

The Role of Husband and Family Support in Reducing Baby Blues Symptoms in Postpartum Mothers

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ABSTRACT

The postpartum period is a challenging transition period, with significant physical, psychological, and social changes for mothers. One common condition is baby blues, a mild mood disorder that usually appears in the first two weeks after giving birth. Around 70-80% of mothers experience baby blues symptoms such as anxiety, fatigue, and difficulty sleeping, which can disrupt the early relationship between mother and baby and slow recovery. Despite its high prevalence, this disorder is often considered normal and does not require intervention, whereas if not handled properly, the symptoms can develop into postpartum depression. Research shows that adequate emotional support from husbands and families can significantly reduce these symptoms. Unfortunately, many families lack understanding of postpartum psychological conditions, so they often provide unsupportive responses, which actually worsen the mother's condition. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to describe the experiences of mothers facing baby blues and the role of husband and family support in their recovery. The findings of this study emphasize the importance of education about postpartum maternal mental health and the need for changes in the social support system to be more sensitive and responsive to reduce the psychological impact on mothers and children.

Keywords: Baby-Blues; Support; Emotional; Postpartum Mental Health

INTRODUCTION

The postpartum period is a challenging transition period, where mothers experience significant physical, psychological, and social changes. One condition that often occurs during this period is baby blues, a mild mood disorder that generally occurs in the first two weeks after delivery. According to Purwati & Noviyana (2020), around 70-80% of postpartum mothers experience baby blues symptoms, such as crying easily, restlessness, anxiety, and difficulty sleeping and concentrating. This high prevalence shows that baby blues is not just a momentary emotional disorder, but a psychological phenomenon that needs

serious attention because it has the potential to disrupt the early relationship between mother and baby, and hinder the postpartum recovery process.

Ironically, despite its high prevalence, baby blues is often considered a "normal" thing that does not require intervention. A permissive approach to this disorder actually risks worsening the mother's condition, because untreated symptoms can develop into more severe postpartum depression. Research by Koenarso et al (2024) confirms that negative emotional experiences that are not responded to appropriately can have long-term impacts on maternal mental health and child development. Therefore, it is important to see the high prevalence of baby blues as an indicator of the need for systemic interventions and stronger social support, not just as a "natural" part of the motherhood process. Collective awareness is needed, including from husbands and families, to ensure that mothers receive adequate emotional and practical support during these vulnerable times.

Physiological changes experienced by postpartum mothers, especially the surge and decline in estrogen and progesterone levels, have a significant impact on emotional stability. In a short time, the mother's body must adapt to drastic hormonal changes that can trigger psychological symptoms such as anxiety, extreme fatigue, and the inability to regulate emotions effectively. Rokhimawaty et al (2025) in his book states that these hormonal fluctuations contribute to affective disorders, especially in individuals with psychological vulnerability or a history of mood disorders. Unfortunately, the health care system still tends to focus on the mother's physical recovery, while the psychological dimension is often ignored or considered secondary. This imbalance shows a serious gap in the holistic perinatal approach.

Furthermore, psychological distress is also exacerbated by social and cultural expectations that burden mothers to recover quickly and demonstrate "ideal" parenting skills. The often unrealistic narrative of idealizing the role of mother creates its own mental distress, which if not balanced with adequate social support, can worsen the mother's emotional condition. In this context, the inability to meet structurally formed social standards is not only an individual problem, but reflects a collective failure in building a humane and responsive postpartum support ecosystem. Therefore, physical and psychological changes after childbirth cannot be separated from the social context that surrounds them, and handling baby blues must involve a multidimensional approach – biological, psychological, and sociocultural simultaneously.

In the context of postpartum psychology, emotional support from husband and family is not just a complement, but a fundamental need that can determine the quality of the mother's mental health. The presence of a husband who is active and responsive to the mother's emotional needs has been shown to reduce stress levels, increase self-confidence in caring for children, and accelerate adaptation to the new role as a mother. A study by De Sousa Machado et al (2020) revealed that mothers who receive emotional and instrumental support from their partners tend to experience a significant reduction in baby blues symptoms compared to mothers who feel isolated. Unfortunately, in many cases, the responsibility for

caregiving is still unilaterally imposed on the mother, while the husband and family often take a passive role or even ignore the emotional dynamics experienced by the mother. This role inequality not only reproduces gender injustice in the household but also worsens the psychological burden borne by the mother.

More critically, the lack of support from families is often rooted in low psychosocial literacy related to postpartum conditions. Many families still view baby blues symptoms as a form of “mental weakness” or “lack of gratitude,” so instead of providing empathy, they judge or add additional emotional pressure. In this framework, the absence of support is not just an individual issue, but a reflection of a structural failure in building a culture of caring for maternal mental health. Therefore, the role of the family and husband must be repositioned not as providers of incidental assistance, but as the main agents in the mother’s emotional support system. This approach requires comprehensive education and a paradigm shift so that families are able to play an active, empathetic, inclusive, and sustainable role in dealing with the postpartum period.

The lack of family understanding of the psychological condition of postpartum mothers is one of the main factors that worsens the symptoms of baby blues (Qomar et al., 2023). Many family members do not yet have adequate mental health literacy, so they are unable to identify signs of emotional distress in mothers, let alone respond appropriately. Not infrequently, the responses given are counterproductive, such as demanding the mother to be “strong,” telling her not to be too sensitive, or even blaming the condition as a lack of faith or gratitude. In fact, this kind of approach has the potential to strengthen feelings of guilt and increase the psychological stress that the mother is experiencing. The absence of empathy in the form of concrete support indicates a failure in transforming knowledge at the community level about the importance of mental health as an integral part of postpartum recovery.

Furthermore, this issue cannot be viewed as merely a matter of individual ignorance, but rather reflects the weakness of systemic interventions in public education related to maternal mental health. Education about the role of the family in the emotional recovery of mothers after childbirth is still not part of the wider public health program. This indicates that the state and health service institutions have not made this issue a priority, even though its impact can affect the long-term well-being of mothers and children. In this situation, mothers are often left to navigate the emotional crisis they experience on their own, without adequate social infrastructure. Therefore, a multidimensional approach is needed that includes policy interventions, community-based education, and active family involvement to build collective awareness about the importance of the role of social support in preventing and reducing baby blues symptoms.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to describe in depth the experience of postpartum mothers in dealing with baby blues symptoms and the role of husband and family support in the process. This approach was chosen

because it allows researchers to understand social and psychological phenomena from the perspective of subjects who experience them directly (Creswell, 2014). Through this method, researchers attempt to capture meaning, dynamics, and emotional contexts that cannot be measured through quantitative data.

The subjects in this study were mothers who experienced postpartum and showed symptoms of baby blues, as well as husbands or family members involved in the mentoring process. The selection of participants was carried out by purposive sampling with the following criteria: (1) mothers who gave birth within the last 6 months, (2) had emotional experiences that indicated baby blues, and (3) were willing to provide in-depth information. Data collection techniques were carried out through semi-structured interviews, non-participatory observation, and documentation. Data validity was maintained through triangulation techniques of sources and methods, as well as re-checking the results of interviews with participants (member check).

The data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques from Braun & Clarke (2006), which include the following stages: data transcription, repeated reading, data coding, theme identification, theme review, and interpretation of meaning. The results of the analysis were interpreted by linking them to the social, psychological, and cultural contexts underlying the emergence of baby blues symptoms and the forms of support provided by husbands and families. With this approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the importance of social support as a protective factor in postpartum maternal mental health.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Emotional Dynamics of Postpartum Mothers in Dealing with Baby Blues Symptoms

1. Internalization of Social Pressure on the Motherhood Role and Its Impact on Maternal Emotional Health

The role of a postpartum mother not only involves biological responsibilities, but is also influenced by great social pressure. Society's expectations of mothers who are always happy, patient, and skilled in caring for children are often unrealistic, causing many mothers to feel like failures, anxious, and not good enough. One participant said, "I feel like a bad mother when I don't immediately know what to do when my baby cries." Research shows that this social pressure worsens the mother's emotional condition, triggering symptoms of baby blues and postpartum depression. Marwiyah et al (2022) stated that feelings of inability to meet social expectations can trigger postpartum depression, while Isnaniar et al (2020) emphasized that high expectations of the mother's role increase stress and anxiety. Hapsari et L (2025) also noted that patriarchal culture exacerbates feelings of isolation for mothers who feel they have failed to meet ideal motherhood standards. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to social and cultural factors in understanding the emotional health of postpartum mothers, so that they can get more empathetic and realistic support.

Based on the interview results, it was found that most postpartum mothers experience significant emotional stress due to the internalization of social standards regarding ideal motherhood. Society tends to idealize the figure of a mother as someone who is always happy, patient, agile, and loving in caring for children. When mothers are unable to meet these expectations, feelings of failure, not being good enough, and deep feelings of guilt and anxiety arise. One participant said,

"I feel like a bad mom when I don't know what to do right away when my baby cries. It feels like everyone expects me to know everything."

This finding is in line with scientific views that show that social and cultural pressures can worsen the emotional condition of postpartum mothers. According to research by Modak et al (2023), pressure from social expectations about perfect motherhood can worsen symptoms of mood disorders such as baby blues and postpartum depression. In the context of patriarchal culture, the construction of motherhood is often considered a natural state of women that must be lived flawlessly. This creates little space for mothers to express doubts, weaknesses, or ask for help.

Furthermore, internalized social pressures make mothers feel ashamed or afraid to express their difficulties, which ultimately worsens their psychological condition. Feelings of isolation, anxiety, and even decreased self-esteem are often invisible but very impactful consequences. Therefore, it is important to understand that symptoms of emotional distress in postpartum mothers are not only influenced by hormonal factors, but also by social and structural factors inherent in the identity of motherhood itself. A more inclusive and empathetic approach to the experiences of new mothers is needed, including the provision of safe spaces for sharing, emotional support systems, and public education to deconstruct the myths of ideal motherhood that have been holding them back.

2. Barriers to Emotional Expression Due to Lack of Safe Space in the Closest Environment

In the dynamics of the motherhood role, emotional expression is an important aspect in maintaining the mental health of mothers after giving birth. However, this study found that many mothers have difficulty expressing their negative feelings due to the lack of a safe space in their immediate environment. Mothers who feel sad, confused, or anxious often hold back their emotions for fear of being labeled weak, ungrateful, or incapable of carrying out their role as mothers. This fear is not without reason; responses from husbands, parents, or close relatives often belittle or even normalize the condition. As expressed by one participant,

"I once told him that I often cried at night, but he said I was exaggerating and told me to be more grateful. In the end, I just kept quiet, afraid of being thought of as spoiled.." (Interview, Mrs. AR, 29 years old).

This phenomenon does not stand alone. Scientifically, a study by Risnah (2023) shows that emotional support from the immediate environment greatly influences the psychological recovery of mothers after giving birth, and a lack of empathy can worsen symptoms of mood disorders such as baby blues and

postpartum depression. In addition, attachment theory states that a secure emotional connection with those closest to you forms the foundation for healthy emotional regulation. In this context, when mothers do not receive an empathetic and supportive response, the risk of emotional isolation and psychological distress increases. Thus, this finding confirms that maternal mental health is not only the responsibility of the individual, but is closely related to the social structure and culture of communication within the family. For this reason, a transformation is needed in the pattern of interaction from being demanding and judgmental, to being more empathetic, open, and supporting the process of collective emotional recovery of mothers.

In addition, it is important to consider the long-term impact of the lack of safe space for mothers to express their emotions. Research by Fardi (2023) shows that the inability to share feelings or get adequate emotional support can increase the risk of postpartum depression. When mothers feel emotionally isolated, feelings of anxiety and depression not only persist, but can also disrupt the quality of relationships with children and partners. In this case, a psychological approach based on coping theory, expressed by Anggraini & Setiyowati (2024) suggests that mothers who have access to good social resources and emotional support tend to be more effective in managing stress and overcoming mental challenges after giving birth. As understanding of the importance of social support grows, it is time for families and communities to change their perspectives on motherhood, by prioritizing empathy and providing space for mothers to talk about their feelings without fear of being judged. In addition, an interview with another mother also revealed something similar:

"I felt calmer after being able to talk to a close friend who understood my condition. It felt like a burden was lifted a little." (Interview, Mrs. AS, 32 years old).

This shows that space to talk and be accepted unconditionally is very important for the mother's emotional recovery after giving birth.

2. The Strategic Role of Husband and Family Support in Suppressing Baby Blues Symptoms

1. Husband's Emotional and Practical Involvement as a Pillar of Mother's Psychological Recovery

Husband involvement in the postpartum process, both emotionally and practically, has a significant impact on the mother's psychological recovery. Based on research by Herawati et al (2018), social support provided by partners, especially husbands, can reduce the negative impact of stress on individuals. They found that emotional support received by a person can increase feelings of control over stressful situations and reduce anxiety, two factors that are very relevant for postpartum mothers. When a husband provides emotional support such as listening to complaints and giving attention without judgment, this increases the mother's sense of appreciation and strengthens her mental resilience in facing postpartum challenges.

Furthermore, a study by Sundary (2024) stated that the husband's practical involvement, such as sharing household tasks or caring for the baby, helps reduce

the mother's physical and emotional burden. Mothers who feel practically supported are better able to handle physical fatigue due to intensive baby care. This involvement also reduces the feelings of isolation that mothers often experience, which can worsen the symptoms of baby blues. This study shows that husbands who actively help with household tasks have a significant influence on improving the mother's psychological well-being.

In contrast, research by Garapati et al (2023) revealed that the lack of support from a partner can worsen feelings of isolation and increase the risk of psychological disorders, including postpartum depression. Mothers who feel less supported by their husbands are at high risk of feeling burdened by the physical and emotional demands that come with the new role of motherhood, which can ultimately worsen their mental condition.

In an interview conducted with a psychologist who focuses on postpartum maternal mental health, she explained,

"An involved husband not only helps to reduce the burden on the household, but also provides much-needed emotional stability for mothers after giving birth. Without such support, many mothers feel trapped in psychological stress that can develop into depression."

This further strengthens the argument that the husband's involvement, both emotionally and practically, has an invaluable role in maintaining the mental health of postpartum mothers.

Overall, husband involvement is an important element in maintaining the well-being of postpartum mothers. Not only does it provide emotional support, but it also helps in the practical aspects of daily life, which significantly improves the mother's mental stability and accelerates the process of postpartum psychological recovery.

2. The Role of Family Education in Forming a Responsive and Empathetic Emotional Environment

Postpartum is a challenging period for mothers, especially in dealing with significant physical and emotional changes. One condition that often occurs is baby blues, which includes symptoms such as mood swings, anxiety, fatigue, and feelings of anxiety that can affect the mother's emotional well-being. At this stage, the role of the family, especially in providing educational support, becomes very important. Adequate family education about this condition can create a more responsive and empathetic environment, which in turn can speed up the psychological recovery process of postpartum mothers. Families who understand the condition of baby blues not only provide the necessary emotional support but also help mothers feel more accepted and understood, which contributes to improving the mother's mental well-being.

The findings of this study indicate that families who have received education about baby blues have a better ability to respond to changes in the mother's mood with empathy and non-judgmental support. They tend to be more sensitive to the mother's feelings, providing space to express feelings without feeling judged. This is in accordance with the findings of Mulyani (2023) who stated that families who are educated about postpartum mental health can reduce

the risk of depression in mothers by creating a more effective support system and reducing emotional stress. In addition, Gultom et al (2024) in their research also revealed that family education can strengthen more open communication between mothers and families, which serves as a main pillar in the mother's emotional recovery process.

On the other hand, families who do not have sufficient understanding of the condition of baby blues often underestimate or even blame the mother for the negative feelings that arise. This view often results in an unsupportive attitude and adds to the mother's psychological burden. This can hinder the mother's recovery process and worsen feelings of anxiety or depression. One quote from an interview with a participant with the initials TA revealed,

"I feel really burdened because my husband keeps telling me that I should be able to handle my feelings on my own. It makes me feel worse about myself."

This statement reflects that without sufficient understanding, families can unintentionally put pressure that can worsen the mother's mental condition. This is also in line with the findings found by Rosyanti & Hadi (2021), which stated that family ignorance of the mother's emotional changes can lead to misunderstandings, stigma, and lack of necessary support.

This study also shows that education about baby blues helps families to not only be more sensitive to the mother's condition, but also to minimize misinterpretations related to mood swings experienced by the mother. Educated families are able to provide appropriate support, both emotionally and practically, and maintain a stable and comfortable home atmosphere. Thus, families play a very important role in reducing the risk of more serious mental health disorders, such as postpartum depression. As explained by Handini et al (2022), appropriate emotional support from the family can accelerate the mother's recovery and mitigate the negative impact of the emotional conditions experienced.

In conclusion, family education about baby blues is very important in creating a safe, supportive, and stigma-free social environment for postpartum mothers. Educated families have the ability to provide more effective support, which directly contributes to the mother's emotional recovery and improves the mother's quality of life after childbirth. Therefore, providing education to families about postpartum mental health should be a priority in health programs, in order to create a healthier and more supportive environment for mothers and prevent long-term psychological complications..

CONCLUSION

The emotional dynamics of postpartum mothers in dealing with baby blues symptoms are influenced by various internal and external factors, which require more attention in understanding this condition holistically. High social pressure regarding the role of an ideal mother often worsens the emotional condition of postpartum mothers, triggering feelings of failure, anxiety, and isolation. Society's expectations of mothers who are always happy and skilled in caring for children can increase anxiety and worsen baby blues symptoms.

Therefore, more empathetic and realistic support is needed from the social environment, as well as an approach that is sensitive to social and cultural factors that influence the experience of motherhood. In addition, the lack of a safe space to express negative feelings worsens the mother's psychological condition. Fear of stigma or negative judgment often makes mothers hold back their feelings, which can worsen baby blues symptoms or even cause postpartum depression. Emotional and practical support from husbands is crucial in helping mothers face postpartum challenges, where the husband's involvement in caring for the baby and sharing household tasks can reduce the mother's physical and emotional burden, which in turn improves their psychological well-being. In addition, family education about baby blues is also very important to create a more responsive, sensitive, and supportive environment, which can accelerate maternal recovery and reduce the risk of further psychological disorders. Overall, awareness and changes in social support patterns, both from family and society, are very important in reducing the emotional impact of postpartum. Education about postpartum maternal mental health should be a priority in health programs to create a healthier and more supportive environment, so that mothers can go through the postpartum period better emotionally and psychologically.

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