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The Power of Culture: *What Igbo Omugwo Can Teach Us About Postpartum Care*

By Chukwunwike Ossai

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FEATURE
IMAGE

A woman carrying her grand child

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The Power of Culture: What Igbo Omugwo Can Teach Us About Postpartum Care

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A woman carrying her grandchild

Postpartum depression (PPD) is a severe problem that affects a lot of new mothers all over the world. The level differs from country to country. It is low in Germany (3.6%), but is up to 39.4% in Bangladesh. In Nigeria, it is between 22.4% and 22.9%. But in many African countries, culture helps to protect new mothers, and for the Igbo people in Nigeria, Omugwo is a strong traditional way of preventing and handling PPD.

This write-up would explain Omugwo, why it is essential for culture, and how it is helping new mothers stay mentally and physically okay after childbearing.

Omugwo is an Igbo tradition that occurs after a woman gives birth to a child. It means that an older woman, mainly the mother, mother-in-law, or an older female relative, would come to stay with the new mother to help her take care of the baby and recover from the stress of childbirth. It is not just for physical help; it supports mind and emotions, so the new mother can rest well, eat well, and have less to worry about.

1. Physical Help: The elder woman would help bathe the baby, cook good food for the mother, and keep the place clean. 2. Emotional Support: She would discuss with the mother, calm her down, and advise her on how to handle motherhood. 3. Teaching Skills: The new mother would learn to care for the baby, breastfeed the child well, and recover from childbirth. 4. Family Bonding: It helps build strong family love and connection between old and young.

For the Igbo people, when a woman gives birth, it's not only her business but the community's business. Omugwo shows that Igbo people believe that "the whole village raises a child." They think a new mother is not meant to handle all the problems alone.

Reduce problems: When a person helps the new mother, she rests more and doesn't stress too much. Prevent PPD: When a new mother gets support, she won't feel lonely or depressed. Good baby care: The mother would know how to handle a baby confidently. Fast Recovery:

Her body would heal faster with good food and rest.

Although living has changed, Omugwo is still very important in Nigeria today, especially among the Igbo people. Some things have modernized a bit, but the main reason remains strong.

Things that have changed & how they have adapted

City Life: Some mothers do not have their family closer to them in town, so they hire someone who acts like an Omugwo helper. Hospital: People do mix tradition with hospital care now. Culture Shift: Some young women initially complain that they do not want an elder to stay with them, but later on, they enjoy the help.

Research has shown that PPD does happen when women do not get help, are tired, or are lonely. Omugwo solves these issues by: Allowing the mother to sleep well because someone is assisting with carrying the baby. Giving her good food would help her body and hormones balance. Talking to her nicely will make her less afraid of motherhood. Helping the baby survive well because of proper care.

Studies in Nigeria show that women who do Omugwo do not suffer PPD like those who do not get support.

Omugwo is not just a culture but a lifesaver for many women. As PPD is rising because families are not as close as before, and stress is too much, traditions like Omugwo might be the answer to help women. Omugwo is a natural and effective way to stop PPD. It helps build a strong family and teaches how to care for a baby. Even with modern life, we can still make Omugwo work well.

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An enthusiast in tech with deep passion for studying and showcasing the vibrant cultural heritage of southern Nigeria . Combining my skill with my obsession towards African history and traditions to create contributions that impacts the digital space.



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