

## The Relationship Between Family Communication and the Tendency of Postpartum Depression Reviewed from the Big Five Personality Traits in Postpartum Mothers

Sianawati Darmawan, IGAA Noviekayati, Dyan Evita Santi  
Fakultas Psikologi Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya

### ABSTRACT

The postpartum period is a transitional phase that can lead to a life crisis and increase the likelihood of postpartum depression (PPD) in some mothers. Symptoms include sadness, irritability, disturbed appetite, insomnia, and exhaustion. Family support, especially through communication, can help reduce the risk of PPD. Additionally, an individual's personality plays a role in coping with postpartum challenges, as explained by the Big Five Personality Traits Theory, which classifies personality into five dimensions: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness. This study aims to examine the relationship between family communication, the Big Five traits, and the tendency for PPD. A quantitative correlational approach was used, with questionnaires distributed to 60 subjects from four Midwifery Independent Practices. The results showed a significant negative correlation between family communication and the tendency for postpartum depression ( $t = -5.337$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This indicates that better family communication is associated with a lower likelihood of PPD. Additionally, significant differences were found in the Big Five dimensions in relation to PPD tendencies, with extraversion ( $t = -3.779$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and agreeableness showing strong correlations.

**Keywords:** *Postpartum depression tendency, Family communication, Big Five personality*

#### Corresponding author

**Name:** Sianawati Darmawan

**Email:** [darmawansianawati@gmail.com](mailto:darmawansianawati@gmail.com)

## INTRODUCTION

The birth of a child is a moment filled with happiness and hope for many parents and families. However, behind this happiness, some mothers face significant challenges that are not always visible to others. One of these challenges occurs during the postpartum period, which, according to Risa et al. (Annisa & Omiati, 2023), is a phase of recovery following childbirth, where the body returns to its pre-pregnancy state. Annisa & Omiati (2023) further note that postpartum itself is a transitional phase that can lead to a life crisis, as it is marked by physical and psychological changes in the mother. For some mothers who struggle to adjust to this new phase, there is a risk of experiencing mood changes that can affect the baby, the family, or themselves.

A mother's inability to adjust after childbirth is referred to as postpartum blues (Rahmadani, Karyono & Dewi, 2010), a condition that typically resolves on its own within

three to five days. On the other hand, if these symptoms persist for more than four weeks, there is a possibility that the mother may be experiencing postpartum depression (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Depression itself is a condition that affects emotions, thoughts, and physical health (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). According to Reeder (Chanora & Endang, 2022), a mother who experiences postpartum depression may feel sad, easily irritable, cry without reason, lose appetite, suffer from insomnia, fatigue, difficulty engaging in activities, feel neglected, engage in self-blaming, show a lack of concern for her baby, and feel incapable of fulfilling her role as a mother. Mothers who are at risk of experiencing postpartum depression require extra attention, as if left untreated, this condition can have effects ranging from mild to severe. Among the most dangerous consequences are the emergence of thoughts of self-harm, even suicide, as well as harming others, including the baby (Munisah, et al., 2021).

According to data from the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) in 2024, 57% of mothers in Indonesia experience symptoms of baby blues, and based on data from the Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS), 27% experience postpartum depression. In Indonesia, cases of mothers who struggle to adjust during the postpartum phase can escalate into other, more dangerous psychological disorders. Often, the condition of mothers with a tendency toward postpartum depression goes unnoticed by their family or the people around them. This is because mothers with this condition tend to remain silent and suppress their feelings, sometimes leading to actions that can endanger the lives of both the mother and the baby. One example of the impact of postpartum depression occurred in South Jakarta in 2023, where a mother threw her three-month-old baby into a bucket of water, recorded the incident while laughing, and then shared the footage. Upon further investigation, it was found that the mother was suffering from postpartum depression, but neither her husband nor her family knew about it because she never complained about anything. In East Java, the incidence of postpartum depression among mothers after childbirth is around 50%. According to data from the East Java Health Office in 2021, in Wonocolo District, 66% of mothers experienced postpartum depression (East Java Provincial Health Office, 2021).

Many factors can contribute to a mother's tendency to experience postpartum depression, both internal and external. As stated by Irawati & Yuliani (Tikka M, et al. 2022), factors that can lead to postpartum depression include age, the mother's readiness for childbirth, and the postpartum process. In addition, psychological factors, especially environmental support, play a significant role, particularly from the husband. Sometimes, the environment focuses more on the newborn baby than on the condition of the mother who has just given birth, even though the mother also needs attention due to the painful childbirth process. Physical factors can also contribute to postpartum depression, such as exhaustion from taking care of the baby, breastfeeding, and the loss of sleep at night while attending to the baby.

On the other hand, one of the most significant factors that can help minimize the tendency for postpartum depression is psychological support, particularly the support a mother receives after childbirth. Family support plays a crucial role in helping a mother

navigate the postpartum period, and one of the key ways this support is provided is through family communication. Family communication can be relied upon by mothers to lighten their burdens and help them get through the postpartum phase more quickly. According to Jamaludin & Sartika (Tikka M, et al. 2022), family communication refers to the ability to discuss everything openly within the family, both the pleasant and unpleasant aspects. Jamaludin & Sartika (Tikka M, et al. 2022) also add that family communication includes words, body language, voice intonation, and actions, all of which have meaning and purpose and help to foster understanding.

Family communication also follows certain patterns that are not simple. Katchleen Galvin (Novianti, 2013) discusses family communication patterns on her website, explaining that communication patterns are formed by the perceptions of the communicators and their reactions to one another. According to Tikka M, et al. (2022), there are several factors that can influence family communication, including self-image and the image of others; psychological atmosphere (related to emotions); physical environment (family norms, culture); parenting style (authoritarian, democratic); language used; and age differences. These factors can affect whether family communication related to postpartum depression in mothers after childbirth is effective or not. Additionally, when good communication is established, the mother can express her feelings, as family relationships are typically emotionally close, with members knowing each other well. This allows the family to provide empathy and a positive attitude toward the mother experiencing postpartum depression symptoms (Ade & Rita, 2023). According to Devito (Ade & Rita, 2023), communication can build thought patterns and change a person's behavior to reach a mutual agreement that benefits all parties involved.

In addition to the aspect of family communication, it is known that postpartum depression is a form of depression closely related to how an individual faces the problems they encounter. A person's personality affects how well they cope with the issues they face (Taylor & Stanton, 2006). When someone struggles with coping in an ineffective way over a prolonged period, it can develop into more serious psychological problems. Certain personality traits are associated with psychological issues, and thus, each personality trait plays a different role in the tendency for postpartum depression. Personality plays an important role in the emergence of depression and also influences the severity of the depression an individual experiences. There are several types of personality models, one of which is the Big Five Personality Traits Theory proposed by Costa and McCrae (1995). It explains that there are various cognitive, emotional, and behavioral tendencies grouped into five domains: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness.

Each dimension of the Big Five Personality traits plays its own role in the tendency toward postpartum depression, so each dimension has a different level of impact when experiencing postpartum depression. In a study conducted by Berkley & Burns (2017), it was found that neuroticism is a significant predictor of postpartum depression. This is because individuals with a neurotic personality type tend to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and anger, making them more vulnerable to mood disorders,

including postpartum depression, as they are more easily overwhelmed and distressed by changes in life. This aligns with the view of Saudina (2014), who stated that several studies have focused on the neuroticism personality trait. According to Lee et al. (Saudina, 2014), this personality trait is associated with inefficient stress coping abilities and poorer adaptation during childbirth and the postpartum period.

On the other hand, some researchers argue that extraversion, agreeableness, and openness are positive personality traits in coping with life's changes. As stated by Dunkley & Blankstein (2019), agreeableness is positively related to psychological well-being because it tends to foster harmonious and supportive relationships, which can protect individuals from the tendency toward postpartum depression. Similarly, extraversion tends to seek social support and engage in activities that improve mood. Yim et al. (2015) stated that the personality type of openness is characterized by a tendency to be receptive to new ideas, imagination, and experiences. However, individuals who are open to experiences are also more sensitive to emotions. This emotional sensitivity can make individuals with an openness personality type more difficult to adapt, thus increasing their likelihood of experiencing postpartum depression due to the challenges of adjusting to life changes.

Another personality type in the Big Five Personality traits discussed by Yim et al. (2015) in relation to the tendency for postpartum depression is conscientiousness. Individuals with this personality type are less likely to experience postpartum depression, as they tend to be better at managing stress and handling the challenges of their new role as a mother. Moreover, the conscientiousness personality type, according to Dunkley & Blankstein (2019), also focuses on goals and responsibilities, enabling them to adapt more effectively to the role of motherhood.

The explanation above is also supported by other studies, such as the research by Meritxell P, et al. (2022), which explains that the personality trait of neuroticism has a positive correlation with postpartum depression. This means that mothers with high neuroticism scores tend to be more vulnerable to postpartum depression. A study conducted by Febri & Pipit (2020) also showed that 82.4% of mothers with extraversion, openness to experience, and agreeableness personalities felt happy about the birth of their child and did not show high depression scores. In contrast, 17.6% of mothers with neuroticism and conscientiousness personalities felt anxious and confused about taking care of their babies, leading to higher depression scores. However, mothers with conscientiousness personality traits tend to experience milder depression, as they are more prepared to face the challenges. Furthermore, the study by Verkerk et al. (Iliadis, et al., 2015) explains that lower extraversion scores, which indicate dependence, risk avoidance, perfectionism, and self-criticism, are also associated with affective disorders that can trigger postpartum depression symptoms.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that 27% of mothers experience postpartum depression, while 54% are at risk of developing postpartum depression, which is often not recognized by the family or the surrounding environment after childbirth. This lack of awareness is also influenced by the family communication patterns applied within the family. Additionally, the tendency for postpartum depression

can be affected by the mother's personality in adapting to conditions that cause stress. Therefore, the researcher aims to investigate whether there is a relationship between family communication and the tendency for postpartum depression as viewed through the lens of the Big Five Personality traits in mothers after childbirth. In this regard, mothers who are preparing for childbirth are expected to be aware of the vulnerability of each personality trait to postpartum depression and to improve family communication to effectively prevent postpartum depression after giving birth.

## METHOD

The subjects of this study were postpartum mothers who had children aged 1 month to 12 months. The population used in this study was 60 people in the data available in the city of Surabaya. The sampling technique in determining the sample of this study was total sampling, meaning that all samples used were the same as the population. The reason for choosing this sampling technique according to the figures was because the population was less than 100 or relatively small, the entire population was used as a research sample so that the sample used was 60 people. For data analysis, the researcher used correlation analysis with the help of the SPSS program.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### RESEARCH RESULT

**Table 1. Simultaneous Regression Analysis Results - Results of Simultaneous Regression Analysis of Family Communication with Postpartum Depression**

<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Keterangan</b>
8.480	0.000	Signifikan ( $p < 0,05$ )

*Source: SPSS output version 25.0*

The simultaneous regression analysis is aimed at testing the first research hypothesis, which is the relationship between family communication and the tendency for postpartum depression. The results of the simultaneous regression analysis show an F coefficient of 8.480 with a p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating statistical significance. These results suggest that there is a significant correlation between family communication and the tendency for postpartum depression (as shown in Table 1).

**Table 2. Simultaneous Regression Analysis Results- Results of Simultaneous Regression Analysis of Big Five Personality with Postpartum Depression**

<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Keterangan</b>
8.480	0.000	Signifikan ( $p < 0,05$ )

*Source: SPSS output version 25.0*

The simultaneous regression analysis test between the Big Five Personality traits and the tendency for postpartum depression shows an F coefficient of 4.542 with a p-value of 0.002 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating statistical significance. These results suggest that there is a significant correlation between the Big Five Personality traits and the tendency for postpartum depression (as shown in Table 2).

**Table 3. Regression Analysis Results - Results of Regression Analysis of Family Communication with Postpartum Depression**

Variabel	t	p	Keterangan
<i>Postpartum Depression – Family Communication</i>	-5.337	0.000	Signifikan (p<0,05)

Source: SPSS output version 25.0

The partial regression analysis aims to test the hypothesis in the study, which is the relationship between family communication and the tendency for postpartum depression. The results of the regression analysis show a t coefficient of -5.337 with a p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating a significant negative correlation between family communication and the tendency for postpartum depression. These results suggest that the first research hypothesis is accepted, with the assumption that higher family communication is associated with a lower tendency for postpartum depression.

**Table 4. Regression Analysis Results - Results of Regression Analysis of Big Five Personality with Postpartum Depression**

Variabel	t	p	Keterangan
<i>Postpartum Depression – Extraversion</i>	-3.779	0.000	Signifikan (p<0,05)
<i>Postpartum Depression – Agreeableness</i>	-1.379	0.000	Signifikan (p<0,05)
<i>Postpartum Depression – Openness</i>	1.597	0.001	Signifikan (p<0,05)
<i>Postpartum Depression – Conscientiousness</i>	0.551	0.004	Signifikan (p<0,05)
<i>Postpartum Depression – Neuroticism</i>	3.001	0.004	Signifikan (p<0,05)

Source: SPSS output version 25.0

Regression analysis was also conducted to test the second hypothesis, which is whether there are differences between each personality type in the Big Five Personality traits and the tendency for postpartum depression. The results of the regression analysis show the following coefficients: Extraversion = -3.779 with  $p = 0.000$  ( $p < 0.05$ ); Agreeableness = -1.379 with  $p = 0.000$  ( $p < 0.05$ ); Openness = 1.597 with  $p = 0.001$  ( $p < 0.05$ ); Conscientiousness = 0.551 with  $p = 0.004$  ( $p < 0.05$ ); Neuroticism = 3.001 with  $p = 0.004$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). These results indicate that there are significant differences between each Big Five personality type and the tendency for postpartum depression. These findings support the acceptance of the second research hypothesis, with the assumption that the Extraversion and Agreeableness personality types have a negative correlation, while the Openness, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism personality types have a positive correlation.

Multiple regression analysis yielded two types of effective contributions: the combined effective contribution of both independent variables to the dependent variable and the individual effective contribution of each independent variable to the dependent

variable. The effective contribution of the first independent variable, family communication, to the tendency for postpartum depression is  $R^2 = 0.329$ , or about 32.9%. Similarly, the effective contribution of the second independent variable, Big Five Personality, to the tendency for postpartum depression is  $R^2 = 0.296$ , or about 29.6%. Therefore, there is a 37.5% possibility that other factors not included in this study explain the remaining variance.

## **DISCUSSION**

The research conducted shows the acceptance of the first hypothesis, which states that there is a relationship between family communication and the tendency for postpartum depression. This is reflected in a negative relationship, meaning that the higher the family communication in a person, the lower the tendency for postpartum depression. This aligns with the explanation by Ade & Rita (2023), who state that good communication allows the mother to express her feelings, as family relationships are emotionally close and mutually understanding, enabling the family to offer empathy and a positive attitude toward the mother experiencing postpartum depression symptoms. On the other hand, psychological factors such as family support can help a mother through the postpartum period, one of which is family communication. Family communication becomes a reliable tool for the mother in alleviating the burden of going through the postpartum period more quickly. According to Jamaludin & Sartika (Tikka M, et al., 2022), family communication can be defined as the willingness to openly discuss everything within the family, both pleasant and unpleasant matters.

Family communication has been proven to be one of the factors that can help minimize or even become a predictor of the emergence of postpartum depression tendencies in mothers after childbirth. This is in line with research conducted by Widyaningtyas (2019), who states that mothers experiencing baby blues syndrome often feel sadness, anxiety, feelings of being unappreciated, and tend to bottle up their emotions due to concerns about the stigma from those around them. Support from the family, which can act as listeners and understand the mother's condition during the baby blues phase after childbirth, can help minimize the occurrence of postpartum depression.

Mothers with tendencies toward postpartum depression, according to Reeder (Chanora & Endang, 2022), will experience feelings of sadness, irritability, crying without reason, loss of appetite, insomnia, fatigue, difficulty with activities, feeling neglected, and choosing to bottle up their emotions to avoid stigma from others. This aligns with the research conducted by Yusniawati & Ganiem (2024), which explains that communication during the baby blues syndrome period involves more self-disclosure from the mother, such as honestly acknowledging that she is experiencing a psychological disorder known as baby blues or the tendency for postpartum depression. However, not all mothers are able to express this condition due to limited knowledge and the stigma in society regarding baby blues. Therefore, it is important for postpartum mothers to initiate communication with their family, especially their husbands, and ask for support that aligns with their needs. The

goal of this openness is to influence the husband's understanding and response, both verbally and nonverbally.

Family communication also involves empathy, which can help the mother feel understood by her family or partner. As expressed by Ade & Rita (2023) in their research, empathy plays a crucial role in communication between husband and wife when dealing with baby blues syndrome. This is because a mother experiencing baby blues syndrome is emotionally affected, so it is important for the husband to understand and appreciate the feelings and emotions the wife is going through. When empathy is shown, it can create more open communication and mutual support. Therefore, effective communication can help address baby blues syndrome, with empathy playing a key role in it. Not only empathy but also a positive attitude from the husband is needed to be involved in the baby's care to alleviate baby blues syndrome. Thus, it can be concluded that interpersonal communication between husband and wife experiencing baby blues syndrome after childbirth is vital and requires empathy and a positive attitude to ensure effective communication.

In addition to family communication, a person's personality type influences how well they cope with the problems they face (Taylor & Stanton, 2006). When someone fails to cope properly and this continues over a long period of time, it can develop into a more serious psychological issue. Certain personality traits are linked to psychological problems, and therefore, each personality trait plays a different role in the tendency for postpartum depression. Personality plays an important role in the emergence of depression and affects the severity of the depression a person experiences.

Based on the results of the research conducted, it was also proven that each personality type in the Big Five Personality model shows differences in the tendency to experience postpartum depression. In this study, 60 participants were divided into 23.33% extraversion, 23.33% openness, 23.33% conscientiousness, 16.67% neuroticism, and 13.34% agreeableness. Within each personality category, different correlations were observed, which could affect the likelihood of a mother experiencing postpartum depression after childbirth. As previously explained, each personality type carries distinct characteristics. For instance, extraversion is characterized by being active, talkative, and enjoying social interactions. Therefore, individuals with extraverted traits tend to have a lower likelihood of experiencing postpartum depression, as their extroverted nature allows them to talk about their experiences more openly, and social interactions help them gain support, making it easier to navigate the postpartum period. Similarly, individuals with an agreeableness personality type tend to be friendly, sociable, and caring toward others. Their easy-going nature allows them to share their experiences and receive support from others, as they are able to engage with many people who offer help and encouragement.

The explanation above is supported by the results of the research, which show that certain personality types have a negative correlation with the tendency to experience postpartum depression, namely the extraversion and agreeableness personality types. This indicates that individuals with these personality types have a lower likelihood of experiencing postpartum depression. This is supported by the research of Dunkley & Blankstein (2019), who argued that agreeableness has a positive relationship with

psychological well-being, as individuals with this personality type tend to have harmonious and supportive relationships, which can protect them from the tendency to develop postpartum depression. Similarly, extraversion tends to seek social support and engage in activities that improve mood.

On the other hand, there are personality types with characteristics that may trigger difficulties for mothers in navigating the postpartum period. One such personality type is openness, which is characterized by a willingness to embrace new ideas and experiences. However, this openness to new experiences makes individuals with this personality type more emotionally sensitive. As a result, people with the openness personality type may struggle to adapt to postpartum conditions, which could lead to a tendency toward postpartum depression. Similarly, the conscientiousness personality type, which is characterized by being organized, responsible, and perfectionistic, may face stress during the postpartum period when things do not go as planned, triggering a tendency toward postpartum depression. The neuroticism personality type, with its negative emotions and anxiety, clearly has a higher likelihood of experiencing a tendency toward postpartum depression.

This is reflected in the research results, where personality types that show a positive relationship with the tendency for postpartum depression are openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. These findings suggest that individuals with these personality types have a greater tendency to experience postpartum depression. Berkley & Burns (2017) state that neuroticism is a significant predictor of postpartum depression. This is because individuals with a neuroticism personality type are more likely to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and anger, making them more vulnerable to mood disorders, including postpartum depression, as they tend to be easily anxious and overwhelmed by life changes. Yim et al. (2015) note that individuals with the openness personality type tend to be open to new ideas, imagination, and experiences, but people who are open to experiences are also more emotionally sensitive. This emotional sensitivity makes individuals with the openness personality type more likely to have difficulty adapting, which increases the tendency for postpartum depression, as they struggle to cope with the pressures of life changes.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examines the relationship between family communication, Big Five personality traits, and the tendency for postpartum depression. The postpartum period is a recovery phase after childbirth that can lead to a life crisis due to physical and psychological changes in the mother. Mothers who struggle to adjust are at risk of experiencing mood changes that can affect themselves and their family. If symptoms persist for more than four weeks, the mother may be experiencing postpartum depression, which can impact her emotions, thoughts, and physical health. Contributing factors include environmental support, especially from the husband, as well as physical exhaustion. On the other hand, good family communication can help alleviate the mother's burden and reduce the risk of PPD.

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