

Influence of Religiosity on Childbirth Satisfaction among Pakistani Women: A Multifaceted Exploration

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Abstract

This study presents a comprehensive thematic analysis of the impact of religiosity on childbirth and satisfaction among Pakistani women. Utilizing a qualitative approach, the research sought to understand the relationships between women's religious beliefs and practices, and their satisfaction with childbirth experiences. Semi-structured interviews conducted with a purposive sample of 25 women who had had live births during past 12 months. Data were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis. Three main themes emerged: (1) religious beliefs as a source of strength and resilience, (2) religious practices providing comfort and coping strategies, and (3) the role of Family and community support. These themes highlight the importance of religiosity in shaping Pakistani women's childbirth satisfaction and emphasize the need for healthcare providers to be culturally sensitive and responsive to the religious needs of their patients.

Keywords: Childbirth satisfaction, Pakistani women, Qualitative research, Religiosity, Thematic analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Satisfaction with childbirth is a complicated and multi-dimensional concept that incorporates a variety of aspects of a woman's experience giving birth to a child. In recent years, academics have endeavored to investigate the elements that contribute to positive birthing experiences. This is due to the significance that positive childbirth experiences have on the outcomes for both the mother and the newborn. The significance of religiosity as one of the several elements that determine birthing pleasure is one that has been underexplored, particularly in countries where Muslims make up the majority of the population, such as Pakistan. The purpose of this research is to evaluate whether or whether not a woman's religiosity has an effect on how satisfied she is with her childbirth experience, while taking into account the particular cultural, social, and religious environment of Pakistan.

The people of Pakistan, who make up the majority of the population of Pakistan, have religious and cultural traditions that go deep in their family trees. It is common for women in Pakistan to give birth within the context of their religious beliefs and practices. This can have an effect on the women's perspectives on the process of childbirth as well as the degree to which they are satisfied with it. Past studies have suggested that there is a connection between religiosity and a variety of facets of health and well-being, such as mental health, coping mechanisms, and social support. Yet, within the context of Pakistan, the possible influence of religiosity on birthing satisfaction has not been examined to the same extent as it could be.¹

Despite the considerable importance of religious and cultural values on delivery experiences in Pakistan, a study was carried out in 2022 in Pakistan and found that religion been underexplored as a factor affecting childbirth satisfaction among Pakistani women. This underscores the need for greater study to be conducted on the role that religiosity plays in shaping childbirth experiences in countries where Muslims make up the majority, such as Pakistan. According to the findings of another study carried out in Turkey in the year 2020, higher degrees of religiosity shown connected with increased levels of contentment regarding the experiences of giving birth among Muslim women.² In addition, in 2018 a study carried out in Iran discovered that spiritual and religious coping mechanisms had an essential role in assisting women in dealing with the difficulties associated with childbirth.³ When discussing the elements that determine a person's level of contentment with their delivery experience, these studies highlight how important it is to take into account the religious and cultural environment in which the childbirth takes place.

The purpose of the current study is to fill this void by investigating the connection between a woman's religion and her level of contentment following childbirth among a group of Pakistani participants. In order to accomplish this goal, the research will investigate the influence that

¹ Night Akhtar, Muhammad Yasir, Aamir Rizwan, and Naveed Munir. "Exploring the relationship between religiosity and childbirth satisfaction in Pakistani women." *Journal of Religion and Health*, 61, no. 1 (2022): 115-129. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-021-01327-1>

² O.Kavlak, , Demir, B., & Yildirim, G. , The Effect of Religiosity on Satisfaction with Childbirth in Muslim Women. *Journal of Religion and Health*, (2020), 59(2), 670-680. doi: 10.1007/s10943-018-0625-x

³ M.A. Mazaheri, Kheirabadi, G. R., Zarghami, M., Esmaeily, H., Mohagheghzadeh, A., & Ghasemi, V., Spiritual and religious coping strategies among Iranian women with preeclampsia. *Journal of Religion and Health*, (2018), 57(6), 2266-2277.

women's religious beliefs and practices have on their childbirth experiences. These beliefs and practices include things like prayer, religious coping strategies, and the sense that women get social support from their religious communities. This research has the potential to inform culturally sensitive interventions aimed at improving maternal health outcomes and the overall well-being of women during childbirth. This is because it provides a comprehensive understanding of the impact religiosity has on childbirth satisfaction in Pakistan.

In order to accomplish this goal, a qualitative approach was utilized. This technique utilizes people's reflections on their emotions and experience. For this purpose, interviews conducted to elicit the personal narratives and experiences that are unique to women. This provides a more nuanced understanding of the role that religiosity plays in shaping women's childbirth experiences and satisfaction, delivering vital insights for healthcare providers, policymakers, and communities to better support women during this crucial juncture in their lives.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

1. explore new mother's experiences and personal narratives regarding birth satisfaction and religiosity
2. study the precise features of religiosity (e.g., beliefs, rituals, community support) that women perceive as contributing to their birth satisfaction and
3. examine the influence of religious coping mechanisms, including as prayer, meditation, and seeking spiritual support, in affecting women's birth satisfaction experiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Childbirth satisfaction is an important component of maternal well-being and has been linked to a number of favorable medical and psychological outcomes for both the mother and the newborn. Researchers have increasingly emphasized the importance of knowing the numerous elements that contribute to birthing satisfaction in recent years. One such issue that has received a lot of attention is the impact of religion in altering women's delivery experiences and views. Personal views, religious practices, and engagement in religious communities are all examples of elements of religiosity that may influence childbirth satisfaction.

The research on the impact of religiosity on childbirth satisfaction provides important insights into how religious beliefs and practices shape women's expectations, coping techniques, and support systems during pregnancy and labour. Past research used diverse samples of women from various religious traditions and cultural backgrounds to investigate the association between various characteristics of religiosity and birthing pleasure.⁴ These studies used quantitative and qualitative

⁴ H.G. Koenig, Religion, spirituality, and health: The research and clinical implications. *ISRN Psychiatry*, 2012, 278730. <https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/278730> and also K.I. Pargament, *Religion and coping: The current state of knowledge. In The Oxford Handbook of Stress, Health, and Coping*, Oxford University Press. 2011, pp.195-209

research approaches to investigate the complex relationship between religiosity and birthing satisfaction.

In this review, we looked at the existing body of research on the impact of religiosity on birthing satisfaction, concentrating on the various characteristics of religiosity and their potential implications on women's childbirth experiences. We also addressed the significance of religious coping techniques in this relationship, as well as the potential moderating impact of demographic factors. Additionally, we discussed healthcare professionals' perceptions on the importance of religiosity in delivery satisfaction, as well as the obstacles and opportunities they confront in supporting pregnant women's and new moms' religious and spiritual needs.

There is a lack of in-depth research in the existing body of knowledge regarding the relationship between a woman's religiosity and her satisfaction with her delivery experience among Pakistani women. On the other hand, a number of studies have investigated the influence that religiosity has on a variety of elements of health and well-being, in addition to the part that culture and religion play in determining how one gives birth.⁵ This literature review intends to provide a comprehensive synthesis of the research that has been conducted on the subject, discussing the role of religiosity in childbirth satisfaction, religious coping mechanisms, and the cultural context of Pakistan. Specifically, this review will focus on Pakistan.

Many studies have found significant links between participation in religious activities and positive mental and physical health, as well as overall well-being. This relationship between religiosity and health outcomes been extensively established in the scientific literature.⁶ In example, research has revealed that religion may be able to function as a coping technique for persons who are facing stress, especially mothers while they are giving birth. It is possible that religious coping mechanisms, such as prayer and reliance on God, can provide emotional and psychological support during the process of childbirth in nations where Muslims make up the majority of the population, such as Pakistan.⁷

The relevance of taking into account cultural context when determining whether a woman was satisfied with her childbirth experience brought to light by research that investigated the effect of religion and culture on childbearing experiences. In Pakistan, women's expectations of and experiences with delivery are frequently shaped by religious beliefs and practices.⁸ These beliefs and practices influence women's perceptions of pain, support, and the results of childbirth. A qualitative study carried out by Rizvi et al.⁹ reveal that Pakistani women reported feelings of spiritual growth and empowerment through their childbirth experiences. These women attributed the feelings of their faith and trust in God, which the researchers found to be a significant

⁵ S. Rizvi, Williams, C., & Hoban, E. Pakistani women's experiences of childbirth. *Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health*, (2012) 57(5), 460-466.

⁶ Fatemeh Ghodrati, Raziheh Hassanzadeh, and Mojgan Mirghafourvand. "The relationship between religious beliefs and coping strategies in pregnant women: A systematic review." *Journal of Religion and Health* (2018), 57, no.3, 851-864.

⁷ R.L. Roudsari, Javadnoori, M., Hasanpour, M., Hazavehei, S. M. M., & Taghipour, A. Religious beliefs and practices in pregnancy and childbirth: Implications for maternal care. *Iranian Red Crescent Medical Journal*, (2013), 15(11), e11590.

⁸ N. Reza, Amin, T., & Saeed, M., Childbirth experience in Pakistani culture. *Journal of the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan*, (2016), 26(6), 479-482.

⁹ Op.Cit, S. Rizvi, Williams, C., & Hoban, E. Pakistani women's experiences of childbirth.

contributor to these outcomes. In spite of the fact that these findings are suggestive of a possible association between religiosity and birthing pleasure, one must keep in mind that they are constrained by the fact that the study was qualitative and only used a small sample size.

In addition, research on the influence of social support on the experience of childbirth has shown that religious communities can be an essential source of emotional, informational, and practical support for women during the labour and delivery process.¹⁰ Given the fundamental place that religion holds in the social fabric of Pakistan, it is possible that the support offered by communities is especially relevant in this setting.¹¹ The unique influence of religious social support on birthing satisfaction among Pakistani women however, underexplored in the currently present literature.

In conclusion, there is a paucity of research on the effect of religiosity on the level of contentment women experience after childbirth in Pakistan, and only a small number of studies have specifically addressed this issue. Despite this, research on the connection between religion and health outcomes, religious coping strategies, cultural context, and social support suggests that religiosity may have a significant role in determining the experiences and levels of pleasure that women have during childbirth. Therefore, there is a need for additional research to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of religiosity on childbirth satisfaction in the context of Pakistan. This understanding has the potential to inform interventions and support services that are culturally sensitive and are offered to women during this crucial time in their lives.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the current study was to assess the influence of religiosity on the amount of satisfaction felt by Pakistani women after giving birth using a qualitative research methodology. This methodology was chosen to enable a deeper understanding of the role that religious beliefs and practices play in influencing the experiences that women have during childbirth and the level of satisfaction they feel with those experiences in the particular cultural, social, and religious context of Pakistan. The methodology aspect of this study, which is detailed below, included an explanation of participant recruitment, data collection methods, and data analysis strategies.

Purposive sampling was used to choose participants, with the goal of including a non-representative sample of women who had just given birth (within the past 12 months). Participants in the study had to meet the following requirements in order to take part: (a) they had to be Pakistani women, (b) they had to have recently given birth, (c) they had to be able to give informed permission. We sought out a total of 20 to 25 people to provide a sufficiently varied variety of experiences and viewpoints.

The data for this study were gathered through in-depth, semi-structured face-to-face or telephone interviews. Before any interviews were done, a timetable was created based on a review of the pertinent literature and the objectives of the study. Open-ended questions about the participants' religious beliefs and practices, their experiences giving birth, the significance of religion in

¹⁰ John K .Ganle,Michael Parker, Rachael Fitzpatrick, and Edmund Otupiri. "A qualitative study of health system barriers to accessibility and utilization of maternal and newborn healthcare services in Ghana after user-fee abolition." *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth* 14 (2014): 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-014-0425-1>.

¹¹ Op.Cit, Roudsari, R. L., Javadnoori, M., Hasanpour, M., Hazavehei, S. M. M., & Taghipour, A. Religious beliefs and practices in pregnancy and childbirth: Implications for maternal care

childbirth, and their overall satisfaction with the labour and delivery process were all part of the interview process. The interviews were then verbatim transcribed and audio recorded with the participants' consent for the purpose of the study.

Data analysis was completed using thematic analysis, with Braun and Clarke's established six-step approach as the methodology (2006). The procedures involved in this process were (a) familiarizing oneself with the data, (b) creating preliminary codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) analyzing themes, (e) defining and labelling themes, and (f) making the final report. Rich, illustrative comments from the participants were used to describe the findings in order to support the themes that were found.

The participants were assured that their privacy would be safeguarded and that they would stay anonymous, and they all gave their informed consent, including permission for their voices to be recorded. The freedom and restriction to leave the study at any time without penalty was made clear to participants. The only person with access to the data was the researcher, and they were kept in a secure area.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The thematic analysis of the collected data revealed three main themes regarding the impact of religiosity on childbirth satisfaction among Pakistani women: (1) religious beliefs as a source of strength and resilience, (2) religious practices providing comfort and coping strategies, and (3) the role of religious leaders and community support. Each theme is discussed in detail below.

Religious Beliefs as a Source of Strength and Resilience

The idea that the participants' religious beliefs served as a source of strength and resilience for them during their children's labour and delivery was a recurring theme that emerged from the interviews. Many women have remarked that without their trust in God and conviction in the divine will, they would not have been able to withstand the agony and hardships of labour and delivery. As one participant put it, "believe that God is with me during the labour and delivery of my child and that everything happens in line with His plan". This conviction gives me strength and allows me to accept the pain and hardships that will come with childbirth". (Participant No. 8). This subject emphasizes the crucial impact that religious beliefs play in affecting Pakistani women's experiences and levels of contentment during and after childbirth. Our findings, which are consistent with previous research, suggest that believing in a higher power may give individuals a sense of meaning and purpose during times of adversity.¹²

According to the authors of a recent study, "religious beliefs can function as a protective factor and source of resilience for Muslim women during pregnancy and childbirth". The study emphasizes the importance of prayer, Quranic teachings, and Muslim community support in providing Muslim women with comfort and guidance during childbirth. As a result, for Muslim moms who are giving birth, their religious beliefs can be a great source of courage and resilience during a time when their bodies and emotions are changing dramatically. Motherhood and the role of women as nurturers and carers of the family are highly valued in Islam, which can provide peace

¹² Op.Cit, K.I.Pargament, *Religion and coping: The current state of knowledge*.

and fortitude to women who are pregnant or giving birth to a child. Prayer may be a source of strength for Muslim women because it reminds them of their relationship with God and the importance of their faith in their daily lives. During labour and delivery, Muslim women can find guidance and comfort in the Quran's teachings and the Prophet Muhammad's example, particularly in terms of patience, perseverance, and trust in God.

Religious Practices Providing Comfort and Coping Strategies

Another key finding from the data is the importance of women's religious rituals as a source of solace and coping methods for them during delivery. Participants reported engaging in a variety of religious activities, such as prayer and Quran recitation, to find solace and control their stress levels. "While I was in labour, praying and reading passages from the Quran made me feel more at ease and closer to God," one of the ladies stated. I had the impression that I could bear the pain better because I knew He was beside me". (15th participant)

This topic gives credence to past studies that have demonstrated the psychological benefits of engaging in religious practices such as prayer and meditation when faced with stressful situations. Religious practices, according to our findings, have a vital role in boosting mother satisfaction during and after childbirth among Pakistani women.

The act of giving birth is a significant event that can cause physical and emotional changes in a woman's life. Islamic activities have an important role in providing comfort and coping methods for Muslim women throughout pregnancy and childbirth. During labour and delivery, Muslim women may find solace and calm via prayer, which is an essential component of their religion. Muslim women are supposed to pray five times a day when pregnant, but they are not permitted to pray while giving birth. To beg God's help and compassion during childbirth, mothers increase the number of prayers they say or recite particular supplications. During labour, praying has been proven in studies to help reduce emotions of anxiety and stress, as well as the level of pain experienced, and to increase a sense of control.

It has been demonstrated that the Quran can assist Muslim women who are giving birth with significant solace as well as coping techniques. The Quran has chapters that emphasize the virtues of perseverance, patience, and faith in God. Muslim women might repeat or listen to these passages to help establish a sense of peace within themselves and to remind them of God's love and kindness. According to the findings of a study conducted by Al-Kubaisi et. al.¹³ (2019) listening to a recitation of the Quran during labour and delivery may help reduce anxiety and promote a happier birthing experience,

Third, altruistic acts have the potential to provide solace and coping skills to Muslim women during the labour and delivery process. Muslim women engage in philanthropic acts such as distributing meals to the destitute to ask God for his favor and offer gratitude to him for the privilege of parenting.

¹³ Al-Kubaisi, Nada J., Rana Al-Fouzan, and Nasser M. Al-Qahtani. "Listening to Quran recitation during labour and its effect on anxiety, pain perception, and childbirth experience: A randomised controlled trial." *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice* 34 (2019): 161-166. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctcp.2018.12.012>.

Finally, religious activities are an important component of the coping mechanisms and comfort measures used by Muslim mothers throughout their children's labour and delivery. Muslim women can find peace, strength, and direction during this difficult period in their lives by engaging in practices like as prayer, Quran recital, seeking support from other members of the Muslim community, fasting, and charitable giving. It is critical that medical practitioners recognize the importance of religious observances and support Muslim women who want to incorporate these rites into their delivery experience.

The Role of Family and Community Support

The third theme that emerged as a result of our research examined the role that family and community support plays in determining how satisfied women are with their delivery experiences. Participants felt that having spiritual support was critical to their overall sense of fulfilment with their delivery experiences. "My mother handed me holy water when I was in labour, and our Priest blew holy verses into the water as it was being poured out," one participant explained (Religious leader). My increasing confidence and sense of security are directly related to my trust in his support". (Participant number 21)

This idea emphasizes the need of social support in improving the overall quality of the delivery experience. According to our findings, religious leaders and members of the community have the ability to play a significant role in the process of offering spiritual education, practical support, and emotional encouragement to Pakistani women going through childbirth.

In addition to praying and reading from the Quran, reaching out to other Muslim community members for support and comfort throughout labour and delivery can be highly beneficial. Muslims are urged to look out for one another and provide financial support and assistance to those in need. Women who practice Islam can seek solace from their family, friends, or other Muslim women who have already given birth. Individuals can also attend programs on childbirth education offered by Muslim organizations. These workshops are offered to participants and focus on Islamic beliefs and practices related to birthing.

When put together, these reoccurring elements paint a comprehensive picture of the impact religion has on Pakistani women's satisfaction with their delivery experiences. Our findings emphasize the significance of religious beliefs, practices, and community support in influencing women's delivery experiences. This emphasizes the need of healthcare providers being sympathetic to their patients' religious requirements. Our findings emphasize the significance of religious beliefs, practices, and community support in influencing women's delivery experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings suggest that religiosity has a major influence in shaping Pakistani women's delivery experiences and may have a positive impact on the degree to which women are content with their births. Religious beliefs and practices of a woman can be sources of comfort, guidance, and strength during labour and delivery; consequently, medical practitioners should understand and respect women's religious needs and choices. The findings of this study highlight the importance of considering the religious and cultural setting in which birthing occurs and making efforts to provide culturally sensitive care in which women's beliefs and practices are acknowledged and

supported. More research needs to be conducted to discover the role of religion in determining the experiences that women have during childbirth, as well as how religious and cultural practices might be included into the care that women receive during childbirth.

Limitations of Research

Our research contains a few shortcomings that must be acknowledged and discussed. To begin, the study had a small number of participants, making it difficult to apply the findings to other organizations and groups. Second, because of the nature of the sample, we relied on a purposive sample, which could have resulted in selection bias. Finally, the study relied on self-reported data, which could have been influenced by biases like social desirability bias or remembrance bias.

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