

INCOMPLETE: A Screenplay Raising Awareness towards Postpartum Depression

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the possibility of postpartum depression (PPD) among new moms, as well as the importance of family support in the recovery process. The study explores the physical and emotional aspects that contribute to PPD, such as exhaustion and a lack of husband support. The screenplay dives into the path of the main character, a mother who has just given birth and is experiencing postpartum depression due to fatigue and lack of support from her husband and family. She continues to struggle to make her life better through treatment, a support group, and support from her family and she begins to share her stories through social media to raise awareness.

Keywords: drama, family support, postpartum depression, screenplay

INTRODUCTION

The preparation for parenthood, both physically and mentally, is crucial, especially for mothers. They need to understand the role of parents, promote open communication, provide mutual support, and prepare themselves before pregnancy. It is important for mothers to carefully consider the decision to get pregnant as the birth of a baby can bring about a range of emotions, from joy to anxiety. Unpreparedness during pregnancy and childbirth can lead to various issues, including baby blues and postpartum depression. Baby blues is a common condition where new mothers experience sadness in the early days after giving birth, typically lasting up to two weeks. On the other hand, postpartum depression is a more serious condition characterized by feelings of hopelessness, inadequacy as a mother, and a lack of desire to care for the baby. It is essential for parents to prioritize their physical and mental well-being and address any emotional difficulties to create a nurturing environment for themselves and their child.

Postpartum depression can have a significant impact on a mother's emotional well-being and can result in difficulties bonding with the baby, feeling overwhelmed, loss of appetite, and challenges with breastfeeding. It is a serious condition that requires attention and support. Research shows that the prevalence of postpartum depression in Indonesian women is 2.32%. Symptoms of baby blues and postpartum depression may overlap, but postpartum depression lasts longer and should be taken seriously, with professional assistance sought if the symptoms persist beyond two weeks. The support of family, especially the husband, and the healthcare system is crucial in helping mothers recover from postpartum depression.

Furthermore, family support plays a vital role in reducing the occurrence of postpartum depression. Studies have shown that husbands' support is particularly meaningful for women with postpartum depression. Social support, including family support, is effective in reducing psychological distress and promoting recovery. It is essential for families and communities to prioritize providing support to new mothers, as it can significantly improve their mental and physical well-being during this critical period.

The idea of exploring postpartum depression through a screenplay is an innovative approach. Screenplays offer a visual and immersive experience for the audience, allowing them to witness the story unfold through dialogue, action, and visual descriptions. They provide a concise and focused narrative structure, making it easier for the audience to follow and engage with the story. Additionally, screenplays have the potential for multiple interpretations and adaptations, making them a powerful medium to explore the topic of postpartum depression.

By delving deeper into the psychological side of postpartum depression, the screenplay aims to raise awareness and provide support to individuals and families who have experienced or are currently experiencing postpartum depression. It can help normalize and destigmatize the condition, offer insight into the struggles and emotions of those dealing with postpartum depression, and promote understanding among those who have not personally experienced it. The screenplay also emphasizes the importance of a supportive environment for mothers to recover and continue to care for their babies. Meanwhile, the chosen genre for the screenplay is drama, which allows for the exploration of high stakes and conflicts. Drama provides an opportunity for intense character development and tells honest stories of human struggle. By adapting the topic of postpartum depression into a dramatic screenplay, the aim is to create a relatable and emotionally impactful experience for the audience. The screenplay intends to provoke realization and provide entertainment while shedding light on the often overlooked psychological challenges faced by postpartum depressed mothers.

In terms of theory and methodology, in their book *Psikologi Ibu dan Anak untuk Kebidanan* (2014), authors Herawati Mansur S. ST., M.Pd., M.Psi., and Temu Budiarti S.Pd., M.Kes. explore the psychological development of mothers during the postpartum period. They identify several factors that can contribute to postpartum depression (PPD). Hormonal imbalances, demographic factors, experiences during pregnancy and childbirth, psychosocial background, and physical exhaustion are among the key factors discussed. Building upon the research of Beck (1993), who identified loss of control as a central issue in PPD, the stages of postpartum depression can be understood as a process of attempting to regain control. This process involves encountering terror, dying of self, struggling to survive, and eventually regaining control.

In the initial stage of encountering terror, mothers with PPD experience sudden and unexpected mood swings, anxiety, obsessive thinking, and mental confusion. They may feel trapped in a dark and overwhelming emotional state, struggling to find a way out. The second stage involves feeling as if one's normal life has been lost or disrupted. Mothers may experience feelings of unreality, going through the motions without genuine engagement. They may isolate themselves, lose interest in activities they once enjoyed, and even contemplate self-destructive behavior. To survive the challenges of PPD, mothers often employ three coping mechanisms. They may battle the healthcare system, seeking appropriate diagnosis and treatment. They may also find solace and relief through prayer and spiritual practices. Finally, joining a support group for mothers with PPD can provide a sense of community, understanding, and practical guidance. The final stage focuses on regaining control, which is a gradual process. Mothers experience unpredictable transitions as they navigate their recovery journey. They mourn the lost time and opportunities due to PPD, but with time and support, they can achieve a guarded recovery.

The screenplay I made revolves around Esmeralda Ariella, a first-time mother eagerly awaiting the arrival of her child. However, her life takes an unexpected turn after childbirth. Esme finds herself overwhelmed with the responsibilities of caring for her baby and managing household chores, all without her husband Jacob's support. The situation worsens when Esme's mother-in-law moves in and starts passing judgment. Feeling trapped and alone, Esme begins to experience symptoms of postpartum depression. Her emotions fluctuate between extreme sadness and irritability, and she struggles to connect with her baby. As the days go by, Esme's

mental and physical health deteriorates, causing her to withdraw from her loved ones and lose interest in the things she once enjoyed until she wants to harm herself.

By utilizing the screenplay format, this exploration of postpartum depression aims to shed light on the experiences of mothers who face this challenging condition. It emphasizes the importance of understanding, support, and open communication within families and communities to address postpartum depression effectively. The screenplay concludes with Esme emerging from the darkness of postpartum depression and reclaiming her life. She develops a strong bond with her baby, rebuilds her relationships with her loved ones, and becomes an advocate for raising awareness about postpartum depression.

In this creative work, I conduct secondary research by analyzing existing data and materials related to postpartum depression (PPD) from various sources such as journals, e-books, articles, and films with motherhood themes. I also explore different genres to understand their workings. By studying Cheryl Tatano Beck's theory on PPD and medical articles, I deepen my knowledge of the differences between baby blues, postpartum depression, and postpartum psychosis, as well as their symptoms. This research strengthens the main theory I employ. Using the gathered insights, I develop an overview of PPD, aligning characters' traits and triggers with real-life scenarios to create a meaningful reflection.

CONCEPT OF THE CREATIVE WORK

The chosen genre for this creative work is drama, which offers a realistic portrayal of emotional and relational development. Drama delves into conflicts, tragedies, and intense emotional situations, aiming to present complex human relationships authentically and challenge the audience's perceptions and emotions. Films like *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, *Black Swan*, and *A Mouthful of Air* are notable examples of the drama genre. In my screenplay, I will thoroughly explore the issue of perinatal depression within this genre. The focus will be on Esme, a charismatic and popular woman who marries the man of her dreams. However, after giving birth, her mother-in-law becomes antagonistic, and her husband fails to support her, causing her immense stress and leading to postpartum depression.

One film that has influenced my work is *Baby Blues* (2022), which tells the story of Dika and Dinda, a couple who have just become parents. Dinda, experiencing motherhood for the first time, feels neglected by her indifferent husband. Frustrated, she wishes that her husband could understand the challenges of being a mother, and her prayers are answered. While *Baby Blues* has a Comedy-Drama genre, my screenplay will focus on drama to explore the profound impact of postpartum depression on Esme's psychological well-being. The setting of the film in Indonesia is a similarity between *Baby Blues* and my script, but the genres differ. Furthermore, I plan to employ a mixed timeline approach, starting with a climactic scene and then incorporating flashbacks. This technique aims to enhance tension and maintain the audience's curiosity and engagement.

In addition, I will utilize montages and voice-overs in my screenplay. Montages will provide an overview of the surroundings with a dramatic effect. Symbolism related to postpartum depression and Esme's emotions may be incorporated into the montages. Voice-overs may be used to convey Esme's inner thoughts and feelings, considering that she may struggle to express herself due to the pressure she experiences.

Premise

Esmeralda Ariella and her husband are eagerly waiting for the arrival of their first child. However, everything changes when their baby is born. Adding to the stress, her mother-in-law

moves in and starts controlling their household, while Jacob's support fades away. Esmeralda finds herself spiraling into postpartum depression, feeling trapped and alone.

Creative Principle

In my creative work, I will show the feeling of loneliness and exhaustion a mother could feel and no one is sensitive to her deteriorating condition and considers her normal and fine when she is actually getting baby blues, postpartum depression, or even psychosis. On the other hand, I would also like to show the importance of family support to a new mother.

Synopsis

In their early marriage life, Esmeralda Ariella (25) and her husband, Agustian Jacob (27), enjoy a blissful existence. However, everything takes a drastic turn when Esme gives birth to their first child. Plunged into the challenges of motherhood, Esme finds herself without the support and guidance of her family. Compounding the situation, Linda, her mother-in-law frequently judges her, while Jacob's support fades away, leaving her to confront her problems alone and bear her burdens in silence. Unbeknownst to Esme, the prolonged stress she endures leads her to unknowingly suffer from postpartum depression, resulting in her venting her emotions onto her baby to the point of endangering her own life.

As time goes on, Esme gradually recovers from her struggles and embarks on a journey of healing. She becomes determined to make a positive impact and inspire others through her social media platforms. Sharing her experiences openly, Esme spreads messages of hope, resilience, and the importance of seeking help during challenging times.

Characters

Main characters:

- Esmeralda Ariella
Age: 25 years old

Esme is a young mother who initially experiences the joy of pregnancy but soon finds herself overwhelmed by the demands of motherhood. She is portrayed as sleep-deprived, exhausted, and struggling with her new role. Esme is determined to be a good mother but faces challenges in balancing her personal life, career aspirations as an influencer, and the needs of her baby. She experiences postpartum depression (PPD) and seeks support through therapy and online support groups. Throughout the story, Esme undergoes a transformation and eventually recovers with the support of her family.

- Agustian Jacob
Age: 27 years old

Jacob is Esme's husband and a supportive partner. He witnesses Esme's struggles and becomes concerned about her well-being. Jacob takes the initiative to suggest hiring a nanny, Puput, to assist Esme. He also defends Esme when his mother, Linda, disapproves of their decision. Jacob is depicted as a caring and understanding husband who tries to be there for Esme, although he may not always fully comprehend her experience. He accompanies Esme to therapy sessions and shows remorse for not being more attentive to her needs.

- Bu Linda
Age: 56 years old

Linda is Jacob's mother and plays a significant role in the story. Initially, Linda expresses disapproval of Esme and Jacob's decision to hire a nanny, believing that Esme should handle motherhood without assistance. She is depicted as critical and judgmental towards Esme, causing tension between them. However, as the story progresses, Linda's

perspective evolves, and she realizes the importance of supporting Esme. She apologizes for her previous behavior and acknowledges the need for Esme to have a space to talk and receive help.

Supporting characters:

- Puput
Age: 32 years old
Puput is the nanny hired to assist Esme with Emily. She enters the story after Esme becomes overwhelmed with her responsibilities. Puput is portrayed as reliable, caring, and helpful. She supports Esme in managing her daily tasks, providing Esme with a much-needed break. However, Puput resigned from her position. Later in the story, Puput returns and becomes an integral part of Esme's support system, alongside Jacob and Linda.
- Esme's friends
- Psychiatrist
- Support groups

Conflict

The conflict that occurs in my creative work is the ignorance of the surrounding environment and the lack of emotional support for Esme which caused her to get postpartum depression. Two types of conflict that will happen in my creative work are Man vs. Man and Man vs. Self. According to Hidayah (2018), man vs. man conflict may have struggled with moral, religious, or social differences and it can be emotional, verbal, or physical conflicts when man vs. self is a conflict that involves the character with his own mind. One of the man vs. man conflicts that will happen in the screenplay that I am about to write is Esme's verbal argument with her mother-in-law. This is triggered by differences in views between them. On the other hand, man vs. self or internal conflict that occurs is between Esme and her thoughts and emotions which are still cluttered due to the effects of postpartum depression.

CONCLUSION

The screenplay presented in this thesis focuses on Esme's journey through postpartum depression, emphasizing the importance of psychosocial and physical factors in her condition. It showcases her struggles, the evolution of her relationship with her baby, and her path to healing with the support of a good healthcare system and her family. Through therapy, connecting with other mothers, and engaging in self-care, Esme finds solace and understanding. Her transformation from a struggling and isolated mother to an empowered advocate is depicted, spreading awareness about postpartum depression and breaking the stigma surrounding it. Overall, this screenplay aims to create a compelling narrative that sheds light on the challenges of postpartum depression and emphasizes the significance of support and resilience.

During the process of writing this thesis, several valuable lessons were learned. The need to explore the experience of stressed mothers in relation to prolonged postpartum depression was highlighted, with a desire to delve into the psychological aspects of a mother suffering from this condition. Improvements are sought to avoid clichéd and trivial scenes, focusing on a deeper understanding of the character's psychological state. Difficulties were encountered in expressing the desired story and conveying character emotions effectively in

screenplay format. Concerns arose regarding the clarity of certain scenes and the potential for misinterpretation by the audience, challenging the intended message and purpose of the work.

Acknowledging the screenplay as a work in progress, future plans involve refining and polishing the narrative to address areas that could benefit from improvement. The aspiration is to transform the screenplay into a thirty-minute project with concise yet impactful tension and conflict, providing a comprehensive exploration of Esme's journey and the complexities of postpartum depression. There is a desire to revise the screenplay and pitch it to studios or filmmakers interested in bringing this story to life on the big screen. The goal is to create a more comprehensive and impactful portrayal that raises awareness about postpartum depression, highlighting the importance of support and understanding. By dedicating attention to character development, pacing, and narrative depth, the aim is to create a thought-provoking cinematic experience that contributes to destigmatizing postpartum depression and fosters dialogue around mental health.

Important suggestion for aspiring writers is to select their creative work topic with care. Postpartum depression (PPD), a rarely discussed subject, requires deep thought and consideration due to its implications and responsibilities. Simply researching, watching movies, and reading novels won't suffice. To truly understand PPD, writers should immerse themselves in society, engage with those who have experienced it, and employ methodologies involving direct interaction. Passion for the topic is crucial, as it inspires extensive research and the creation of impactful narratives. However, excessive pressure to find the "perfect" topic should be avoided. Writers should choose an idea that resonates with personal experience and develop it to the best of their abilities. When exploring characters different from themselves, conversations with relevant individuals provide valuable insights and authentic details without obsessing over perfect realism. Jotting down ideas, taking breaks, and entertaining oneself can combat writer's block. Additionally, writers in the drama genre should narrow down their scope to find credible sources and create a unique flavor for the story. These guidelines empower writers to create compelling and relatable narratives.

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