



Mental Health of Indian Surrogate Mothers – a retrospective perspective

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Abstract:

India was the surrogacy capital of the world until its recent ban on commercial gestational surrogacy in 2016. A rough estimate of 25,000 surrogacy births (registered only) has been reported since its legalisation in 2002 and surrogacy in India is estimated to have generated revenue of \$400 million to \$1 billion per year (Banerjee, 2012; Chopra, 2006; Holzberg, 2018; Rudrappa, 2017). Little, however, is known so far about the mental health impact that surrogacy has on surrogate mothers in India (Brazier, Campbell, & Golombok, 1998; Edelman, 2004; van den Akker, 2010). While studies have examined exploitation (Bromfield & Rotabi, 2014; Goswami, Rotabi, & Bromfield, 2014; Panitch, 2013a; Saravanan, 2013; 2015; Schanbacker, 2014), there is no study to date investigating the long-term emotional costs and consequences of gestational surrogacy on Indian women living in poverty, despite evidence from other researches from various parts of the world acknowledging the presence of post-natal depression including feelings of anger and guilt (Jadva, Murray, Lycett et. al., 2003), and other psychological problems such as feelings of regret and loss after the first weeks of separation (Rapaport, 2015; Tieu, 2009). This research investigates the surrogate mother's perspectives about potential mental health implications undergone post relinquishment of the surrogate child through the lens of the surrogates' own narratives. Surrogate mothers in southern India are interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule. The author/researcher will present a part of the initial analysis of these interviews using narrative inquiry. These views will help inform the current policies around ART in India and help speculate on the possibility of revisiting the shut-down of commercial surrogacy in India.



Biography:

Lopamudra Goswami is an Indian research scholar currently pursuing her doctoral studies at Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus, Australia. From April 2020, she is going to be a Visiting Scholar at the University of Cambridge in the Faculty of Law. Her research area over the last 5 years has been with Indian surrogate mothers in Gujarat. Her doctoral work is also an extension of the same and she is now working with surrogate mothers in southern India assessing their mental health post surrogacy. Lopamudra is a trained psychologist and has had extensive teaching experience at several masters programs in Bangalore prior to moving to Australia. She has field experience of being with the mothers, interacting with them and knowing them beyond the realms of being surrogates. Currently, Lopamudra splits her time between the Gold Coast, Bangalore, and Cambridge.

Publication of speakers:

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2. Brinsden P. Gestational surrogacy. *Hum Reprod Update.* 2003;9:483-491. [PubMed] [Google Scholar]
3. Golombok S, Murray C, Jadva V, MacCallum F, Lycett E. Families created through surrogacy arrangements: Parent-Child Relationships in the 1st Year of Life. *Dev Psychol.* 2004;40:400-411. [PubMed] [Google Scholar]

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