

Sources of Stress, their Effects on Mental Wellbeing and Psychosocial Mitigators for Mothers During the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Thematic Analysis “It's like juggling 4 full plates at a time”

Jennifer Monkhouse

Methods

This research qualitatively investigates stress experienced by mothers through the Covid-19 pandemic using prior classifications of primary and secondary stressors and Huston's Social-Ecological theory as a framework to explore mothers' coping strategies. The analysis identified two main themes within the 'Stressors' category: 'Changing and Challenging Relationships' and 'Identity, Incumbency and Municipal Support'. The two main themes within the 'Coping' category were 'Social Capital and Cohesion' and 'Socio-Economic Stability'.

Results

The most prominent results show that the importance of 'other' attachments in mothers' lives are significant moderators and mediators to stress, which has been underestimated in prior research. This study began during the third lockdown in the United Kingdom (January 2021), providing the benefit of reporting on contemporaneous qualitative data. As the ongoing pandemic is reported to have expanded a mother's role exponentially, transforming the role of 'mother' and the act of 'motherhood', the subjective experiences from fifteen mothers were sought to investigate their sources of stress, its effects upon their relationships and wellbeing, and explore any psychosocial mitigating support they felt was beneficial to their ability to cope.

Further work

This study is limited to the participants' demographics and socioeconomic status, limitations were also identified in using Huston's Social-Ecological Theory as a framework to analyse mothers' coping strategies. Therefore, a further quantitative investigation is proposed, using an extended coping framework to incorporate 'other' important relationships in mothers' lives, with a representational population sample, giving further evidence which could advance how psychological services are designed for mothers to assist them in times of extreme stress and forced change.