

Pregnant Women's Experiences in Maintaining Mental Health During Pregnancy in Pontianak City

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Abstract

Maternal mental health is a crucial aspect that affects both maternal and fetal well-being. This study aims to explore the experiences of pregnant women in maintaining their mental health during pregnancy in Pontianak City. Using a phenomenological qualitative approach, six participants were interviewed in-depth to understand the challenges faced and the coping strategies employed. The findings indicate that pregnant women experience anxiety related to childbirth, physical changes, and social pressures. Support from partners, family, and healthcare professionals plays a vital role in maintaining their mental health. Additionally, coping strategies such as relaxation activities, information-seeking, and spiritual approaches are utilized to manage stress. These findings highlight the need for social support-based interventions and mental health education for pregnant women.

Keywords

Coping Strategies, Phenomenology; Mental Health; Pregnant Women; Social Support,



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1. INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy is an important phase in a woman's life that not only causes physical changes but also affects the mother's psychological condition (Yanti & Fatmasari, 2023). Various studies have shown that pregnant women have a higher risk of experiencing anxiety and depression disorders due to hormonal changes and psychosocial factors that accompany pregnancy (Aisyah & Prafitri, 2024). Factors such as family support, economic conditions, and the mother's mental readiness have a significant impact on mental health during pregnancy (Alini et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding the experiences of pregnant women in maintaining their mental health is very important so that targeted interventions can be developed (Winarni et al., 2023). One of the factors that plays a role in maintaining the emotional balance of pregnant women is the social support they receive (Hanim & Adab, 2023). Husbands, families, and health workers have a major contribution in helping pregnant women overcome anxiety and emotional stress that arises during pregnancy (Latifah, 2017). Lack of social support has been associated with an increased risk of mental disorders, such as antenatal depression, which can negatively impact maternal and fetal health (Ediyono, 2022). Therefore, delving deeper into how pregnant women obtain and experience social support is an important aspect of this study (Ningsih, 2025).

In addition to social support, mothers' psychological readiness to face pregnancy also plays an important role in their mental well-being (Sujawaty et al., 2024). Mothers who have good mental readiness tend to be better able to face the emotional challenges that arise during pregnancy and childbirth (Marwiyah et al., 2022). Conversely, lack of mental readiness is often associated with increased stress, sleep disturbances, and emotional exhaustion that have the potential to affect the physical condition of the mother and fetus (Syahidah Marwah et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important to explore how mothers' mental readiness can affect their experiences during pregnancy (Aisyah & Prafitri, 2024).

Economic factors are also one of the aspects that influence the psychological condition of pregnant women (Ningrum, 2017). Economic pressures faced during pregnancy can increase maternal anxiety, especially related to the cost of childbirth and postnatal care (Sudirman et al., 2019). Financial uncertainty often makes mothers feel unprepared for childbirth and raises concerns about the welfare of their children in the future (Septrilia et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding the impact of economic conditions on the mental health of pregnant women is very important in designing policies that can provide protection and support for pregnant women who experience economic stress (Mulyani, 2023). In addition to external factors, coping strategies

applied by pregnant women in dealing with stress are also important to consider (Melba, 2024). Some pregnant women choose to seek information about pregnancy and childbirth through online sources or pregnant women's communities as a form of adaptation to the anxiety they experience (Lathifah & Dewi, 2021). In addition, methods such as meditation, light exercise, and consulting with health workers are known to help reduce stress levels during pregnancy (Wahyuni, 2020). Therefore, this study will further explore the various strategies used by pregnant women in dealing with psychological stress during pregnancy.

In Indonesia, attention to the mental health of pregnant women is still not optimal, one of which is in urban areas such as Pontianak City (Riana et al., 2021). Many pregnant women are still reluctant to seek professional help due to the social stigma attached to mental health problems (Hidayati & Purwandari, 2023). This shows that more structured interventions are needed to increase awareness and access to mental health services for pregnant women (Anggraini & Setiyowati, 2024). Therefore, this study seeks to provide insight into the experiences of pregnant women in maintaining their mental health during pregnancy in Pontianak City.

Based on the background that has been described, this study aims to explore the experiences of pregnant women in maintaining their mental health during pregnancy in Pontianak City. With a qualitative approach, this study explores various factors that contribute to the mental well-being of pregnant women, the challenges they face, and the coping strategies they apply. It is hoped that the results of this study can be the basis for developing more effective mental health interventions for pregnant women in Indonesia. Thus, this study is expected to provide a significant contribution to increasing understanding of the mental health of pregnant women and provide.

2. METHODS

The method in this study uses a qualitative descriptive research method to explore and understand the meaning that occurs in pregnant women (Cresswell, 2013). This study involved 6 research participants in the Pontianak City area using the snowball sampling technique. The data collection process with in-depth interviews was carried out and stopped when the data had reached data saturation.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 6 participants. Female participants were women who were pregnant with varying levels of education ranging from high school to bachelor's degree. Their jobs also varied, including 4 housewives and 2 private employees.

Participant 1 (P1)

Mrs. AN is 28 years old, lives in Pontianak Selatan District, is a housewife, Muslim, comes from the Malay ethnic group, and is currently pregnant with her first child with a gestational age of 32 weeks. Mrs. AN admitted that she felt very happy when she found out she was pregnant because this was a long-awaited pregnancy. However, as her pregnancy progressed, she began to feel anxious, especially about childbirth and her new role as a mother. She often experienced sleep disturbances due to thinking too much about the condition of her fetus and the upcoming labor process.

In dealing with her anxiety, Mrs. AN received full support from her husband who always tried to calm her down and convince her that everything would be fine. In addition, she also actively sought information about pregnancy through social media and pregnant women's groups. However, she felt that sometimes the information circulating actually made her more anxious, especially when reading negative experiences from other pregnant women. Therefore, she began to limit herself in accessing information and preferred to consult directly with a midwife or obstetrician.

Participant 2 (P2)

Mrs. DR is 34 years old, lives in Pontianak Utara District, is a private worker, is Muslim, comes from the Dayak tribe, and is pregnant with her second child at 28 weeks of pregnancy. Unlike her first pregnancy which went smoothly, this pregnancy felt more difficult for Mrs. DR because she still had to work with a busy schedule. She often experienced physical and emotional fatigue, especially because of the difficulty of dividing her time between work and taking care of her first child who was still 4 years old.

Mrs. DR admitted that she often felt stressed because of the high work pressure, coupled with the mental burden of preparing for childbirth. Her husband provided support, but she felt that he did not fully understand the challenges she faced as a working pregnant woman. To overcome stress, she tried to do prenatal yoga and occasionally had pregnancy massages at a health clinic. She also often talks to her friends who are also pregnant to share experiences and provide support to each other.

Participant 3 (P3)

Mrs. FS is 25 years old, lives in Pontianak Timur District, is a housewife, is Muslim, comes from Javanese ethnicity, and is pregnant with her first child at 20 weeks of pregnancy. She said that her pregnancy was a surprise because it was unplanned, so she experienced anxiety, especially regarding mental and financial readiness.

Initially, she was afraid of not being able to be a good mother and worried about how she and her husband would face this new responsibility.

However, the support from her husband and extended family was very helpful in reducing her anxiety. Her mother often gave advice and helped her understand the changes that occurred during pregnancy. She also started attending pregnancy education classes at the health center to increase her insight. However, sometimes she feels anxious if she hears negative stories from people around her about pregnancy and childbirth, so she prefers to focus on positive experiences and increase worship to calm herself down.

Participant 4 (P4)

Mrs. MN is 30 years old, lives in Pontianak Barat District, is a housewife, is Catholic, comes from Chinese ethnicity, and is pregnant with her third child at 35 weeks. As a mother who has had experience giving birth, she admitted that she is calmer in facing this pregnancy compared to her previous pregnancies. However, she still experiences anxiety, especially because her two previous deliveries were done by caesarean section, so she is afraid of having to undergo surgery again.

Mrs. MN gets great support from her husband who always accompanies her to every check-up with the doctor. However, she also feels an increased burden because she has to take care of two young children at home without the help of a household assistant. As a result, she often feels tired and easily emotional. To overcome this, she tries to maintain her diet, manage her rest time, and do fun activities such as watching movies or reading books.

Participant 5 (P5)

Mrs. RD is 27 years old, lives in Pontianak City District, is a civil servant, is Muslim, comes from the Malay ethnic group, and is pregnant with her first child at 25 weeks of pregnancy. Since the beginning of her pregnancy, she has often experienced excessive anxiety because she has a history of previous miscarriages. Every time she feels pain or changes in her body, she immediately feels panicked and worried about the condition of her fetus.

Because of her high anxiety, Mrs. RD consults an obstetrician more often than other pregnant women. She is also very careful in carrying out her daily activities so as not to experience complications. Her husband always tries to calm her down, but she feels that only a doctor can provide definite answers to all her worries. To reduce stress, she tries to take meditation classes for pregnant women and do relaxation therapy at home.

Participant 6 (P6)

Mrs. TS is 22 years old, lives in Pontianak Tenggara District, is a student, is Muslim, comes from the Bugis ethnic group, and is pregnant with her first child at 18 weeks of pregnancy. She admitted that her pregnancy was unplanned and had difficulty accepting the reality. At the beginning of her pregnancy, she often felt stressed and cried because she felt she was not mentally and financially ready to become a mother. However, after receiving support from her parents and husband, she began to accept the situation and tried to be calmer. Currently, she is more focused on maintaining her health by eating nutritious food and avoiding negative thoughts. She also joined a community of young pregnant women to share experiences and get motivation from those in similar situations.

Discussion

The Colaizzi method was used to understand the experiences of pregnant women in maintaining their mental health. The analysis process was carried out by reading the transcripts in their entirety, marking significant statements, formulating meanings, grouping main themes, describing phenomena, confirming with participants, and compiling a final report (Yuliani & Supriatna, 2023). From the results of the analysis, four main themes were found: (1) Mixed feelings in dealing with pregnancy, (2) Social support as the main factor, (3) Psychological challenges during pregnancy, and (4) Coping strategies in dealing with pregnancy stress.

Mixed Feelings in Facing Pregnancy

Pregnancy brings up various emotions for mothers, ranging from happiness to anxiety. Several participants stated that pregnancy is a joyful experience, especially for those who have been waiting for it for a long time. However, feelings of anxiety also arise, especially related to the health of the fetus and the delivery process (Aisyah & Prafitri, 2024).

One participant, P1, said, "At first I was very happy to know that I was pregnant, but after that many worries arose, such as whether my baby is healthy, how the delivery process will be, and whether I can be a good mother." This statement shows that feelings of happiness do not always stand alone, but are mixed with fear and uncertainty.

Mothers who are pregnant for the first time tend to experience higher anxiety than mothers who have previous experience. P2 said, "This is my first pregnancy, so I don't know what to do. I often feel scared, especially when I hear stories of painful childbirth." This is in accordance with research which states that pregnant women

often experience emotional fluctuations due to hormonal and psychosocial changes (Astuti et al., 2023).

Social Support as a Key Factor

Social support greatly influences the mental well-being of pregnant women. Mothers who receive support from their partners, family, and environment tend to be better able to cope with stress during pregnancy (Hanim & Adab, 2023).

P3 stated, "I feel calmer because my husband always accompanies me, reminds me to eat well, and accompanies me to the doctor every month." Support from a partner like this has been shown to increase a pregnant woman's sense of security and reduce the risk of mental disorders (Wulandari & Purwaningrum, 2023).

Conversely, a lack of social support can cause stress and feelings of loneliness. P4 said, "My husband is busy working and doesn't really care about my pregnancy. I feel alone and often cry for no reason." This is in line with research showing that pregnant women who lack social support are more susceptible to antenatal anxiety and depression (Ediyono, 2022).

In addition to partners, health workers also have an important role in providing support. P5 said, "I feel calmer after consulting with the midwife at the health center. She provided a lot of information that made me more prepared for childbirth." Prenatal counseling can help reduce fear and increase maternal confidence in facing childbirth (Amalia et al., 2023).

Psychological Challenges During Pregnancy

Pregnancy not only requires physical readiness, but also mental readiness. One of the main challenges faced by pregnant women is anxiety about childbirth. P6 stated, "I'm afraid of giving birth, especially after hearing my friend's experience of complications. I can't stop thinking about the worst possibilities". Fear of labor pain and possible medical complications often make pregnant women feel stressed (Lestari et al., 2023).

Economic factors are also a significant challenge. P2 said, "I'm worried about the cost of childbirth and the baby's needs later. My husband and I are trying to save, but there is still a fear of not having enough." Research shows that economic pressure can increase anxiety in pregnant women and have an impact on fetal health (Septilia et al., 2024).

In addition, physical changes during pregnancy are also a challenge. P3 said, "I feel insecure because my weight has increased drastically. I also get tired and emotional more easily, sometimes getting angry for no reason." Hormonal changes

that affect the mood of pregnant women often have an impact on social interactions and relationships with partners (Yanti & Fatmasari, 2023).

Coping Strategies in Dealing with Pregnancy Stress

Pregnant women use various coping strategies to manage stress during pregnancy. One of the most common strategies is seeking information from the internet and pregnant women's communities. P4 stated, "I often read articles and watch videos about pregnancy. It makes me more prepared, although sometimes it also makes me more anxious." This shows that although information can be helpful, excessive exposure can actually increase anxiety (Simanjuntak & Princen, 2022).

Another strategy used is doing light physical activities such as pregnancy exercises and prenatal yoga. P1 said, "I started doing prenatal yoga regularly, and it really helped me feel calmer and more comfortable." Studies show that light exercise during pregnancy can help reduce anxiety and improve the emotional well-being of mothers (Wahyuni, 2020).

Some mothers also rely on spiritual activities to cope with stress. P5 said, "I pray more and get closer to God. It gives me peace and makes me more prepared for childbirth." Spiritual activities are known to have a calming effect and help reduce anxiety during pregnancy (Niko, 2018).

In addition, support from fellow pregnant women also helps in coping with stress. P6 stated, "I joined a group of pregnant women on social media. We share experiences and support each other." Sharing experiences with fellow pregnant women can increase self-confidence and reduce anxiety related to childbirth (Girsang, 2018).

4. CONCLUSION

This study is a qualitative study with a phenomenological approach with a data collection method conducted by in-depth interviews with 6 research participants. This study reveals the experiences of pregnant women in maintaining mental health during pregnancy. Based on the findings, pregnant women experience mixed feelings, where happiness is mixed with anxiety about the health of the fetus and the delivery process. Social support, especially from partners, family, and health workers, has been shown to be a major factor in helping mothers manage stress and improve mental well-being. However, psychological challenges such as anxiety about childbirth, economic pressure, and physical and emotional changes remain obstacles that need to be overcome. To overcome these challenges, pregnant women apply various coping strategies, such as seeking information, doing light physical activities, increasing

spirituality, and getting support from the pregnant women's community. These strategies help them deal with stress and prepare themselves for childbirth better. These findings also emphasize the importance of social support and access to mental health education for pregnant women. Therefore, community-based interventions and health workers are needed to improve the mental well-being of pregnant women. The results of this study are expected to be the basis for the development of psychosocial support programs and more inclusive policies in improving the mental health of pregnant women, thus having a positive impact on the welfare of the mother and the baby to be born.

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