

CHARACTERISTIC DESCRIPTION AND KNOWLEDGE OF PREGNANT WOMEN ABOUT EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING

Yuni Kurniawati¹, Nabila Amelia Hanisyah Putri², AA Putri Melastini³, Nis'atul Khoiroh⁴, Sumiati⁵

Department of Midwifery, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, Bali, Indonesia

Email correspondence: yunikurniawati@undiksha.ac.id

ABSTRAK : GAMBARAN KARAKTERISTIK DAN PENGENTAHUAN IBU HAMIL TENTANG ASI EKSKLUSIF

Latar Belakang: Upaya menurunkan angka kematian bayi (AKB) salah satunya dapat dilakukan melalui pemberian ASI eksklusif. Rendahnya cakupan ASI eksklusif umumnya dipengaruhi oleh faktor sosial budaya serta keterbatasan pengetahuan ibu hamil mengenai manfaat ASI eksklusif.

Tujuan: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi gambaran karakteristik dan pengetahuan ibu hamil tentang ASI eksklusif.

Metode: Penelitian kuantitatif dengan desain deskriptif ini dilaksanakan pada Agustus–September 2024 di Desa Tegallingghah, wilayah kerja Puskesmas Sukasada I. Sebanyak 35 ibu hamil trimester II dan III diikutsertakan dengan teknik total sampling. Data karakteristik dan pengetahuan dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner, kemudian dianalisis secara univariat untuk menggambarkan distribusi frekuensi.

Hasil: Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar responden berusia 20–35 tahun (80%), berpendidikan menengah (51,4%), multigravida (54,3%), tidak bekerja atau sebagai ibu rumah tangga (57,1%), serta memiliki tingkat pengetahuan cukup (65,7%).

Kesimpulan: Pengetahuan ibu merupakan faktor penting dalam keberhasilan ASI eksklusif, sehingga diperlukan intervensi edukasi selama masa antenatal care. Tingkat pengetahuan berkontribusi signifikan terhadap perubahan perilaku dalam mendukung keberhasilan menyusui. Tenaga kesehatan diharapkan lebih aktif memberikan informasi, sementara ibu perlu meningkatkan pemahaman mengenai manfaat dan teknik menyusui untuk mengoptimalkan keberhasilan ASI eksklusif.

Kata Kunci : ASI Eksklusif, Karakteristik, Pengetahuan

ABSTRACT

Background: Reducing infant mortality can be achieved in part through exclusive breastfeeding. The low coverage of exclusive breastfeeding is generally influenced by socio-cultural factors and the limited knowledge of pregnant women regarding its benefits.

Purpose: This study aimed to identify the characteristics and knowledge of pregnant women regarding exclusive breastfeeding.

Methods: This descriptive quantitative study was conducted from August to September 2024 in Tegallingghah Village, within the Sukasada I Health Center area. A total of 35 pregnant women in their second and third trimesters were included using a total sampling approach. Data on maternal characteristics and knowledge were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using univariate methods to describe frequency distributions.

Results: The results showed that the majority of respondents were aged 20–35 years (80%), had secondary education (51.4%), were multigravida (54.3%), were unemployed or housewives (57.1%), and had a sufficient level of knowledge (65.7%).

Conclusion: Maternal knowledge is an important factor in the success of exclusive breastfeeding, indicating the need for educational interventions during antenatal care. Knowledge levels substantially influence behavioral changes that support breastfeeding success. Health care providers are expected to take a more active role in delivering information, while mothers are encouraged to enhance their understanding of breastfeeding benefits and techniques to optimize exclusive breastfeeding outcomes.

Keywords: Exclusive Breastfeeding, Characteristics, Knowledge

INTRODUCTION

One of the key indicators of a healthy family is the provision of exclusive breastfeeding (Beal et al., 2018; Aristiani & Khayati, 2022). Exclusive breastfeeding is adequate to fulfill the nutritional requirements of infants in supporting their proper growth and development up to six months of age, as it provides the complete set of essential nutrients and fluids needed throughout the first six months of life (Widaryanti, 2019).

During the period 2015–2020, infants and children did not optimally obtain sufficient nutrition required to support their growth and developmental processes. Such a condition is reflected in the global exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) coverage, which was only about 44%, still below the minimum target of 50% set by the WHO (WHO, 2023). In Indonesia, the coverage of EBF among infants aged six months was reported at 56.9% in 2021 and increased to 61.5% in 2022 (Kemenkes RI, 2022; Kemenkes RI, 2023). In Bali Province, the EBF coverage reached 76.96% in 2022, with Buleleng District achieving 80.1% (Dinkes Provinsi Bali, 2023; Dinkes Kab. Buleleng, 2023).

Infant mortality continues to be a significant public health issue in Indonesia, and exclusive breastfeeding is recognized as an effective strategy to reduce infant mortality (Pramita, 2017; Septiani et al., 2017). EBF contributes to lowering infant morbidity and mortality, enhances immunity, protects against infectious diseases, and supports optimal brain and physical development. For mothers, EBF facilitates recovery after childbirth, lowers the likelihood of developing breast cancer, while also strengthening emotional bonding with the infant (Kemenkes RI, 2019 ; Yuliarti, 2020).

Low EBF coverage is influenced by several factors, including socio-cultural aspects and limited knowledge among pregnant women regarding the importance of breastfeeding (Anggraini, 2017; Afriyani & Salafas, 2019; Aristiani & Khayati, 2022). Knowledge is considered a fundamental determinant in guiding breastfeeding practices, although influencing factors may vary across populations (Hegazy et al., 2015). Previous studies have also shown associations between knowledge, attitudes, occupation, psychological conditions, and early breastfeeding initiation associated with the success of EBF (Satriani et al., 2019 ; Assriyah et al., 2020).

Individual knowledge plays a crucial role in decision-making and health-related actions. Health knowledge may be gained through structured educational programs, health counseling, and information disseminated via mass media. Awareness and understanding of EBF foster positive attitudes and discourage the practice of providing prelacteal feeding (Rahman, 2017; Widiyawati & Qamariah, 2021). The government supports EBF promotion through health education programs aimed at increasing public awareness of its benefits. Health education serves as an effective method to instill understanding and encourage positive health behaviors (Jasadin, 2021). The purpose of this research is to examine the characteristics and knowledge of pregnant women in relation to exclusive breastfeeding. The results are anticipated to improve maternal understanding and support the preparation of a quality postpartum period, ultimately promoting the achievement of successful exclusive breastfeeding.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research employed a quantitative design with a descriptive approach. This research was conducted in Tegallingsah Village, located within the working area of Sukasada 1 Public Health Center. The study population included all pregnant women in their second and third trimesters during the period of March to April, totaling 35 individuals, who were also selected as the research sample through a total sampling technique.

Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire designed to evaluate maternal characteristics and knowledge. The characteristics analyzed included age, education, parity, and occupation. The data were analyzed using univariate analysis to present the frequency distribution and percentage of maternal characteristics and knowledge variables.

RESEARCH RESULTS

As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents were within the age range of 20–35 years, accounting for 80%. The majority had attained a secondary educational level (51.4%). In terms of gravidity, most respondents were multigravida (54.3%). Regarding occupation, the majority were unemployed/housewives (57.1%).

Table 1
Distribution of Respondents Characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age		
≤ 20 years	2	5.7
20 – 35 years	28	80
≥ 35 years	5	14.3
Educational Level		
Primary Education (SD, SMP)	10	28.6
Secondary Education (SMA/SMK)	18	51.4
Higher Education	7	20
Gravida		
Primigravida	14	40
Multigravida	19	54.3
Grande Multigravida	2	5.7
Occupation		
Unemployment/ Housewife	20	57.1
Private Sector	5	14.3
Government Employees/Civil Services	3	8.6
Others	7	20

Table 2
Frequency Distribution of Pregnant Women's Knowledge About Exclusive Breastfeeding

Knowledge	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Good	10	28.6
Moderate	23	65.7
Poor	2	5.7

As shown in Table 2, the majority of respondents demonstrated a moderate level of knowledge, accounting for 65.7%.

DISCUSSION

Knowledge is shaped by multiple determinants, including maternal age, education, occupation, prior experiences, media exposure, and environmental conditions, which collectively affect pregnant women's ability to access information and encourage positive behaviors related to exclusive breastfeeding.

Maternal age is an important determinant in decision-making regarding personal health care. As age increases, experience and knowledge tend to improve, along with access to more diverse information sources. Age also affects maternal health, including pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum conditions, and the ability to care for and breastfeed the infant. Women under 20 years are generally not physically or socially mature enough to cope with pregnancy, childbirth, and infant care (Ramlah et al.,

2014). Conversely, women over 30 years may experience decreased physical capacity and a higher risk of complications. Advanced maternal age is also associated with nutritional anemia, which can affect breast milk production (Shaliha, 2019). According to Fatimah, (2017) a relationship exists between maternal age and knowledge of exclusive breastfeeding. Nevertheless, the capacity to acquire and retain information may decrease at certain ages; therefore, older age does not always correspond to higher knowledge levels, as age alone is not the only determinant influencing an individual's knowledge.

Educational attainment has a strong influence on knowledge, as higher levels of education are typically linked to a wider scope of knowledge. However, it should be emphasized that lower education does not necessarily equate to limited knowledge, as knowledge can also be acquired through non-formal education (Wawan & Dewi, 2019). Education encourages individuals to be curious, seek experiences, and transform received information into knowledge. Maternal education can affect a mother's knowledge, which in turn may influence attitudes and shape new behaviors. This is supported by Rellam et al., (2023) which revealed a significant association between maternal education, maternal knowledge, and exclusive breastfeeding. Furthermore Lindawati, (2019) reported a statistically significant association between maternal education and exclusive breastfeeding ($p = 0.027 < 0.05$).

Multigravida women, or those with more than one pregnancy, generally have more opportunities to gain experience, particularly regarding knowledge of breastfeeding. Consequently, they usually possess greater knowledge and experience about breastfeeding compared to primigravida women, who often require additional guidance on breastfeeding, prenatal care, and breastfeeding preparation. Gravidity can contribute to the acquisition and enhancement of knowledge, which in turn influences maternal attitudes and skills in providing breast milk to their infants. Personal experience plays a crucial role in knowledge development, as individuals with prior experience tend to have a better understanding than those without. This is supported by Tendean, (2019), who reported a significant association between maternal knowledge of breastfeeding and exclusive breastfeeding after accounting for gravidity. Additionally, Retnawati & Khoriyah, (2022) a significant association was identified between parity and exclusive breastfeeding behavior (OR = 3.656), suggesting that multiparous mothers are approximately 3.6 times more likely to practice exclusive breastfeeding compared to primiparous mothers.

Occupation represents one of the determinants that may contribute to the improvement of an individual's knowledge. Unemployed women (housewives) possess comparable opportunities to acquire adequate knowledge as working women, since they have more time to access information concerning the significance of exclusive breastfeeding for their infants (Amin, 2014). In contrast, higher levels of occupational demands among working mothers are associated with a reduced likelihood of exclusive breastfeeding, largely attributable to time limitations resulting from maternal absence from the infant at home (Timporok et al., 2018; Khofiyah, 2019). Nevertheless, adequate breastfeeding knowledge, supportive workplace environments, and the availability of breast pumping facilities enable employed mothers to continue practicing exclusive breastfeeding. This is consistent with the study by Fatimah, (2017) which demonstrated a significant relationship between maternal occupation, maternal knowledge, and the practice of exclusive breastfeeding.

Maternal knowledge constitutes an essential determinant in the successful implementation of exclusive breastfeeding. Therefore, efforts to enhance knowledge should be prioritized before delivery rather than afterward. Information regarding exclusive breastfeeding is best provided during

antenatal care (ANC) visits, including guidance on colostrum feeding, the avoidance of prelacteal nutrition, and the rights to early initiation of breastfeeding (EIBF). Healthcare providers should explore mothers' motivations, attitudes, and beliefs regarding exclusive breastfeeding in depth, beyond verbal statements alone. Knowledge levels significantly influence maternal behavior related to breastfeeding, ultimately supporting successful breastfeeding practices.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that most respondents were aged 20–35 years, had secondary education, were multigravida, and were unemployed (housewives). Additionally, the majority demonstrated a moderate level of knowledge regarding exclusive breastfeeding.

SUGGESTION

Future research should include larger, more diverse populations, assess antenatal educational interventions, and examine social, cultural, and occupational factors affecting exclusive breastfeeding. In practice, health care providers are expected to play a more active role in delivering information, while mothers are encouraged to broaden their knowledge of the benefits and techniques of breastfeeding to optimize the success of exclusive breastfeeding.

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