

Blogging Relieves Stress On New Mothers

June 19 2012

(Medical Xpress) -- New mothers who read and write blogs may feel less alone than mothers who do not participate in a blogging community, according to family studies researchers.

"It looks like blogging might be helping these women as they transition into [motherhood](#) because they may begin to feel more connected to their extended family and friends, which leads them to feel more supported," said Brandon T. McDaniel, graduate student in human development and family studies, PennState. "That potentially is going to spill out into other aspects of their well being, including their marital relationship with their partner, the ways that they're feeling about their [parenting stress](#), and eventually into their levels of depression."

McDaniel and colleagues from Brigham Young University surveyed 157 [new mothers](#) about their media use and their well-being. The moms were all first-time parents with only one child under the age of 18 months -- most much younger than this. The researchers report in the online version of [Maternal and Child Health Journal](#) that blogging had a positive impact on new mothers, but [social networking](#) -- mainly Facebook and MySpace -- did not seem to impact their well-being.

"We're not saying that those who end up feeling more supported all of a sudden no longer have stresses, they're still going to have those stressful moments you have as a parent," said McDaniel. "But because they're feeling more supported, their thoughts and their feelings about that stress might change, and they begin to feel less stressed about those things."

McDaniel pointed out several potential benefits for new mothers who blog, including giving moms both a way to connect with family and friends who do not live nearby and an outlet to use and showcase their hobbies and accomplishments, particularly for stay-at-home moms.

The researchers found that 61 percent of the mothers surveyed wrote their own blogs and 76 percent read blogs. Eighty-nine percent of the mothers who wrote their own blogs did so to "document personal experiences or share them with others," and 86 percent wanted to stay in touch with family and friends through the blog.

Because this is one of the first studies to look at the effects of participation in online communities on new mothers, McDaniel noted that there is not enough information collected yet to determine how or why blogging and social networking have markedly different impacts on new moms. However, this study demonstrated that mothers who blogged frequently show stronger connections to their family and friends.

The researchers saw a significant correlation between a strong connection to family and friends and increased feelings of social support, which in turn led to higher marital satisfaction, less marital conflict and less parenting stress. The mothers who experienced fewer feelings of parenting stress also had fewer feelings of depression.

Study participants completed an online survey that focused on two main subjects -- their media use and their well-being. [Mothers](#) rated their feelings on scales corresponding to each item. Moms also tallied time spent on different activities throughout the day, including sleep, housework, childcare tasks and computer usage. They reported spending about three hours per day on the computer, using the Internet -- behind only childcare, at almost nine hours a day, and sleep, at about seven hours per day.

McDaniel is continuing this line of research and exploring why blogging has the significant impact it does with new moms, while social networking may not always show the same effect. He emphasizes that this initial study is all correlational research, and one cannot establish causation from this study.

Sarah M. Coyne and Erin K. Holmes, assistant professors, School of [Family](#) Life, Brigham Young University, also worked on this research.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

Citation: Blogging Relieves Stress On New Mothers (2012, June 19) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-06-blogging-relieves-stress-mothers.html>

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