

Coping Strategies Used by Pregnant Women in India to Overcome the Psychological Impact of COVID-19

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Abstract : Introduction: Biological, psychological and social domains influence the outcomes of pregnancy. The COVID19 pandemic had a significant effect on the psychological and social domains of pregnant women all over the world. Everyone has inherent coping mechanisms which ultimately determine the actual impact of such external stimulus on outcomes of pregnancy. This study aims to understand the coping strategies used by pregnant women to overcome the psychological impact of the first wave of the COVID 19 pandemic. Methods: Institutional ethics permission was sought. All pregnant women attending antenatal clinics in the institution during September 2020 were included in the study. Brief-COPE, a self-rated questionnaire, was provided to understand the coping strategies used by them. The Questionnaire consists of 28 questions that fall into 14 themes. These 14 themes were mapped into four domains consisting of Approaching coping (APC) styles, Avoidant Coping (AVC) styles, Humor and Religion. The results were analyzed using univariate and multivariate analysis. Factor analysis was performed to identify themes that are most frequently used. Results: 162 pregnant women were included in the study. The majority of the women were aged between 18 and 30 (90.1%). 60.9% of the respondents were having their first pregnancy and were in the 2nd trimester (59.6%). The majority of them were living in the city (74%), belonged to the middle class (77.6%) and were not working (70.1%). 56 respondents (34.6%) reported that they had contact with suspected or Covid positive patients. Many were worried that their pregnancy might be complicated (43%), their baby may contract COVID (45%) and their family members could get COVID during the hospital visits for antenatal check-ups. 33.6% of women admitted missing their regular antenatal check-ups because of the above concerns. All respondents used various coping strategies to overcome the psychological impact of COVID 19. Out of the 4 coping strategies, participants scored high on Religion with a mean of 5.47 ± 1.45 followed by Approaching Coping (APC) styles (5.13 ± 1.25), Humor (4.59 ± 2.07) and Avoidant Coping (AVC) styles (4.13 ± 0.88). Religion as a coping strategy scored high for all respondents irrespective of age, parity, trimester, social and employment status. Exploratory Factor analysis revealed two cluster groups that explained 68% of the variance, with Component 1 contributing to 58.9% and component 2 contributing 9.13% of the variance. Humor, Acceptance, Planning, and Religion were the top 4 factors that showed strong loadings. Conclusion: Most of the pregnant women were worried about the negative impact of COVID 19 on the outcomes of their pregnancy. Religion and Approaching coping styles seem to be the predominant coping strategies used by them. Interventionists and policymakers should consider these factors while providing support to such women.

Keywords : coping strategies, pregnancy, COVID-19, brief-COPE

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