

**COGNITIVE APPRAISAL, SOCIAL SUPPORT AND
DEPRESSION AMONG POSTPARTUM
MOTHERS IN SRI LANKA**



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was (1) to explain how postpartum depressed mothers appraise baby delivery and their life changes and (2) to explain how the social support they experience could buffer the postpartum depression.

Twelve postpartum depressed mothers from the National Institute of Mental Health in Angoda, Sri Lanka were purposively recruited as informants. Based on qualitative study, information about cognitive appraisal and social support, as well as depression, was collected through non-participative observation and in-depth interview.

Results revealed that postpartum depressed mothers appraised pregnancy and baby delivery negatively. Moreover, it was found that poor social support from their husbands, relatives, and hospital staff; death of the husband; unwanted pregnancy; and extra marital affairs of the husband were associated with negative appraisal of the pregnancy and baby delivery.

It was also found that if they later receive good social support from their 'closest persons' and hospital staff they can recover from their depressive feelings more quickly. Based on these findings, several recommendations are made including providing knowledge about postpartum depression to society, educating the hospital staff who work with delivering mothers, improving the quality of service at the government hospital by providing more social support to the delivering mothers at delivery and after delivery; and giving advice to the husband and other close family members to provide support for the mother. Furthermore, a reproductive health program to provide knowledge and protect women's rights and women's reproductive rights should be established.

**KEY WORDS: POST PARTUM DEPRESSION/ BABY DELIVERY/ COGNITIVE
APPRAISAL/ SOCIAL SUPPORT**

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