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**Early Parenting Stress in Professional Working Mothers: The Implications
of Support for Psychological Wellbeing.**

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What do we expect as new parents?



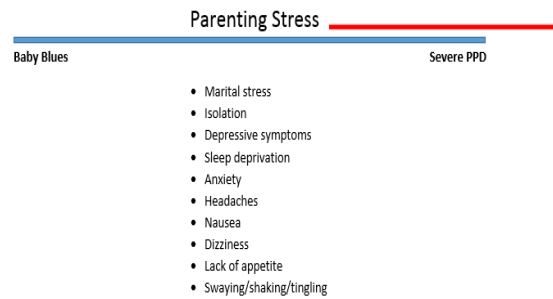
Bilszta, J., Ericksen, J., Buist, A., & Milgrom, J. (2010)
Ussher, J. M. (2004)
Choi, P., Henshaw, C., Baker, S., & Tree, J. (2005)

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Parenting Distress

- Many women do not qualify as diagnostically depressed



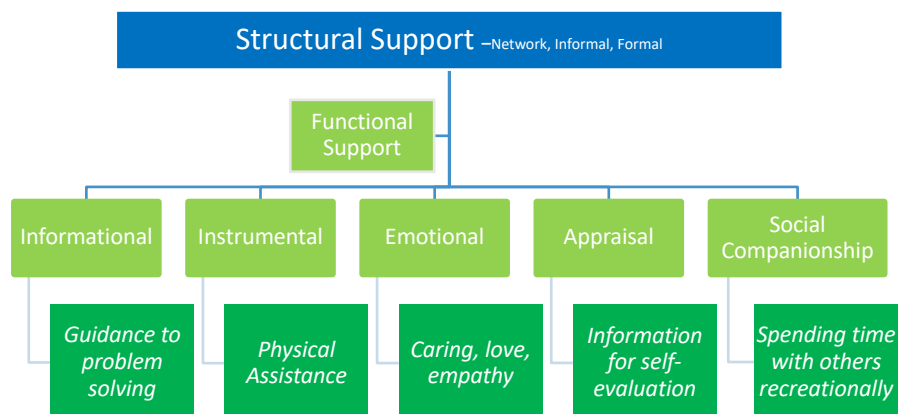
Fisher, J., Wynter, K., & Rowe, H. (2010)
Bilszta, J., Ericksen, J., Buist, A., & Milgrom, J. (2010)

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Social Support

- Existence and Quantity of Social Relationships



Sherbourne & Stewart (1991)
Leahy-Warren, P., McCarthy, G., & Corcoran, P. (2012)

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Sweden

- Similar rates of PPD – approx. 15%
- Similar rates of women in workforce – approx. 50%
- Median age, male to female ratio, urban population %, birth, death, survival rates, number of children per woman,

- 480 Days of parental leave
- VAB (“Vård Av Barn”, caring of children)
- Flexible Work upon return
- 3 months allocated to the father
- Free childcare
- Continuity of care



Massoudi, (2013)
Habel, Feeley, Hayton, Bell, & Zelkowitz, (2015)

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Sweden



[Photographer Johan Bävman](#)

Massoudi, (2013a)
Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid, & Bremberg, (2008)

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Aim & Research Questions

Investigate policies and practices around early parenting in Sweden so as to understand more clearly the experience of women who have high structural support and work in paid employment.

1. What are the causes of stress for working mothers?
2. What are the sources of supports for working mothers?
3. What is it that women feel are missing in terms of support postnatally?

Seierstad and Kirton (2015)
 Emslie and Hunt (2009)
 Cooklin, Canterford, Strazdins, & Nicholson, (2011)
 Choi et al (2005)
 Liss, Schiffrin, & Rizzo, (2013).
 Bilszta et al (2010)

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Method

- 3.5 Months in Sweden 2017
- Participant Observation / Ethnographic Field Work
- Mother and Pregnant
- 30+ Interviews with Industry Professionals and Parents
- Thematic Analysis
- Analysing of Field Notes



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Preliminary Results In Terms of Support

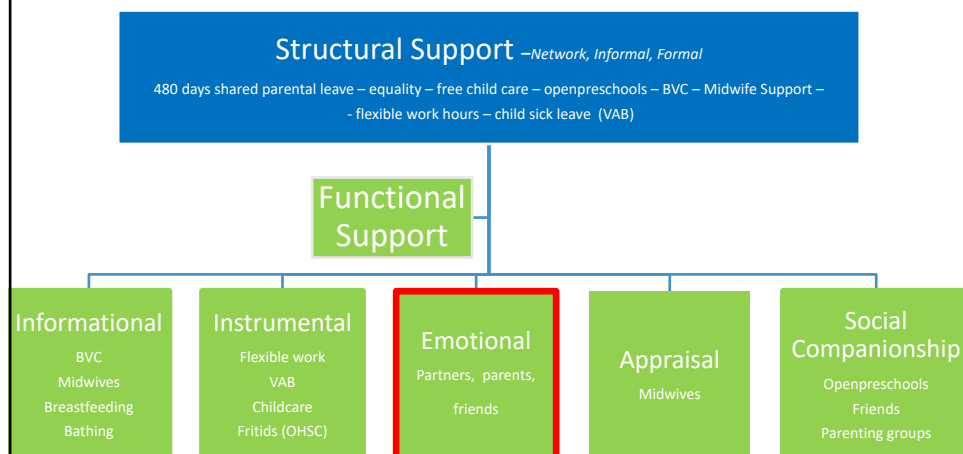
“It puts you in two...torn...tears you apart”

Mother, senior OB/GYN consultant

“I’m working full hours...that’s hurting me in my heart...I don’t see him for more than 3 hours...(Crying)..Im sorry”

Mother, student

Preliminary Results In Terms of Support: Emotional



Preliminary Results In Terms of Support: Emotional

“[there is mostly a need for] emotional support – someone to talk to, maybe because many of the women...have not put into words what they feel to anyone else, um, and that makes them feel alone ...that they’re supposed to cope with everything on their own”

Psychologist, clinic for postpartum depression

“I told the same story to [her] and....it switched, I felt better...suddenly I could sleep”

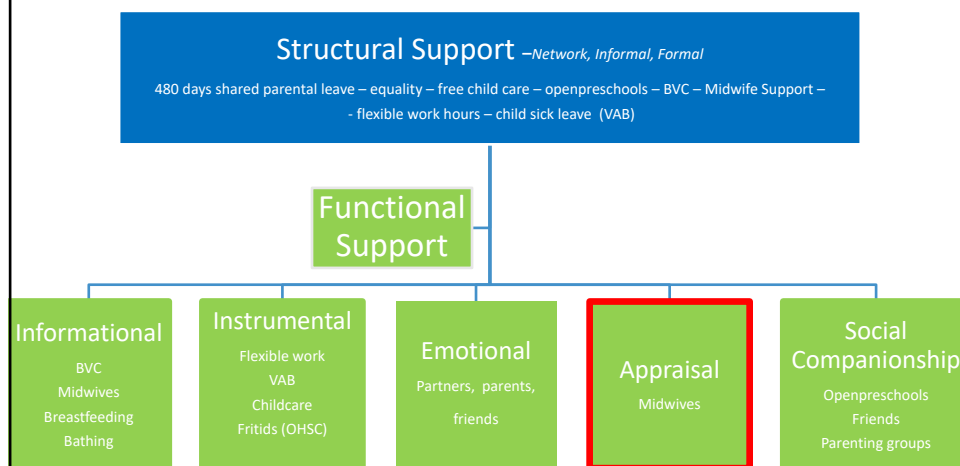
Mother of 2, PPD sufferer

Biggs et al., (2015).

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Preliminary Results In Terms of Support: Appraisal



Dennis & Chung Lee (2006)
Abrams, Dornig, & Curran, (2009).

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Preliminary Results In Terms of Support: Appraisal

“[appraisal] gives them a sense of being a good parent, that they are good enough...which generates a more positive spiral”

Psychologist, clinic for postpartum depression

“I think it’s to be validated in the first place, actually, that someone saw that I was really struggling, then I could accept that, and I could see that Im not fine. I cant do this. I need help.”

Mother of 2

Limitations and Challenges

- Language
- Single Mother, Pregnant
- Lack of local knowledge
- Length of Stay
- Heterosexual, Higher Socioeconomic, Educated, Couples

Sweden ranked worst place to make friends... again



Photo: Emelie Asplund/imagebank.sweden.se

For the umpteenth time in a row, expats have ranked Sweden as one of the worst countries in the world to make friends in. But is it really that bad? We let our readers have their say.

Implications

- Holistic Health Promotion
- Better Pre-partum Support and Education
- Mother Centered
- Talking Therapies, Companionship, Connection
- Accessible Emotional Support
- Policy Change in terms of flexible work, parental leave for fathers/spouses

Ussher, J. M. (2004)

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Questions?



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Massoudi, P. (2013b). *Depression and distress in Swedish fathers in the postnatal period. Prevalence, correlates, identification, and support*. University of Gothenburg

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