

# Assessment of Postpartum Mental Health and Its Determinants Among Women in Karu LGA, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Postpartum mental health disorders (PMHD) continue to be an essential but underappreciated public health concern in Nigeria, where social, biological, and cultural factors interact to influence women's psychological health following childbirth. Despite growing awareness, there is a lack of research evidence integrating these complex determinants in peri-urban settings, such as Karu LGA in Nasarawa State. Therefore, this study aims to determine the prevalence of postpartum mental health challenges among women in Karu LGA, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

**Methodology:** A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 220 postpartum women attending selected primary health care centres in Karu LGA between the 3rd of August and the 2nd of October 2025. A face-to-face interviewer administered a structured questionnaire that included socio-demographic variables and the World Health Organization Self-Reporting Questionnaire-20 (WHO SRQ-20) and adapted questions on awareness, knowledge, coping strategy and determinants of PMHD. Data were analysed using descriptive and bivariate analyses using a binary logistic regression model to identify factors associated with PMHD. Odds ratios with 95% CI were computed, and a p-value of < 0.05 was used to declare statistically significant factors.

**Results:** The mean age of the mothers was  $27.87 \pm 5.81$ . Using a cut-off score of  $\geq 8$ , 82 (37.3%) of the mothers were classified as having probable cases of common mental disorder symptoms. The most frequently endorsed symptoms were frequent headaches (62.3%), getting tired easily (54.5%), and feeling tired all the time (48.2%). The study identified husband's level of education (primary education, OR 0.07, 95% CI 0.0 to 0.93), women's marital status (divorced, OR 0.06, 95% CI 0.01 to 0.641 and widowed, OR 0.06, 95% CI 0.01 to 0.898) and antenatal care attendance (OR 0.37, 95% CI 0.14, 0.95) as significant predictors of maternal emotional distress. 54.5% of the women relied on more family and friend support; sleep disturbances, breastfeeding difficulties, and emotional well-being showed moderate associations with mental distress, while biological stressors like postpartum pain or exhaustion showed a weak association.

**Conclusion and Recommendations:** Overall, PMHD among Karu LGA mothers are influenced by intertwined biological, psychosocial, and cultural factors. Improving maternal psychological outcomes among postpartum mothers requires addressing socioeconomic barriers, incorporating routine mental health screening into maternal care, and bolstering family support.

**Keywords:** Postpartum; Mental Health; Depression

