

Patterns of Communication and Mother-in-Law Support in Supporting Exclusive Breastfeeding Practices and Infant Nutrition

Seventina Nurul Hidayah¹, Okta Zenita Siti Fatimah²

¹Program Studi DIII Kebidanan, Politeknik Harapan Bersama, Tegal, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia

²Program Studi S1 Kebidanan, STIKES Bhakti Pertiwi Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

seventinanurulhidayah@gmail.com, oktazenitasiti@gmail.com

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Abstract : This study aims to investigate the patterns of communication and support provided by parents-in-law to mothers in supporting exclusive breastfeeding practices and fulfilling infant nutrition. This research method involves a qualitative study with data collection through in-depth interviews and content analysis. The location of the research was carried out in the District of South Tegal. Purposive sampling technique was used to select informants. The main informants in this study were mothers who practiced exclusive breastfeeding and lived with their in-laws. while the triangulation informants were the in-laws of the main informants and each of them was 7 people. In the context of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for the health and development of babies, the role of in-laws as part of the family environment has significant potential in shaping the success of this practice. Research results reveal a variety of communication patterns, ranging from understanding and positive support to less supportive attitudes. Emotional, informational and practical support also plays a role in influencing the success of exclusive breastfeeding practices. These findings provide insight into the important role of in-laws in supporting mothers in breastfeeding and infant nutrition practices, and highlight the need for a holistic educational approach to ensure consistent support for mothers on this journey.

INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding is a natural process that has a significant impact on the growth, development and health of babies. ASI (Breast Milk) is the main source of nutrition which is rich in essential substances that not only support physical growth, but also contain immune elements that protect babies from infection and disease. (Polwandari et al., 2021) Based on the data obtained, the coverage of breastfeeding in 2021 in Tegal City is 66.7%, an increase compared to the coverage in 2020 of 59.8%. The coverage of exclusive breastfeeding in South Tegal District is 60.7% and is still below the national coverage rate of 80% (Kesehatan & Sehal, n.d.).

In an era where the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and the fulfillment of infant nutrition are increasingly recognized as important foundations for health and early life development, the role of parents-in-law in providing social support to young mothers is an aspect that is increasingly attracting attention. Exclusive breastfeeding has been shown to provide invaluable nutrition and immune protection to infants. (Suciati & Wulandari, n.d.) Challenges in keeping this practice consistent often arise. In this context, communication patterns between mothers, in-laws and babies and the level of support provided by in-laws can have a significant effect. However, understanding of how parents-in-law are involved in supporting exclusive breastfeeding

practices and fulfilling infant nutrition is still limited. (Agustina et al., 2020; Sabriana et al., 2022).

This study aims to analyze in depth the communication patterns that exist between mothers, in-laws, and babies, and to assess the extent of the role and support of in-laws in supporting the success of exclusive breastfeeding practices and fulfilling infant nutrition. Thus, it is hoped that this research will not only provide new insights in understanding the factors influencing exclusive breastfeeding practices and infant nutrition, but also provide a solid basis for the development of more effective interventions in increasing social support for young mothers in this important journey.

METHOD

This research method involves a qualitative study with data collection through in-depth interviews and content analysis. The research location was conducted in Tegal Selatan District, which was selected based on accessibility considerations to the relevant population. The main informants in this study were mothers who practiced exclusive breastfeeding and lived with their parents-in-law, while the triangulation informants were the parents-in-law of 7 main informants each. Purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who have diverse experiences and views on the research topic. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews and participatory observation. In-depth interviews were used to gain in-depth insight into the views and experiences of participants regarding patterns of communication and in-law support in the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. Participatory observation was used to observe daily interactions between mothers and parents-in-law, as well as family dynamics related to breastfeeding and fulfilling infant nutrition. The collected data will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, involving stages of coding, developing themes, and in-depth interpretation of the findings that emerge. This research will

also adhere to the principles of research ethics, including obtaining informed consent, maintaining the confidentiality of identities, and ensuring the comfort and safety of participants during the research process.

RESULTS

Based on the results of research on Communication Patterns and Parent-in-law Support in Supporting Exclusive Breastfeeding Practices and Infant Nutrition, they are as follows:

Main informants (mothers who are practicing exclusive breastfeeding)

Perceptions of Exclusive Breastfeeding (the concept of exclusive breastfeeding and what it means for the health and development of babies)

- R1 : "Exclusive breastfeeding means giving only breast milk without other food or drink to the baby for the first six months. This is important because breast milk has all the nutrients a baby needs, protects against disease, and supports the development of the brain and immune system."
- R2 : "In the short term, exclusive breastfeeding helps protect babies from infection and disease. In the long term, exclusive breastfeeding can have a positive impact on cognitive development and the health of infants into adulthood."
- R3 : "To be honest, it was a bit difficult at first because of the need to breastfeed more frequently and there was a change in diet. However, I realized the value and with support, I feel like I'm getting used to it."
- R4 : "I am committed to providing the best for my baby. I will seek information and support, including from my in-laws, to overcome challenges and continue the practice of exclusive breastfeeding until the time is right."
- R5 : "For me, exclusive breastfeeding means giving only breast milk to the baby without giving other food or drinks during the first

six months of life. This means, the baby only gets breast milk as the only main source of nutrition during that period."

R6 : "Exclusive breastfeeding has various benefits that are very important for the health and development of babies. Breast milk contains nutrients that babies really need, such as protein, fat, vitamins, and other substances that support their growth and immune system."

R7 : "Exclusive breastfeeding has a mechanism that helps protect babies from various diseases and infections. A baby's immune system that is not yet fully developed can be strengthened by substances in breast milk, thereby helping to keep babies healthy."

The majority of respondents have a fairly good understanding of the concept of exclusive breastfeeding. They recognize that exclusive breastfeeding means giving only breast milk to the baby without giving additional food or drink, such as formula milk or solid food. Several respondents highlighted that this practice involved exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby's life.

The Role of Mother-in-law in Exclusive Breastfeeding Practices

R1 : "I feel that my in-laws have an important role in supporting the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. They provide moral support, give advice on how to take care of my health, and sometimes help in caring for the baby so that I can have enough rest."

R2 : "My parents-in-law help with food preparation, especially food that is good for breast milk production. They also help with household chores so I have more time to rest and pay attention to the baby. This support makes me feel better prepared to practice Exclusive breastfeeding."

R3 : "We often talk about exclusive breastfeeding practices. They give advice on good diets, provide positive support, and sometimes share their experiences when they become parents. I find this communication helps me feel supported and

more confident in the practice Exclusive breastfeeding."

R4 : "Yes, sometimes there are differences of opinion. However, we try to talk openly about each other's views and try to find a middle point. I explain why I chose exclusive breastfeeding and how it is important for me and the baby. We try to come to a mutual understanding. "

R5 : "I hope that the role of the parents-in-law remains positive and supportive. I want them to continue to provide moral and practical support, and understand the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for the baby's health. With this support, I am sure that the practice of exclusive breastfeeding will go even smoother and more successful."

R6 : "I feel that my parents-in-law have an important role in supporting the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. They provide emotional support, advice, and practical assistance in carrying out this practice."

R7 : "The in-laws help with things like helping with the preparation of healthy meals, taking care of the baby when I need rest, and giving practical advice on how to practice exclusive breastfeeding."

Some of the respondents' answers indicate that in-laws play an important role in providing emotional and moral support to mothers in the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. They provide encouragement, praise, and reassurance to mothers to continue this practice despite the challenges it may face. Respondents highlighted that parents-in-law help in caring for the baby, especially when the mother feels tired or needs rest. Mother-in-law helps to breastfeed, change diapers and look after the baby, so the mother can rest and take care of her health.

Communication Regarding Exclusive Breastfeeding Practices

R1 : "We often talk about exclusive breastfeeding. We talk about things like good diet, how to keep myself and my baby healthy and our experiences with the practice."

- R2 : "Yes, I feel comfortable. They are supportive and open to this topic. I know that we share the same goal, which is the health and well-being of babies, so I feel comfortable discussing this with them."
- R3 : "In-laws generally provide positive support. They provide advice on good foods for milk production, provide encouragement, and sometimes share their experiences as parents."
- R4 : "Once, several times we had different views. However, we tried to talk openly, listen to each other, and find a middle point that made us feel comfortable."
- R5 : "This communication has made me feel supported and more confident in carrying out the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. I feel that I have support in facing challenges and feel more motivated to continue this practice."
- R6 : "I hope that this communication will continue, and we can continue to support each other. I wish them to continue to provide positive advice and support, and to remain involved in the journey of this exclusive breastfeeding practice."
- R7 : "We often talk about the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. We talk about how my baby is developing, whether I feel comfortable enough with this practice, and how my in-laws can help."

The results of the respondents' answers indicate that communication between in-laws and sons-in-law about exclusive breastfeeding practices generally goes well. Most of the respondents stated that they had a fairly good understanding of the practice of exclusive breastfeeding and its benefits, so they could speak with their in-laws with adequate knowledge. Mother-in-law tends to support daughter-in-law's decisions in exclusive breastfeeding practices. The results of the respondents' answers reflect understanding and respect for the right of the son-in-law to make decisions about the health and development of their own baby.

Mother-in-law Support in Exclusive Breastfeeding Practices

- R1 : "The in-laws provide support in many ways. They help with the preparation of good food for milk production, sometimes taking care of the baby so I can rest, giving advice on baby care, and providing moral encouragement."
- R2 : "Support from my parents-in-law makes me feel that I am not alone in this journey of exclusive breastfeeding practice. I feel that I have help and advice from them, which makes me feel more confident and motivated."
- R3 : "Yes, of course. When I feel tired or face certain challenges, their support helps me get through these difficult moments. But sometimes the in-laws have cultural influences that influence exclusive breastfeeding practices such as giving drinks or tea to babies. So sometimes they doubt my decision to give exclusive breastfeeding."
- R4 : "Very appreciated. I feel this support shows that they care about the health and well-being of me and my baby. I feel supported in carrying out this exclusive breastfeeding practice."
- R5 : "Of course, one example is when I feel very tired and need to rest. The in-laws are happy to look after the baby, giving me a chance to rest in peace. It really helps."
- R6 : "I hope they continue to be as supportive as they are now, especially in terms of practical support and helpful advice. I want to feel like I have a solid support team on this journey."
- R7 : "Sure, there are times when I feel tired and need to rest. The in-laws help with the baby, it gives me a chance to sleep, and it really helps me deal with the tiredness."

Several respondents highlighted that parents-in-law played a role in providing physical support and practicing exclusive breastfeeding. They help with household chores, cooking and cleaning, thereby helping the daughter-in-law to focus more on breastfeeding and caring for the baby. Mother-in-law also

contributes in providing their knowledge and experience about exclusive breastfeeding practices. They share advice, tips, and guidance based on personal experience or knowledge they have, such as the correct breastfeeding technique or how to deal with problems that may arise. However, some of the results of the respondents' answers indicate that parents-in-law are sometimes influenced by certain cultures or traditions that may not be in harmony with the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. This can make them doubt or not support their daughter-in-law's decision to provide exclusive breastfeeding.

Challenges and Obstacles with Mother-in-law in Exclusive Breastfeeding Practices

- R1 : "The challenge I face is that sometimes there are different views on diet and baby care. This can be an obstacle because I want to ensure that the practice of exclusive breastfeeding is continued according to recommendations, but there may be different suggestions from parents-in-law."
- R2 : Yes, one of the challenges is the difference in views on baby's diet. Sometimes in-laws suggest giving complementary foods earlier, but I want to focus on exclusive breastfeeding. It gets a little tricky in keeping practices consistent.
- R3 : "I also experience similar challenges. Sometimes my parents-in-law worry that the baby is not getting enough nutrition only from breast milk. That makes me have to explain more about the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding."
- R4 : "Another challenge that I experience is the different schedule between me and my parents-in-law. Sometimes they give extra food when I'm not at home, and that affects the exclusive eating pattern that I want to adopt."
- R5 : "My experience is mixed. One of the big challenges is that my parents-in-law have different views about the baby's diet. Sometimes they want to give complementary foods earlier, while I want to stay exclusive with breast milk."
- R6 : "Living with my in-laws makes me feel a little pressured. They have their own way of caring for the baby and sometimes provide additional food without my permission. This is a challenge in maintaining the practice of exclusive breastfeeding."
- R7 : "I feel lucky because my parents-in-law support the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. However, the challenges that still arise are differences in schedules and routines, sometimes interfering with consistent eating patterns."

The results of the respondents' answers indicate that sometimes there are differences in understanding and knowledge between respondents and parents-in-law regarding the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. This challenge can arise when the in-laws have different views or perhaps lack information about the benefits and importance of exclusive breastfeeding. Several respondents highlighted that the culture and traditions adhered to by the in-laws could be an obstacle to the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. If culture or tradition dictates that infants be given additional food or drink at an early age, this could conflict with exclusive breastfeeding practices.

Triangulated informant (in-law of main informant)

Perceptions and Knowledge of Exclusive Breastfeeding and Infant Nutrition (views of exclusive breastfeeding practices as the main way of feeding infants)

- T1 : "I believe that exclusive breastfeeding is the best for babies in the first 6 months of life. Breast milk contains important substances that babies really need for their growth and development. I always support my daughter-in-law's decision to provide exclusive breastfeeding to my grandson."
- T2 : "I agree that exclusive breastfeeding is important for a baby's health. However, I sometimes worry whether breast milk alone is enough to provide all the nutrition a baby needs. I want to make sure that my grandchildren get everything they need."

- T3 : "I've heard a lot about the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding and I support it. But sometimes I worry about how babies are getting all the nutrition they need when they're only getting breast milk. I want to make sure they grow well."
- T4 : "I understand that exclusive breastfeeding is very important, but I also think that babies may need extra nutrition. I have some experience with babies and may have a different view on how to feed them."
- T5 : "I fully support the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. I have read a lot about the health benefits and emotional bonds formed through breastfeeding. I am always ready to support my daughter-in-law in this practice."
- T6 : "I know that exclusive breastfeeding has many benefits for babies, such as strengthening the immune system and providing proper nutrition. However, I sometimes worry that babies are not getting enough nutrition. I want to make sure that they grow up healthily."
- T7 : "I fully support the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. I have read a lot about the importance of breastfeeding and how it can positively impact a baby's health. I try to provide moral support and help my daughter-in-law on this journey."

The results of the parents-in-law's answers show that most of them have a fairly good understanding of the concept of exclusive breastfeeding. They recognize that exclusive breastfeeding means giving only breast milk to the baby without giving additional food or drink, such as formula milk or solid food. This shows that most in-laws have basic knowledge about exclusive breastfeeding practices. Several in-laws expressed the importance of the quality of breast milk in supporting the health and development of the baby. They realize that exclusive breastfeeding provides special benefits that cannot be found in formula milk or other foods, especially in optimizing the growth of the baby's brain and digestive system.

Challenges and Obstacles Faced in Supporting Exclusive Breastfeeding

- T1 : "I am aware that the practice of exclusive breastfeeding has great health benefits for both the baby and the mother. However, as a mother-in-law, I also see that this can be a challenge for my daughter-in-law. One of the barriers that may arise is the feeling of exhaustion and pressure that comes from demands of breastfeeding all the time. I try to provide support by taking on some household chores to help relieve her physical and emotional burden."
- T2 : "I really appreciate my daughter-in-law's determination to carry out exclusive breastfeeding practices. However, the challenge that I see is a lack of information and knowledge about the correct position when breastfeeding and how to deal with problems that may arise. I try to share my knowledge and support with provide tips that may be helpful."
- T3 : "I feel proud to see my daughter-in-law is committed to exclusive breastfeeding. However, I also realize that this can affect the time she spends with her partner and extended family. Another challenge is pressure from the environment or society that may not fully support breastfeeding. As a mother-in-law, I try to give positive encouragement and make sure that my daughter-in-law's decision is the best."
- T4 : "I understand that the practice of exclusive breastfeeding can provide long-term benefits for the baby's health. However, in practice, I see that my daughter-in-law may have difficulty maintaining a balanced diet and adequate rest. I try to help by providing healthy food and taking role in taking care of the baby so that the daughter-in-law can rest a while."
- T5 : "I fully support my daughter-in-law's decision to practice exclusive breastfeeding. However, the challenge that arises is the physical discomfort or health problems associated with breastfeeding. I try to provide support by directing my daughter-in-law to a health professional or

lactation consultant who can help solve the problem."

T6 : "I am happy to see my daughter-in-law focusing on the health of the baby by practicing exclusive breastfeeding. However, the challenges that may be faced are changes in daily routine and limited time to do other activities. I try to support this by giving free time to help care for baby so his son-in-law can rest."

T7 : "We fully support our daughter-in-law's decision to provide exclusive breastfeeding. The challenge we see is pressure from the environment or society that may doubt this decision. We try to provide moral support and tell our daughter-in-law that we believe in the choice she made for the good of our grandson."

The results of the parents-in-law's answers indicate that the influence of culture and tradition can be one of the main challenges in supporting exclusive breastfeeding. Some in-laws may have grown up in an environment where it was considered the norm to provide complementary foods or formula to babies, and these changes can be difficult to accept or understand. Some in-laws have different knowledge and understanding of exclusive breastfeeding practices. This challenge arises if the in-laws do not fully understand the benefits and importance of exclusive breastfeeding or if they have different views regarding infant feeding.

DISCUSSION

The research explores important themes regarding knowledge about exclusive breastfeeding, support provided by in-laws, as well as challenges and obstacles that arise in carrying out exclusive breastfeeding practices. In this study, we analyzed responses from in-laws to gain insight into their views on this topic. Knowledge about exclusive breastfeeding among in-laws is quite convincing. They understand well the concept of giving only breast milk to babies without giving any additional

food or drink in the first few months of life. In their view, exclusive breastfeeding is an important step in providing optimal nutrition and protection for infants. This is in line with Novi Indryati's 2019 research that parents-in-law with good knowledge of exclusive breastfeeding affect the success of practicing exclusive breastfeeding. (Untuk Melengkapi Sebagian Persyaratan Menjadi Sarjana Kesehatan Masyarakat, n.d.)

The role of mother-in-law support in supporting exclusive breastfeeding practices and infant nutrition is very significant. Mother-in-law provides moral and emotional support to daughter-in-law in the form of encouragement and praise. In addition, they also provide practical support by helping with household chores and caring for babies. This support creates a positive environment and encourages the son-in-law to continue practicing exclusive breastfeeding. According to Eury Envira 2020, there is a relationship between mother-in-law's support for exclusive breastfeeding. (Publikasi, n.d.) Another study, namely Nidaa, Izzatun 2022, found that respondents who received support from their mother-in-law had a nine times greater chance of giving exclusive breastfeeding than mothers who did not get support from their mother-in-law. (Nidaa et al., n.d.)

However, this study also identified a number of challenges and obstacles faced by in-laws in supporting exclusive breastfeeding practices. The influence of culture and traditions, differences in knowledge, and pressure from the social environment can hinder consistent support. Some in-laws may have different views or reservations about this practice, which can affect their ability to provide strong support. (Florince oyay et al., 2020)

Interaction and communication between in-laws and sons-in-law play an important role in overcoming these challenges. Open communication and mutual listening allows for a shared understanding of the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding and overcoming differences of opinion. (Ramli, 2020) The implication of this research is the need for

effective education and communication in overcoming challenges and strengthening parent-in-law support. As a recommendation, the involvement of in-laws in educational programs regarding the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding and infant nutrition can be considered. The creation of a supportive environment can also be promoted through collaborative efforts between families. (Indah Erfiyani, 2020) As such, this research provides valuable insight into how communication patterns and in-law support can influence exclusive breastfeeding practices and overall infant nutrition, as well as providing guidance for increasing support and understanding in this context.

CONCLUSION

Research provides an in-depth understanding of the complex interactions between knowledge, support, challenges, and barriers that occur in the context of exclusive breastfeeding practices and infant nutrition. The results showed that parents-in-law had a good understanding of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and were able to provide moral, emotional and practical support to their daughters-in-law. However, challenges such as cultural influences, knowledge differences, and social environmental pressures also play a role in this dynamic. In this case, open communication and mutual listening between in-laws and sons-in-law are key in overcoming challenges and strengthening support. The implication is the need for further education to overcome disagreements and doubts, as well as to promote awareness about the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding. In conclusion, parent-in-law support plays an important role in establishing an environment that supports exclusive breastfeeding practices, with the expansion of communication and better understanding helping to create an optimal environment for the growth and development of infants.

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