

# Analysis of Spousal Support and The Correlation with Postpartum Blues

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Up to 50% of mothers who have given birth experience postpartum depression, while almost 80% experience postpartum blues. If not properly addressed, postpartum blues can lead to mild depression, which may develop into postpartum depression. Partner support is an important coping mechanism for managing stress and can help reduce stress proactively. There are four types of support: emotional support, appraisal support, instrumental support, and informational support; **Method:** This study is a quantitative research project that utilizes a correlational design and a cross-sectional approach. The research tool used was a questionnaire on spousal support, as well as the Edinburgh Postpartum Depression Scale (EPDS); **Results:** the Asymp-sig values for emotional support, appraisal support, instrumental support, and information support are 0.00 and 0.01, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that emotional support, appraisal support, instrumental support, and informational support from partners have an impact on the occurrence of postpartum blues **Conclusion:** The statistical test results revealed that postpartum blues can be influenced by all types of family support, including emotional support, appraisal support, instrumental support, and informational support.

## 1. Introduction

Postpartum blues is a condition where a mother experiences discomfort after childbirth related to her relationship with her baby or herself. During labor, as the placenta is expelled, there are hormonal changes involving progesterone and estrogen that can affect the mother's physical, mental, and emotional state. Studies have shown that postpartum blues affect a significant percentage of new mothers in Asia, ranging from 26-85%. Up to 50% of mothers who have given birth experience postpartum depression, while almost 80% experience postpartum blues [1]. Symptoms of postpartum blues include fatigue, pain, lethargy, sleep disturbances, anxiety, worry, and tension. Unfortunately, these symptoms are often considered natural for new mothers and no specific treatment is recommended (Tindaon & Anggeria, Efektivitas Konseling Terhadap Post Partum Blues Pada Ibu Primipara, 2018) [3]

If not properly addressed, postpartum blues can lead to mild depression and potentially more severe conditions such as postpartum depression and postpartum psychosis, which can have negative effects. Breastfeeding mothers experiencing postpartum blues may have inhibited oxytocin release, resulting in reduced breast milk production. Mothers may also exhibit a lack of desire to breastfeed or interact with their babies, leading to short-term nutritional deficiencies and underdeveloped emotional bonds. Long-term effects may include developmental delays, emotional disturbances, and social problems (Smith & Sarafino, 2014) [5]. Additionally, children of mothers experiencing postpartum blues may exhibit behavior problems, sleep disturbances, tantrums, aggression, hyperactivity, and cognitive development disorders such as slow speech [6].

Postpartum depression in Indonesia is not as prevalent as in other countries, but many still believe that it is a normal occurrence for mothers after giving birth. However, it is essential to detect and screen for postpartum depression early in mothers after giving birth, as it can significantly impact both the mothers' and their children's daily lives and quality of life (Sari, Triyunita, & Keraman, 2020).

Lack of support from a spouse is one of the causes of postpartum blues. Partner support is crucial in managing stress and preventing postpartum blues [8] [9]. Women who receive emotional support and respect from their husbands tend to avoid symptoms of postpartum blues, while those who don't receive support tend to experience them [10]. Partner support had a significant influence on the incidence of postpartum blues [1] [11]. Postpartum mothers with less partner support have 2.44 times greater risk of experiencing postpartum blues than those with high partner support [8]. Another study found that husband's support had 5.7 times the influence on the occurrence of postpartum blues [1]. A study conducted in China revealed that mothers require three types of support during the puerperium: instrumental, emotional, and informational support. Instrumental support involves newborn care, cooking, and shopping, and is best provided by the mother, mother-in-law or sisters. Emotional support, on the other hand, is provided by the husband and involves understanding, love, and companionship, which are essential for most mothers [12].

## 2. Materials and Method

This study is a quantitative research project that utilizes a correlational design and a cross-sectional approach. It included a total population of 200 postpartum mothers, with 134 participants selected through purposive sampling based on strict inclusion and exclusion criteria. The research tool used was a questionnaire on spousal support, as well as the Edinburgh Postpartum Depression Scale (EPDS) to measure the psychological well-being of postpartum mothers. The data was analyzed using the Kendal Tau correlation test, with a significant level of 95%, through bivariate analysis.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Results

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Husband Support and Postpartum Blues

Variable	Category	Frequency	
		N	Percentage (%)
Postpartum Blues	Yes	56	41,8
	Not	78	58,2
	Total	134	100,0
Emotional Support	low	32	23,9
	moderate	73	54,5
	Hight	29	21,6
	Total	134	100,0
Appraisal Support	low	27	20,1
	moderate	36	26,9
	Hight	71	53,0
	Total	134	100,0
Instrumental Support	low	29	21,6
	moderate	30	22,4
	Hight	75	56,0
	Total	134	100,0
Informational Support	low	31	23,1
	moderate	19	14,2
	Hight	85	62,7
	Total	135	100,0

Source: primary data (2022)

Table 1 shows that 41.8% of respondents experienced postpartum blues. Of the participants in this study, 54.5% had moderate emotional support, 53% had high appraisal support, 56% had high instrumental support, and 62.7% had high informational support.

Table 2 Analysis of the effect of partner support on the incidence of post partum blues

		Postpartum Blues	
Kendall's tau_b	Emotional Support	Correlation Coefficient	,421**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,000
		N	134
	Appraisal Support	Correlation Coefficient	,312**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,000
		N	134
	Instrumental Support	Correlation Coefficient	,269**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,001
		N	134
	Informational Support	Correlation Coefficient	,270**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,001
		N	134

Source: primary data (2022)

According to the data analysis in Table 2, the Asymp-sig values for emotional support, appraisal support, instrumental support, and information support are 0.00 and 0.01, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that emotional support, appraisal support, instrumental support, and informational support from partners have an impact on the occurrence of postpartum blues.

### 3.2 Discussion

The husband is a crucial member of the family who has a close relationship with the mother. During the postpartum period, all actions taken by the husband can significantly impact the mother's mental state and overall well-being. Positive support from partners is essential to improve the mother's condition during this period. If the husband fails to provide support, it can lead to feelings of sadness and anxiety in the first week after giving birth, especially when caring for the baby. Partner support involves effective communication and giving and receiving help to create a sense of love and attention.

Having a supportive husband is highly beneficial for wives and creates a positive relationship [10]. Additionally, the level of closeness in the relationship, the main type of assistance provided, and the quality of the interaction are critical factors that make social partner support more valuable than other types of support [11].

The support of a spouse is a major factor in the development of postpartum blues. This is due to the fact that having a supportive partner is an effective coping mechanism during times of stress and can serve as a preventative measure against stress. Women who received emotional support, respect, and overall support from their husbands were less likely to experience postpartum blues. Conversely, those who lacked support from their partners were more likely to experience symptoms of postpartum blues [1].

There are four types of support: emotional, appreciation, instrumental, and informational. The study found that husbands provide moderate emotional support (54.5%) to postpartum mothers. Emotional support includes expressions of care, empathy, and sympathy, which help the recipient feel comforted, reassured, loved, and supported during times of stress. This type of support can also involve providing encouragement, warmth, and love. In the case of postpartum mothers, husbands can provide emotional support by motivating and encouraging them during the healing process and while caring for their newborns.

A husband's support involves providing emotional assistance through expressions of empathy, concern, and care for their partner. They act as a secure and soothing space for rest and recovery, helping to alleviate emotional distress. Emotional support encompasses elements such as love, trust, attention, active listening, and giving their partner a voice to be heard.

Receiving support and appreciation can lead to feelings of self-respect, confidence, and worth. According to a study, 53% of participants reported high levels of appreciation support. New mothers face many challenges while caring for their newborns, including the ability to breastfeed and daily care. Husbands can show appreciation during the postpartum period by praising their partners for successful breastfeeding. The results of the variate test showed a significant relationship between reward support and postpartum blues with an alpha value of 0.00. Compliments from spouses can make new parents feel valued and less alone, which can reduce anxiety levels and prevent postpartum blues.

Support in the form of direct and tangible assistance, also known as instrumental support, is crucial for postpartum mothers. The findings of a study indicate that 56% of participants received a high level of instrumental support. First-time mothers require support from their loved ones as they are not yet fully stable, both physically and mentally. Postpartum mothers are unfamiliar with the drastic changes that occur in their new role as a mother within a short period. A positive response from the husband speeds up the adaptation process, making it easier for midwives to provide healthy care [12].

Mothers can receive instrumental support in the form of regular health check-ups and measures to reduce anxiety and stress. Husbands play a crucial role in providing feedback, guidance, and mediation for problem-solving, as well as validating the identity of their family members. They can provide support, appreciation, and attention to their loved ones [13].

The husband plays an important role in the family, especially during the mother's postpartum period. Any actions taken by the husband during this time can greatly affect the mother's psychological state and her ability to navigate this period smoothly. The husband must provide positive support to the mother during this time. If the husband fails to support the mother, it can make her feel sad and overwhelmed, especially in the first week of caring for the baby. Supporting the postpartum mother involves a relationship of giving and receiving real help, which gives her a sense of love and attention.

Support in the form of advice, suggestions, and information can be very helpful in solving problems or expressing oneself. This type of support can come from various sources such as books, magazines, articles, and radio broadcasts. 62.7% of respondents reported receiving high levels of information support. For example, during the puerperium and lactation process, informational support can be particularly useful in adapting to changes. This support may include advice, suggestions, knowledge, and instructions. It's important to note that the husband can also play a role in collecting and sharing information about the world. Ultimately, suggestions and information can be very valuable in uncovering and addressing problems.

Several psychological factors can contribute to postpartum blues, including the level of family support, particularly from the mother's partner [14]. Mothers need to receive support from their families during the postpartum period. In Indonesia, the decisions of the husband and instructions from the mother are highly influential and play a significant role in the daily care of the baby. If the mother does not receive adequate support from her family after giving birth, she may experience feelings of sadness and become overwhelmed with caring for the child. The support of the husband can help alleviate stress and pressure, and improve the mental health of the individual and the family. Therefore, women must receive support from their partners after giving birth [15]

Mothers who experience postpartum blues or mental disorders often struggle alone in the moments following childbirth [16]. They may sense that something is wrong, but they do not know what is happening to them. Seeking help from doctors or other sources may only result in advice to rest or sleep more, rather than addressing their anxiety or prescribing medication. This can leave mothers feeling isolated and unsupported, even when they love their new baby.

After the postpartum period, mothers will experience psychological adaptation. The first phase is called taking in and typically occurs on the first and second day after delivery. During this time, mothers need help and are likely to focus on themselves. This is a period of dependency that lasts from the first day to the second day after giving birth. During this phase, mothers may relive experiences from the birth process. The next phase is taking hold, which happens between 3-10 days after giving birth. In this phase, mothers may feel worried or incapable and have a sense of responsibility for caring for the baby.

Furthermore, he has highly sensitive emotions and can be easily hurt if the communication is not careful. Hence, mothers require assistance as it presents a golden opportunity to receive various counseling on self-care and baby care which helps in building self-confidence. The next phase is the letting go phase which lasts for ten days after giving birth. During this phase, the mother begins to

adjust to her baby's dependency and the desire to care for herself and her baby increases. It is a crucial time for the mother to accept responsibility for her new role.

#### 4. Conclusion

The statistical test results revealed that postpartum blues can be influenced by all types of family support, including emotional support, appraisal support, instrumental support, and informational support.

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