

An Assessment of Impact of Psycho-social Support on Emotional Wellbeing of Postnatal Mothers in Ovia North Local Government of Edo State.

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ABSTRACT

The postnatal period is a critical phase in a mother's life, marked by significant emotional, psychological, and physiological changes. Psychosocial support, plays a crucial role in fostering maternal well-being. The study assesses impact of psychosocial support on psychological and emotional well-being of postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government of Edo State, Nigeria. Adopting a quantitative survey research design, data was collected using a structured questionnaire from a sample of 220 respondents. The data collected was analyzed using inferential to determine the association between psychosocial support and maternal well-being. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was employed to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between the types of psychosocial support received and maternal well-being. Additionally, it was found that postnatal mothers who received adequate psychosocial support were more likely to engage in positive infant care practices compared to those with limited support. Socioeconomic factors such as income and education level were identified to influence the accessibility of psychosocial support services for postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government of Edo State. In conclusion, the study underscored the importance of psychosocial support in promoting maternal well-being and infant care practices. It highlighted the need for healthcare providers and policymakers to prioritize the provision of comprehensive psychosocial support services tailored to the needs of postnatal mothers. Recommendations include the implementation of targeted interventions to address barriers to access, the integration of psychosocial support into routine maternal healthcare services, and the provision of education and awareness programs to enhance the understanding of the benefits of psychosocial support among stakeholders.

Keywords: Maternal; Ovia -North; Postnatal; Psychosocial; Support; Well-being.

1. INTRODUCTION

Childbirth is a life-changing experience that profoundly impacts a woman's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. The period immediately after childbirth is often marked by significant emotional, psychological, and social adjustments for mothers, including physical recovery, demanding caregiving responsibilities, new sleep and routine patterns, and role changes. These factors can predispose mothers to emotional difficulties such as stress, anxiety, or depression (Chukwuma & Osage.2023). Globally, insufficient support during postpartum increases vulnerability to poor mental health. Research has shown that psychosocial support", broadly including emotional support, practical help, informational support, plays a protective role. For instance, a study among postnatal women in Lagos, Nigeria found that lack of help with baby care and unsupportive partners were predictors of postpartum depression. Similarly, during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, reductions in social support corresponded with increased risk of postpartum depression, anxiety, and impaired mother-infant bonding (Badru, 2023).

While the clinical aspects of labor and delivery are well-documented, increasing attention is being paid to the role of psycho-social support. Childbirth is a transformative and often challenging experience for women, marked by physical, emotional, and psychological changes. The presence and quality of psychosocial support during labor and the postpartum period have been shown to significantly influence maternal well-being and birth outcomes (Bohren, M. A., Hofmeyr, G. J., Sakala, C., Fukuzawa, R. K., & Cuthbert, A. 2024). In many developing regions, including rural communities like Ovia North Local Government, in Edo State, Nigeria, women may lack access to adequate psycho-social care, both in health facilities and from their immediate social environment. This gap can exacerbate stress, fear, and even contribute to postpartum depression or anxiety, impacting the mother's ability to care for herself and her newborn.

Despite growing recognition of the importance of psycho-social support during childbirth, many women continue to receive inadequate emotional and psychological care throughout labor and the postpartum period. In numerous healthcare settings—particularly in under-resourced areas—maternal care services tend to prioritize clinical and physical health, often overlooking the emotional and psychological needs of mothers. This gap can lead to increased vulnerability to postpartum depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and poor maternal-infant bonding. The lack of culturally sensitive and tailored interventions is one of the major gaps in the provision of psycho-social support in Edo South Senatorial district. The unique cultural needs and preferences of postnatal mothers may not adequately address, in many existing support services, most especially in Ovia North Local Government. In addition, there is dearth of research in the perceived impact of psycho-social support among postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government, hindering efforts to develop targeted interventions that address their specific needs (Ohoka, H., Koide, T., Goto, S., Murase, S., Kanai, A., & Masuda, T. (2022).

Furthermore, existing maternal healthcare programs and services are characterized by limited integration of psychosocial components, which also constitutes another gap. Also, it is evident that socioeconomic disparities and access barriers contribute to inequitable access to psychosocial support services among postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government (Jegade 2014). Psychosocial support during labor and after delivery has the potential to significantly influence the psychological outcomes and overall maternal health. However, there is limited research on how postnatal mothers perceive the impact of such support on their labor experience, recovery, and overall well-being.

This gap in understanding is particularly concerning as the quality of psychosocial support may contribute to improved maternal outcomes, enhanced bonding with the newborn, and increased satisfaction with the birth experience. Therefore, it is crucial to

investigate the perceived impact of psychosocial support provided during labor and after delivery on postnatal mothers, particularly in terms of emotional well-being, stress reduction, and overall satisfaction with their childbirth experience in Ovia North Local Government. Addressing this issue can inform healthcare practices and policies, ensuring that maternal care not only addresses physical health but also promotes psychological resilience, mental health, and positive long-term outcomes for both mothers and their families. Against this backdrop that this study investigates the impact of psychosocial support on psychological and emotional well-being of postnatal mothers in selected health centers in Ovia North Local Government of Edo State.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. What are the types of psychosocial support provided to women during labor and after delivery in selected health centers in Ovia North Local Government?
- ii. How do postnatal mothers perceived the adequacy and quality of psychosocial support provided during labor and postpartum.
- iii. How do postnatal mothers perceived emotional and psychological benefits of psychosocial support?
- iv. What are the potential challenges or barriers in accessing psychosocial support in the selected health centers?

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- i. Identify the types and sources of psychosocial support received by women during labor and after delivery in Ovia North Local Government of Edo State
- ii. Assess postnatal mothers' perceptions of the adequacy and quality of psychosocial support provided during labor and postpartum.
- iii. Evaluate the perceived effects of psychosocial support on maternal emotional well-being and recovery after childbirth.
- iv. Explore potential challenges or barriers in accessing psychosocial support in the selected health centers.

1.4. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- i. There is no significant association between the types of psychosocial support received and maternal well-being among postnatal mothers in selected health centers in Ovia North Local Government
- ii. There is no significant association between psychosocial supports received and postnatal mothers infant care practices.
- iii. There is no significant relationship between socioeconomic factors such as income and education level, on the accessibility of psychosocial support services for postnatal mothers.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies (Chukwuma, and Osagie 2023; Lisabi et al 2023; Jegede 2024) have shown a significant association between the psychosocial support received by postnatal mothers and their infant care practices. Mothers who reported receiving robust psychosocial support—emotional encouragement, informational guidance, and practical assistance - were more likely to adopt recommended infant care behaviors such as exclusive breastfeeding, timely immunization, proper hygiene, and responsive caregiving. Postnatal" refers to the period after childbirth, typically focusing on the health and recovery of the mother and baby.

It encompasses physical, emotional, and psychological changes that occur following delivery (Ohoka et al 2022). Postnatal care includes monitoring the well-being of the mother as her body heals, managing any complications, and ensuring the newborn's health and development. The postnatal period is usually considered to last up to six weeks, but care and attention continue beyond that time, especially for mothers and babies who may need additional support (Cindy2021). Psychosocial support encompasses emotional, informational, and instrumental aid that women receive from healthcare providers, family members, and peers during labour and after delivery. This support can be provided in various forms, including emotional reassurance, encouragement, advice on coping strategies, and assistance with practical tasks (Alade. (2024). Psychosocial support during labor refers to the emotional, informational, and social support women receive to help them cope with the stresses and challenges of labor. This support is typically provided by partners, family members, doulas, midwives, or other healthcare professionals (Linda and Nguyen, 2022; Barry 2023)

Postnatal mothers receive various forms of psychosocial support during labor and after delivery, which significantly influence their birth experiences and postpartum adjustment. As earlier shown, these supports can be categorized into **emotional, informational, instrumental, and companionship support**, with sources ranging from family members to healthcare professionals. Emotional support emerged as one of the most critical components during labor and postpartum. Women often reported that reassurance, empathy, and a calm presence were vital in reducing their anxiety and fear during labor. Partners, mothers, and midwives were identified as primary sources of emotional support (Bohren et al 2024). According to Alade. (2024), continuous emotional support during labor is associated with a decreased need for medical interventions and increased maternal satisfaction. Receiving timely and accurate information helped women feel in control and reduced uncertainty, Bohren et al. (2024) noted that women who receive clear and consistent communication during childbirth experience greater satisfaction and reduced feelings of helplessness. Women who experienced continuous, compassionate care from midwives, nurses, generally reported high satisfaction with their care. The availability of a consistent support person, whether a healthcare provider or a family member, contributed positively to their perceptions of adequacy

Lisabi et al. (2023) emphasized that the lack of postpartum psychosocial support, especially informational and emotional, is a key predictor of postnatal depression and maternal stress. He further stressed that many mothers felt a decline in psychosocial support after discharge from health facilities. While some reported strong support systems at home, others—particularly first-time mothers or those with limited family support—described feelings of isolation, anxiety, and being overwhelmed. This underscores the critical role that psychosocial support plays in facilitating positive maternal mental health outcomes during the vulnerable postpartum period. Given the complex challenges faced by postnatal mothers, integrating structured psychosocial support services into routine maternal healthcare is essential

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Support Theory

Social Support Theory, as a formalized concept, was **proposed and developed** primarily by **Cohen and Wills in 1985**. **Social Support Theory** is a framework used to understand how relationships with others can provide emotional, practical, and informational resources that help individuals cope with stress, improve mental health, and achieve overall well-being. The theory emphasizes that the social networks and relationships people have - whether with family, friends, colleagues, or community - play a critical role in influencing their ability to manage challenges and thrive in life. Social Support Theory posits that the quality and quantity of social support a person receives can influence their ability to

cope with. This theory is most widely recognized formulation of Social Support Theory. They introduced the framework which suggests that social support can protect individuals from the negative effects of stress by acting as a buffer. According to this hypothesis, people who receive adequate social support are better able to cope with stressors, thus reducing their risk of negative mental health outcomes such as depression and anxiety stress, improve mental health, and enhance physical well-being. Social support helps individuals manage stress by providing resources that assist in coping with stressful life events. The support can come in different forms, such as **emotional, informational, instrumental, and appraisal support**. When individuals are under stress, their social networks can offer help that alleviates some of the burdens.

A central tenet of Social Support Theory is the **buffering hypothesis**, which suggests that **social support acts as a buffer or protective factor** against the harmful effects of stress. In other words, when individuals experience stressful situations (illness, financial strain, bereavement), having strong social support systems can reduce the negative psychological and physical consequences, such as depression, anxiety, and physical illness. For example, emotional support from loved ones can help an individual feel less overwhelmed during stressful life events, which may decrease the physiological stress response and improve overall resilience. In addition to its buffering role during times of stress, social support has a **main effect** on well-being. This suggests that having a strong social network **improves health and well-being even in the absence of stress**. Positive social connections lead to feelings of belonging, security, and self-worth, which can enhance overall life satisfaction and health outcomes (Rogbitan 2021).

Applying social support theory to this study, the Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how psychosocial support from healthcare providers, family members, and peers affects women's experiences and outcomes during and after childbirth. Emotional support, expressed through empathy, reassurance, and active listening, can help reduce stress and foster feelings of safety. Postnatal mothers who perceive high levels of emotional support may report greater emotional stability, reduced postpartum depression, and higher satisfaction with their birthing experience.

Labor and post-delivery periods are often accompanied by uncertainty regarding pain management, newborn care, and physical recovery. Informational support, such as guidance from healthcare providers and family members, empowers mothers with knowledge to make informed decisions. This perceived support can increase mothers' confidence in their parenting skills and adherence to recommended health practices, improving maternal and infant outcomes. Instrumental support involves tangible aid such as assistance with household tasks, infant care, or transportation to follow-up appointments. For postnatal mothers, this support alleviates physical and logistical burdens, enabling rest and recovery. Social Support Theory emphasizes that such practical help enhances mothers' capacity to focus on healing and bonding with their newborn.

3. METHODS

This study adopted cross sectional descriptive survey research design. This design was chosen due to its ability to efficiently collect data from a large sample size, providing generalizable findings. A survey design allows for the measurement of multiple variables and their relationships, aligning with the objectives of this study to explore various aspects of psychosocial support and maternal well-being. The target population for this study included postnatal mothers who had recently delivered their babies at the selected health centers within the Local Government Areas (LGAs). The inclusive criteria involve chosen women who have delivered within the past **six weeks** (postpartum period). This time frame is chosen because it captures the immediate postnatal period when mothers are still adjusting to the

demands of motherhood and may still be receiving healthcare services at the selected health centre. Mothers who have received some form of **psychosocial support** during labor and after delivery, whether from healthcare providers, family members, or peer support groups. Multi-Stage sampling technique was employed to select study participants. Multi-Stage sampling technique is a step by step process of selecting samples from huge population. Participants were drawn from both postnatal wards and clinics. Sample size was 220 determined using the minimum sample size formula for studying simple proportions developed by Cochranes (2017). Questionnaire was used to elicit information on the socio-demographic characteristics and interphase between **psychosocial support**. Questions on **psychosocial support** were centered on emotional support, physical support, information provided, involvement of family members, communication with healthcare providers, and presence of support systems such as counseling or support groups.

The survey uses a **Likert scale** (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree) to allow respondents to express the level of agreement with statements regarding the quality and impact of psychosocial support. The questionnaire was administered to postnatal mothers within 6-12 weeks postpartum at the selected health centers. To ensure clarity and avoid bias, trained field assistants was responsible for distributing and assisting mothers in filling out the questionnaires if necessary. This was also ensure that participants understand the questions. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that they are aware of their rights to confidentiality and voluntary participation

Data were analyzed using **descriptive statistics** to summarize participant characteristics, and experience of **psychosocial support and emotional wellbeing**. To examine the relationships between lifestyle factors and hypertension management, **inferential statistics** were employed specifically **correlation analysis** (Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC)) to determine the strength and direction of associations. Additionally, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was also employed, showing the effect of lifestyle factors on hypertension management.

4. FINDINGS

Research Question 1: What are the types of psychosocial support provided to postnatal mothers during labor and after delivery in selected health centers in Ovia North Local Government?

Table:1 Descriptive Analysis of Responses to items on Research question 1

SN	Items	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	During labor and after delivery, postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government receive emotional support from healthcare providers and family members	220	1	5	2.14	.78	Agree
2.	Postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government receive informational support through educational materials and guidance provided by healthcare professionals	220	1	5	2.48	1.07	Agree

3.	During labor and after delivery, postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government receive Practical Support During and After Delivery	220	1	5	2.01	1.02	Agree
4.	During labor and after delivery, postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government receive Companionship and Social support	220	1	5	1.95	.94	Agree
	Grand mean response						

Scoring: 1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= strongly disagree 4= disagree 5 undecided

Criterion mean: 2.5. Decision rule: Response mean > 2.5 imply not in agreement with the item response mean <2.5 imply agreement with the item. <2.5

Table 1 above shows a response mean value of 2.14 to item1 and this implied that postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government agree that emotional support is one of psychosocial support provided by healthcare providers and family members;

Item 2 with a mean response value of 2.48 implied that postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government agree that informational support through educational materials and guidance is one of psychosocial support provided by provided by healthcare professionals>Items 3with a mean response value of 2.02 implied that, postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government agree that practical support during and after delivery is one of psychosocial support provided by provided by healthcare professionals family members

Items 4,with a mean response value of 1.95implied postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government agree that companionship and social support is one of psychosocial support provided by provided by healthcare professionals family members.From this analysis, it is clear that postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government were provided with diverse psychosocial support ranging from emotional support, informational support through educational materials and guidance, practical support, as well as companionship and social support.

Research Question 2: How postnatal mothers do perceive the adequacy and quality of psychosocial support provided during labor and postpartum.

Table 2: Postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government perception of the adequacy and quality of psychosocial support provided during labor and postpartum

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	SA	75	34.0
	A	47	21.3
	SD	32	14.5
	D	43	19.5
	U	23	10.4
	Total	220	100.0

Table.2 shows the responses of postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government regarding their perception of **the** adequacy and quality of psychosocial support provided during labor and postpartum. The data reveal that a 34.0% of the of respondents strongly agreed (SA) that of psychosocial support provided during labor and postpartum are of good quality and they are adequate in enhancing their ability to care for their infants effectively. Additionally,21.3% of the of respondents agreed (A) that good quality and they are adequate in enhancing their ability to care for their infants effectively.

These findings underscore the perceived importance of psychosocial support services in empowering postnatal mothers to navigate the challenges of infant care more effectively, thereby promoting positive maternal-infant interactions and infant well-being. It also indicates that psychosocial support contributes to their effectiveness in caring for their infants. Conversely, a notable portion of respondents expressed strong disagreement (SD) or disagreement (D) with the statement constituting 14.5. % and 19.5% of the responses, respectively. These divergent perspectives may be as a result of varying experiences or interpretations among postnatal mothers regarding how quality and adequate is psychosocial support provided during labor and postpartum are efficient and effective in enhancing their ability to care for their infants effectively.

Moreover, a smaller percentage of respondents (10.4%) expressed uncertainty (U) regarding the perceived relationship between psychosocial support and their ability to care for their infants effectively. This uncertainty highlights the complexity of assessing the multifaceted influences of psychosocial support interventions on maternal caregiving practices.

Research Question 3: How do postnatal mothers perceived emotional and psychological benefits of psychosocial support?

Table.3: Postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government perceive that psychosocial support positively influences their emotional well-being.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	SA	81	36.8
	A	52	23.6
	SD	40	18.1
	D	34	15.5
	U	13	5.9
	Total	220	100.0

Table.3 illustrates the responses of postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government regarding how psychosocial support positively influences their emotional well-being. There is the belief in the enhancement of their emotional well-being through psychosocial support. The data shows that a considerable number of respondents strongly agreed (SA) with this statement, comprising 38.8 % of the total responses. Also, a significant percentage of participants agreed (A) that psychosocial support positively influences their emotional well-being, accounting for 23.6% of the responses. When mothers agreed to positive implication of psychosocial support to his well-being, it can make her healthier, and be able to take care of her infant effectively, thereby promoting positive maternal-infant interactions and infant well-being.

Conversely, a notable number of respondents expressed strong disagreement (SD) or disagreement (D) with the statement, which are 18.1 and 15.5 respectively. These divergent perspectives may indicate varying experiences or interpretations among postnatal mothers regarding the impact of psychosocial support on their emotional well-being.

However, a smaller percentage of respondents (5.9%) expressed uncertainty (U) regarding the perceived relationship between psychosocial support and their emotional well-being. This uncertainty highlights the complexity of assessing the multifaceted influences of psychosocial support interventions on maternal emotional well-being. Overall, these results emphasize the importance of further exploring the factors influencing postnatal mothers' perceptions of the role of psychosocial support in their emotional well-

being and addressing any barriers or misconceptions to optimize maternal-infant health outcomes in Ovia North Local Government.

Research Question 4: What are the potential challenges or barriers in accessing psychosocial support in the selected health centers.

Table 4: Postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local face barriers when accessing psychosocial support services

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	SA	75	34.0
	A	47	21.3
	SD	32	14.5
	D	43	19.5
	U	23	10.4
	Total	220	100.0

Table 4 illustrates the responses of postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government regarding barriers and challenges in accessing psychosocial support services. The above data reveal that a significant majority of respondents strongly agreed (SA) with the statement constituting 34.0% of the total responses. This is an indication that postnatal mothers face financial constraints and lack of transportation when accessing psychosocial support services. Moreover, an appreciable proportion of respondents comprising 21.3% of the responses agreed (A) with the statement. This suggests a consensus among a considerable segment of postnatal mothers regarding the barriers and challenges they face in accessing psychosocial support services. In addition, a smaller percentage of respondents expressed strong disagreement (SD) or disagreement (D) with the statement, accounting for 14.5% and 19.5% of the responses, respectively. These divergent perspectives may reflect varying degrees of awareness or experiences regarding the barriers and challenges they face in accessing psychosocial support services.

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant association between the types of psychosocial support received and maternal well-being among postnatal mothers in selected health centers in Ovia North Local Government

Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the relationship between the types of psychosocial support received and maternal well-being among postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	n	r	p-value	Remarks
Psychosocial support received	48.2917	20.62853	220	.496*	.001	Sig.
Maternal well-being	32.9167	4.62471				

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.3.1 showed the findings of a Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis investigating the relationship between psychosocial supports received and maternal well-being of postnatal mothers in selected health centers in Ovia North Local Government. The table showed that there is a statistical significant relationship between Psychosocial support received and maternal well-being of postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government ($r = .496$, $n=220$, $p (.001) < .05$). Hence, psychosocial support received influenced/enhanced the maternal well-being of postnatal mothers in selected health centers in Ovia North Local Government. The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant association between psychosocial supports received and postnatal mothers infant care practices.

Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the relationship between psychosocial supports received and postnatal mothers infant care practices.

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	n	r	p-value	Remarks
Psychosocial supports received	21.7185	5.88515	220	.441*	.001	Sig.
Postnatal mothers infant care practices	22.9185	4.51044				

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 showed the findings of a Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis investigating the relationship between psychosocial supports received and postnatal mothers infant care practices in Ovia North Local Government of Edo State. The table showed that there is a statistical significant relationship between psychosocial supports received and postnatal mothers infant care practices ($r = .441$, $n=135$, $p (.001) < .05$). Hence psychosocial supports received influences postnatal mothers infant care practices in the study. The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between socioeconomic factors such as income and education level, on the accessibility of psychosocial support services for postnatal mothers.

Table 7 Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the relationship between relationships between socioeconomic factors, on the accessibility of psychosocial support services for postnatal mothers.

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	n	r	p-value	Remarks
Socioeconomic factors	28.1852	5.51835	220	.365*	.001	Sig.
Accessibility of psychosocial support services	22.9185	4.51044				

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 showed the findings of a Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis investigating the relationship between socioeconomic factors, and accessibility of psychosocial support services among postnatal mothers in Ovia North Local Government. The table showed that there is no statistically significant relationship between attitude and practices to family planning ($r = .365$, $n = 135$, $p (.001) < .05$). Hence, socioeconomic factors do not significantly influenced accessibility of psychosocial support services. The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study reveal that postnatal mothers in the study area receive various forms of psychosocial support during labor and after delivery, which significantly influence their birth experiences and postpartum adjustment. As earlier shown, these supports can be categorized into **emotional, informational, instrumental, and companionship support**, with sources ranging from family members to healthcare professionals. Emotional support emerged as one of the most critical components during labor and postpartum. Women often reported that reassurance, empathy, and a calm presence were vital in reducing their anxiety and fear during labor. Partners, mothers, and midwives were identified as primary sources of emotional support. This aligns with previous studies that emphasize the role of continuous emotional presence in improving maternal outcomes. According to Alade. (2024), continuous emotional support during labor is associated with a decreased need for medical interventions and increased maternal satisfaction.

Many women valued informational support, particularly from healthcare providers such as midwives and nurses. This included explanations about labor progression, pain management options, and newborn care advice postpartum. Receiving timely and accurate information helped women feel in control and reduced uncertainty, a finding consistent with previous research. A study by Bohren et al. (2024) noted that women who receive clear and consistent communication during childbirth experience greater satisfaction and reduced feelings of helplessness

Women who experienced continuous, compassionate care from midwives, nurses, generally reported high satisfaction with their care. The availability of a consistent support person, whether a healthcare provider or a family member, contributed positively to their perceptions of adequacy. This aligns with the findings of Bohren et al. (2024), who reported that women receiving continuous support during childbirth were more likely to have positive experiences and report a sense of empowerment and emotional safety. Postnatally, many mothers felt a decline in psychosocial support after discharge from health facilities. While some reported strong support systems at home, others—particularly first-time mothers or those with limited family support—described feelings of isolation, anxiety, and being overwhelmed. Lisabi et al. (2023) emphasized that the lack of postpartum psychosocial support, especially informational and emotional, is a key predictor of postnatal depression and maternal stress.

Community health workers and postpartum follow-up services were cited by some mothers as helpful sources of support, although their availability varied. This point to a gap in continuity of care, where postpartum psychosocial support is often less prioritized compared to intrapartum support. Many mothers reported that high patient-to-provider ratios resulted in fragmented care and limited opportunities for individualized psychosocial support. This finding aligns with Gadosi et al. (2021), who identified understaffing and resource constraints in low- and middle-income countries as major obstacles to providing effective psychosocial care during childbirth. Additionally, institutional policies sometimes restrict the presence of companions during labor, which mothers viewed as a barrier to receiving continuous emotional and companionship support. Bohren et al. (2024) highlight

how the absence of birth companions negatively affects women's birth experiences and emotional well-being.

Some women identified personal barriers such as lack of awareness about available psychosocial services or mistrust of healthcare providers. Misinformation, previous negative experiences, or fear of judgment may discourage women from seeking support. According to Ngai. & Chai (2022), low health literacy and poor communication from providers exacerbate these challenges, resulting in unmet psychosocial needs. Furthermore, physical exhaustion, pain, and the demands of newborn care can reduce mothers' capacity to actively seek support, especially when services require travel or additional effort. These practical constraints often limit engagement with postpartum care, as supported by findings from Oloketuyi (2024).

The findings of this study demonstrate a significant association between the types of psychosocial support received during the perinatal period and the overall maternal well-being among postnatal mothers. Different forms of psychosocial support - emotional, informational, instrumental, and companionship - were found to have distinct and complementary effects on various dimensions of maternal well-being, including emotional stability, physical recovery, and maternal confidence. The findings suggest that while each type of psychosocial support independently contributes to maternal well-being, their combined presence creates a synergistic effect that maximizes positive outcomes. Mothers receiving a comprehensive package of emotional, informational, instrumental, and companionship support reported the highest levels of well-being, consistent with holistic care models promoted by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2024).

The findings of this study reveal a significant association between the psychosocial support received by postnatal mothers and their infant care practices. Mothers who reported receiving robust psychosocial support—emotional encouragement, informational guidance, and practical assistance - were more likely to adopt recommended infant care behaviors such as exclusive breastfeeding, timely immunization, proper hygiene, and responsive caregiving. This is consistent with the findings of Lisabi et al. (2023), who noted that maternal self-efficacy, bolstered by psychosocial support, is a key determinant of successful infant care practices, including breastfeeding and safe sleeping arrangements. Similar findings were reported by Ohoka et al. (2022), who highlighted that maternal knowledge, reinforced by supportive counseling, directly influences infant care quality and health outcomes. The findings of this study indicate that socioeconomic factors such as income level and educational attainment do not have a significant association with the accessibility of psychosocial support services among postnatal mothers. This suggests that barriers to accessing psychosocial support transcend traditional socioeconomic divisions and may be influenced more by other factors such as health system structures, cultural norms, or awareness levels.

Contrary to some expectations that higher income or education would facilitate better access to health services, including psychosocial support, this study found no statistically significant differences among mothers from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. This finding aligns with research by Jegede. (2024), who reported that while socioeconomic status influences many aspects of maternal health, access to psychosocial support services was often determined by factors such as service availability and outreach efforts rather than income or education alone. Similarly, a study by Chukwuma & Osage (2023). observed that psychosocial support during the postpartum period was inconsistently related to socioeconomic status, with some lower-income mothers accessing support through community or informal networks, while some higher-income mothers experienced gaps due to lack of tailored or culturally appropriate services.

6. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that psychosocial support significantly impacts the psychological and emotional well-being of postnatal mothers attending selected health centers in Ovia North Local Government of Edo State. Mothers who received comprehensive psychosocial support, including emotional encouragement, informational guidance, and practical assistance, demonstrated better coping mechanisms, reduced symptoms of postpartum depression and anxiety, and improved overall emotional health. This underscores the critical role that psychosocial support plays in facilitating positive maternal mental health outcomes during the vulnerable postpartum period.

Given the complex challenges faced by postnatal mothers, integrating structured psychosocial support services into routine maternal healthcare is essential. Health centers should prioritize training healthcare providers to deliver empathetic, continuous, and culturally sensitive support, while also fostering community and family involvement to enhance support networks. Such interventions can contribute to healthier postpartum recovery, greater maternal satisfaction, and improved mother-infant bonding, ultimately promoting better long-term outcomes for both mothers and their children in the region.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Implementation of targeted interventions to address barriers to access, the integration of psychosocial support into routine maternal healthcare services, and the provision of education and awareness programs to enhance the understanding of the benefits of psychosocial support among stakeholders.
- ii. Policymakers should develop guidelines that mandate the provision of psychosocial support as part of routine postnatal care and allocate adequate resources to support the implementation of these services, particularly in underserved and resource-limited settings.
- iii. Implement regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of psychosocial support interventions on maternal psychological and emotional well-being, allowing for data-driven improvements and tailoring of services to meet mothers' needs

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