Figure 1: Proposed etiological model of postpartum depression.
The aim of the present study was to assess the unique and combined contributions of social support, obstetric interventions, locus of control and birth risk to the development of postpartum depression. A review of the literature to date showed that these were the most important contemporary factors worthy of investigation. Social support was the only variable to make a significant independent contribution to postpartum depression. When combined, all 4 variables accounted significantly for a small proportion of the variance of postpartum depression (5.7%). With reference to this result it was suggested that the aetiology of postpartum depression may be multidimensional. An interactive multidimensional aetiological model was proposed and drawn up.

A further aspect of the study was the development of a device to measure the impact obstetric interventions have on women. Mean ratings were obtained for a number of procedures, both minor and major, practiced at the time of childbirth.

In conclusion, childbirth is a major life event causing stress. Arising out of this event are various adaptation difficulties. Most common, is postpartum depression. However, the aetiology of this condition remains a controversial issue. Before a sound treatment model can
really be developed, social scientists will need to persist in their pursuits of a sound aetiological theory. The psychological adjustment of the new mother remains an important and topical concern.

The fundamental motivation of future research should be a consideration of the optimal health of the mothers themselves. Ideally, in time, with the development of a well-founded aetiological theory, better preventative and treatment programmes will be established and these in turn will enable more mothers to conclude that:

"Birth sure has its ups and downs. Becoming a mother is a happy and sad experience, but nevertheless, a very worthwhile one. It's such a big adjustment, but somewhere, I know, it's all going to be alright!"
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