and pressure is prevailing which needs to be addressed

**Key words :** Phenomenological Study, Pregnant Women , Experience , COVID-19, Lockdown Period

## Introduction

Pregnant women are facing challenges with the restrictions during the lockdown period. Advices and instructions from husband and support system contribute to anxiety.

As per Indian Council of Medical Research, that transmission of coronavirus from mother to baby before birth or during delivery is possible although the proportion of pregnancies affected and the significance to the neonate is yet to be determined<sup>[1]</sup>

Study of Psychological Assessment journal shows the that pregnant women's feelings about their changing bodies could help predict how well the mother might bond with her unborn baby and her emotional well-being after childbirth<sup>[2]</sup>

Marie Health , spokes person fro Midwives Australia says "The impact of those restrictions during labor is going to be very traumatic for many women. the resulting anxieties of expecting parents -- are about to get worse<sup>[3]</sup> .Pregnant women have a lot of queries about whether coronavirus poses a threat to self and her baby<sup>[4]</sup>. Pregnant women are more vulnerable to infection with COVID-19 compared to the general population<sup>[5]</sup>

**Purpose:** The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe lived experience in COVID -19 lockdown period from the perspective of pregnant women.

**Problem statement:** "A phenomenological study of pregnant women's experience: COVID-19 Lockdown period"

**Objective:** To describe Pregnant women's experiences during COVID -19 lockdown period.

**Significance of Study:** It was the purpose of this study to contribute to the knowledge base from unique perspective of pregnant women during lockdown period. The respondents in this phenomenological study were able to contribute to the knowledge base in a way that could be beneficial to other pregnant women in providing the best psychological environment possible. As pregnant women share the lived experience, they can offer a unique perspective for pregnancy period.

#### **Research Questions:**

How do pregnant women describe their experience during COVID -19 lockdown period?

#### **Operational definitions:**

**Phenomenology:** The study of pregnant women's experience perceived as phenomena shared during COVID- 19 lockdown period

**Pregnant Women:** Women who is pregnant (In any trimester) from Pune city during COVID- 19 lockdown period.

**Experience:** Pregnant women of urban community express the feeling about pregnancy during COVID -19 Lockdown period.

#### **Inclusion Criteria:**

- Pregnant women in any trimester.
- Pregnant women of urban community.
- Pregnant women who will explore all answers genuinely and with openness.

#### **Exclusion Criteria:**

- Pregnant women who will be unwilling to participate

#### **Material and Method**

Research Approach used for the study was Qualitative Research Approach. Descriptive Phenomenology as research Design was used. This design helps the investigator to have equal value and allowed to bracket the phenomenon so that the focus of study remains clear.

Data source was interviewing the participants. Sample size was four Pregnant women from Urban community during COVID -19 lockdown period . Data saturation was reached after the fourth interview as no new themes emerged from the interviews. Samples were from the urban community and purposive sampling techniques was used for the study.

Before Interview consents been taken from each participants for the study. The investigator collected the data on lived experiences of pregnant women through in-depth interview, which was lasted for 45-60 minutes. The investigator maintained the notes encompassing of observations made during the interview and due importance was given to voice, pitch, tone of speech. An interview guide with open-ended questions was used. The women were asked to share their experiences without disruption and with openness. Each Pregnant women were given time to speak comprehensively. Probing questions were imposed, to obtain clarity or redirect the interview.

Qualitative rigor was done, researcher 'Bracketed' her own feelings and experiences about the content under investigation and through. Triangulation was applied and member checking was done.

The investigator maintained the objectivity using member review process for trustworthiness. The Interview discussion was transcribed and reviewed by co researchers. To ensure credibility the investigator had co researcher review the data. Dependability is achieved by clearly laid down the steps and also in analysis process to ensure that anyone wishing to conduct study can easily follow and carry out the steps. Transferability of the study was ensured by the exhibition of a dense narration of the samples research context and setting. The quality of data collected was significant.

Seven steps of Colaizzi's phenomenological method of data analysis were monitored for data analysis.

## **Findings**

### **Description of Demographic Variables**

All women were Pregnant. The ages of the participants were ranged between 24-29 years. Two women were in second trimester and two were in third trimester. Four women were from urban community of

Pune city.

Four main themes emerged after the analysis of data.

### Themes That Emerged

#### Theme 1: Unknown Fear

Under this theme Women develops feeling of knowing that something of tragic is likely to happen. An impending sense of uncertainty arises at times.

..... *I feel insecure due to unknown factor and feel something will happen to my baby* (P 03)

*I experienced numbed when I heard about lockdown and the rules of lockdown. I consider but could not stop myself, A fear on unknown always around me....*(P 01)

#### Theme 2: Anxiety

This theme refers to the apprehension expressed by the participants. At times, it is very difficult to handle the tension. It is risky to go out especially during routine hospital check-up and follow-up. Women are anxious about the delivery which has to take place in hospital. Anxiety tend to see the situation a threatening and sometimes dangerous.

..... *things are not going to work out as I planned* (P-04)

*What if something bad happens to my child .....*(P 03)

#### Theme 3: Inclination towards Spirituality

Apart from support from husband and other family members, all women acknowledged the significance of spirituality as a source of personal strength in lockdown situation. Spirituality guides them, show the way and give source of security.

*“God play important part in my life; he is my strength and believe and he will take away my all worries and tension”*(P 01)

#### Theme 4: State of Dilemma

Women being having experience of anxiety about the delivery in hospital environment. If she comes in contact with infection, whether baby will be infected.

*I am in a dilemma. I may not be able to visit the hospital for follow up. I might get infected with infection.* (P 04)

*During the delivery process how the situation will impact my baby....*(P-02)

### Discussion

Present Study findings shows that expecting mothers are anxious, state of mixed feeling and unknown fears prevail.

Finding of the study showed that pregnant women who felt more positively about their body changes were more likely to have better relationships with their husbands, depression and anxiety scores are low. These women also showed a more positive attachment to their unborn child. Rather, pregnant women who had negative feelings about their appearance during pregnancy desirable additional emotional support during pregnancy [2].

### Conclusion

Most of the participant reported a negative overall experience but very much appreciated the support of husband and other family members. Shown strong peer relationships creating an environment which is supportive in nature. An unknown fear and pressure is prevailing which needs to be addressed.

#### Limitations:

- The study was limited to four participants
- The study was limited to Phenomenological research design.
- The findings could also not be generalized, as the study was conducted with a limited sample, which is not representative of all pregnant women
- The study population was purposively selected to fulfill inclusion criteria and which resulted in a small number of samples

**Ethical Consideration:** The researcher gained the Institute research Committee approval and Study was approved at Institute Ethical subcommittee. Informed consent was obtained from each sample. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study by concealing the

names of the samples, as different codes were allotted to each sample during the interviews and when the results were made. All transcripts, notes and data were stored with researcher and it will be shredded once the study ends and result have been documented.

**Conflict of Interest:** Nil

**Source of Funding:** Self-Funded

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