



Psychology of Breastfeeding: From Self Narration to Digital Technology

Ade Iva Murty, Safira Binar Anjani
Fakultas Psikologi Universitas Pancasila, Jakarta
Email: aiwicaksono@gmail.com

KATA KUNCI *menyusui, efikasi diri yang dipersepsikan, narasi diri, dukungan teknologi digital, perilaku sehat*
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ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: Menyusui merupakan sumber tumbuh kembang yang paling penting bagi bayi dan anak. Pembahasan mengenai proses menyusui umumnya berasal dari sudut pandang medis, padahal, untuk mempertahankan proses menyusui eksklusif bukanlah hal yang mudah. Menyusui melibatkan proses pengambilan keputusan oleh Ibu. Studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana seorang Ibu yang tinggal di kota megapolitan mempertahankan menyusui eksklusif selama 6 dan tetap memberikan air susunya hingga bayi berusia 2 tahun. Psikologi menekankan faktor-faktor internal dan sosial, karena kombinasi keduanya memiliki peranan signifikan dalam mendukung menyusui eksklusif.

Metodologi: Studi ini memakai pendekatan penelitian kualitatif dengan tipe studi kasus. Metode pengumpulan data adalah wawancara mendalam dan pengamatan pada saat wawancara. Tim penelitian mewawancarai 4 partisipan, dengan kriteria ibu-ibu yang berusia antara 20 sampai 40 tahun, menetap di JABODETABEK dan memiliki sedikitnya satu pengalaman menyusui eksklusif, dengan usia anak tidak lebih dari 12 tahun. Seluruh partisipan adalah ibu-ibu perkotaan, bahkan 2 diantaranya adalah perempuan yang bekerja.

Hasil Penelitian: Keempat partisipan adalah “Pejuang ASI”, yakni perempuan maternal yang berjuang keras untuk memberikan ASI sebagai nutrisi terbaik pada bayinya. Proses psikologis mempertahankan menyusui eksklusif merupakan representasi dari narasi diri mengenai persepsi menyusui sebagai bagian dari skema kognitif “Ibu Alamiah” dan bagaimana teknologi digital membantu Ibu mendapatkan lebih banyak dukungan dan mengatasi masalah-masalah menyusui dan bayi.

Kesimpulan: Pertama. skema kognitif Ibu mengenai menyusui dan kelekatan pada bayi sangat penting untuk memotivasi Ibu mempertahankan menyusui eksklusif. Kedua, adalah sangat penting untuk mengidentifikasi pengetahuan dan ketrampilan Ibu dalam memanfaatkan teknologi digital dengan cerdas, sehingga menjadikan proses memberikan nutrisi terbaik pada bayi menjadi pengalaman yang produktif dan nyaman, baik bagi bayi maupun Ibu.

ABSTRACT

Background: Breastfeeding has been a very precious source for the development of infants and children. Generally, most of the studies about breastfeeding come from a medical knowledge point of view. However, the process of sustaining exclusive breastfeeding is not an easy task for a mother. As breastfeeding involves a mother's decision-making process, the study explores how mothers live in a megapolitan area, preserving exclusive breastfeeding until baby 6 months old and partially continued up to 2 years old. Psychology emphasizes internal factors and also external or social factors, both factors have significant roles in enabling exclusive breastfeeding. Methodology: The study methodology was qualitative with case study type. Methods of data collection were in-depth interviews and on-the spot interview observation. We have interviewed 4 participants. All of them are urban mothers (women live in megapolitan areas of Jakarta Greater Area or JABODETABEK). Age ranges from 20 to 40 years old, with at least an experience of exclusive breastfeeding and the child's age currently not more than 12 years old. 2 out of 4 participants are working mothers, who have to strive every day between domestic and work domains. Result: All 4 research subjects are typically kind of "Pejuang ASI" (breastfeeding warrior), a term used for representing a maternal woman who fights hard to breastfeed, as the best nutrition for a baby. It was shown that psychological processes of preserving exclusive breastfeeding of an urban mother significantly reflect the role of self-narration around the perception of breastfeeding as part of "natural mother" schema and how digital technology helps a mother to get more support and solve breastfeeding and baby's problems. Conclusion: First, Mother's schema about breastfeeding and attachment to the baby are important to motivate her to maintain exclusive breastfeeding. And for enhancing the motivation for exclusive breastfeeding, we need to know how her schema about breastfeeding and her attachment to the baby. Second, it is important to identify her skills and knowledge on using digital technology diligently, for a more productive and comfortable process of delivering the best nutrition for the baby.

INTRODUCTION

On May 21st, 2021, a joint statement of WHO/UNICEF on the 40th anniversary of the International Code of Marketing Breastmilk Substitutes, stated again that breastfeeding is very vital for a child's lifelong nutrition, health, and wellbeing. Breastfeeding has been proven as a guard for protecting children from malnutrition, diseases and enhancing the probability of a child's life and safety. International Code of Marketing Breastmilk Substitutes has helped to reduce significantly progressive acts of commercial interests that endanger the health and nutrition of the world's youngest inhabitants (WHO, 2021). WHO also marked the progress that for 4 decades the

world has achieved a 50% increase in the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding. As a result, an estimated 900 million infants globally have enjoyed the survival, growth, and development benefits of exclusive breastfeeding in infancy (WHO, 2021).

Indonesia has targeted exclusive breastfeeding as an important strategy of resolving malnutrition and stunting problems in infancy, and children under five. In Indonesia Health Profile 2019 (Indonesia Ministry of Health, 2020), it is stated that giving breastmilk exclusively until baby 6 months old, weighing baby frequently, iodine intake, and supplementary nutrition has turned out to be the best prevention and solution for problems of malnutrition in

general. Breastmilk or ASI (Air Susu Ibu) consists of colostrum which is filled with antibodies and protein for immunity and reducing infant mortality rate. Concerning colostrum, the first stage of breastmilk, Indonesia has a program called IMD (Inisiasi Menyusu Dini or Early Breastfeeding Initiation), a process where the newborn is put in the mother's stomach and the baby will crawl to find the mother's nipples and tries to breastfeed for the first time. Indonesia has reached 50% of IMD of all the babies born in the current year.

How about exclusive breastfeeding? According to Indonesia Health Profile 2019 (Indonesia Ministry of Health, 2020), nationally, Indonesia has reached 67,74% of babies having exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months old of all the babies born in the current year. Exclusive breastfeeding was defined as a stage of giving nutrition, with only breastmilk and no other food or additional liquids, for newborns until 6 months old. There is government regulation, Indonesia Government Regulation (PP number 33, 2012) about Exclusive Breastfeeding, which stated that "every maternal mother has to give breastmilk for her newborn baby". The regulation becomes a solid foundation for The Ministry of Health to launch a very progressive program about breastfeeding, and it helps mothers and families to be more focused on giving the best nutrition for babies. But still, Indonesia has to face a deep problem about malnutrition. Up until 2018, 11,4% of children under five (especially 0 – 23 months) can be categorized as children with malnutrition problems. Therefore, breastfeeding can be posited as a strategy to overcome problems of malnutrition and stunting, that can be started right after the birth.

Breastfeeding studies mostly consist of elaboration and hypotheses concerning the effect of breastfeeding on the wellbeing of infants and mothers. Krol and Grossman (2018) made a systematic review of the positive effects of breastfeeding for infants and breastfeeding moms. It stated that shreds of evidence display a link between breastfeeding experience and cognitive development later in life, including

improved memory retention, greater language skills, and intelligence. Still, in Krol and Grossman (2018), it was shown that a study has proven, a higher frequency of breastfed meals and the duration of exclusive breastfeeding during the first year of life were found to be positively associated with measures of the Bayley Scales of Infant Development, including memory performance, early language, and motor skills at 14 months and 18 months of age. The Bayley Scales of Infant Development (now in the 3rd generation) is internationally recognized as one of the most comprehensive tools for assessing young children, used in clinical practice in several developmental domains. In essence, the review showed that positive effects of breastfeeding continue until the adult period, and it affects cognitive performance and also social and emotional performance in children. Infants with breastfeeding experiences have temperament control compared to infants fed with formula (Krol et.al., 2015).

There is extensive evidence of short-term and long-term health benefits of breastfeeding for mothers (Renfrew, 2007). Breastfeeding has been reported to impact mood and stress reactivity in mothers, and also anxiety reduction, especially when it was compared to non-breastfeeding mothers (Krol, 2018). However, Renfrew (2007) noted that in many country mothers receive less support for the continuation of breastfeeding. Mothers are continuously faced with early cessation of breastfeeding time, even though a longer period of breastfeeding has been proven as a positive stimulus for the development of a child and the mothers themselves. Renfrew (2007) reinstated that we need more studies as inquiries to disclose processes and factors that can help mothers gaining support for prolonged breastfeeding time. Here we have to focus on the psychology of breastfeeding, a term that is meant to be an understanding of processes of giving the best nutrition for baby and the benefit of the processes for baby and mother. This study fills in the gap of the lack of studies that is aimed at supporting the mothers to prolong breastfeeding time.

Problem statement:

How is the psychology of breastfeeding that can be applied for supporting mothers to prolong breastfeeding time?

The current study refers to Bandura's thought on perceived self-efficacy (Bandura in Marks, 2002). Perceived self-efficacy was defined as people's judgment of their capability to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances. Self-efficacy is distinguished from response-outcome expectation. Perceived self-efficacy is a judgment of one's capability to accomplish a certain level of performance, whereas an outcome expectation is a judgment of the likely consequence such behavior will produce. The differences lead us to delineate a subtle understanding of the processes of breastfeeding. Breastfeeding has a high relevance to perceived self-efficacy. As a mother, a maternal woman since the first day of her pregnancy builds a capability of taking care of the baby competently and within the schema of antenatal care, every mother will be taught to pay attention to some information about the baby after-born. Judgment of a maternal mother's capability to give breastmilk is very important not just for the baby, but also for the mother (Groer, 2005; Krol, 2018; Black et.al., 2020). Within perceived self-efficacy as the main construct, we will find an array of concepts that can directly explain the psychology of breastfeeding.

METHODS

The study takes a qualitative stance as a research approach. The epistemology position of the study is leading researchers to the position of social constructionism. Willig (2013) said that social constructionism develops an understanding of how human experience is mediated through historical, cultural, and linguistic analysis. Experience is never a direct influence of the environment, but a socially constructed knowledge. In essence, social constructionism is concerned with identifying various ways of constructing social reality in a culture, and how those

socially constructed realities are implied in social practices. Within the stance, researchers decided to employ case studies as a type of research. The study takes every research subject as a unit of analysis or case. The Research team has conducted in-depth interviews and observations as data collection techniques. For data analysis, we use thematic analysis (Willig, 2013), which has been defined as a method of analysis characterized by theoretical flexibility, with which researchers can build a theoretical framework to be the answer to research question. A theme can be comprehended as something important about the data with concerning to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within a set of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The process was delineated from coding, theoretical categorization, and at last we can come up with several themes. In the context, a theme could be viewed as research results, that is being functioned to be the answer for research question.

We have 4 subjects as cases unit. The subjects were assigned with the help of a breastfeeding network in Jakarta. The subjects are (in pseudonyms as follows):

"Donna"

She is 25 years old, a mother of two boys, Donna has been married 7 years, and now she and her family lives in East Jakarta. Donna is not a working mother she spends full time at home taking care of her kids and the family. The first child is 6 years old now, and the 2nd one is 2,5 years old and still depends on the mother's breastmilk.

"Elina"

Elina is also a mother of two children, she is 39 years. She has been married for 17 years and the couple has two kids. The first one is 17 years old, and the 2nd child is 3 years, both are girls. The youngest child of Elina and her husband is still breastfed, and the mother has been consulting doctors for cessation of breastfeeding.

"Kitty"

Kitty is 24 years and has one child, a boy now 4 years. Kitty is now enrolling in a professional psychologist master's degree

school while working to give her only child a good life. As the sole breadwinner since the baby 1-year-old, Kitty is very tough on giving breastmilk to her son.

“Rose”

Rose is 32 years and has also two children, a girl and a boy, who is now 15 and 10 years old. Rose is working as a cook for 3 houses, she works very hard because her husband is chronically sick and from a long time ago cannot work due to his health.

The Research team interviewed subjects directly in a face-to-face interaction and also by zoom media communication. Personal profiles of 4 research subjects can be classified as follows:

Characteristics of *“Megapolitan maternal women”*

1. Ages between 20 to 40
2. Two persons were born and raised in Jakarta City, and two persons were born in other cities in Java Island and then moved to Jakarta because of education and work
3. Three cases are happily married women who have been in legal-binding marriage between 5 to 20 years long and only one divorced.
4. The family of the cases is coming from “aspiring middle-class families” with an average income between IDR 5 million to 15 million (The World Bank and Australian Government, 2019)
5. The cases are a full description of experiences from working mothers and non-working mothers
6. The babies in the cases are in good health, growing well physically and emotionally
7. All cases have children who are now still in breastfeeding time and/or have kids not more than 12 years old, whomever breastfed exclusively

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Team has interviewed all research subjects and conducted data management, from inductive coding, then categorization, and at last thematization. Inductive coding

can be defined as the basic labeling of every answer from research subjects. Here at this stage, we have found 400 codes. After classifying it with regarding to the main construct and the openness to other constructs, we found 50 categories. These 50 categories then narrowed it down to 5 themes. Here is the result comprises of 5 themes. These themes come up from several discussions and one process of member check. The themes from PSE (perceived self-efficacy) are *belief in “natural mother”*, *the capability of taking care of breastfeeding problems*, and *perception about baby’s development*. But we also found other themes, *social support*, and *technological use*.

1. *Belief in “natural mother”*

Being a mother for these 4 women has been perceived as a blessing and in addition to that blessing, they feel very proud of themselves, concerning the opportunity to giving the best nutrition for the children. The emotional reaction they showed during an interview when we asked, how do you feel that you are a maternal mother that can give exclusive breastfeeding?

Donna said:

I thank God for the opportunity, and it feels so good, really good

Elina stated:

I think it is my happiness, lots of mommies out there cannot breastfeed the baby

Kitty said:

Whatever is needed for breastfeeding the baby, I will do it, it is so happy every time I sit and breastfeed my baby

Rose said:

I love it, the feeling at the time of breastfeeding

The most important finding is the mothers' belief that breastfeeding makes them a natural mother, the perception helps them define their role to give breastmilk. The perception motivates them when some adversities appear before them.

Donna stated:

Breastmilk can cure illness, I always trust this, because when my baby was sick, I continued giving him breastmilk, and rarely I have to go to the doctor. You know, breastfeeding makes me a mother that does not have to depend on products of manufacturers, and I feel we are all healthier.

Elina said:

My husband and I believe in breastmilk as the best nutrition, we can help other families by saying that breastmilk, our process of breastfeeding has been a savior when we faced some difficulties. And of course, breastmilk is more natural, healthy, and better for the baby. Even now, when my baby should be stopped because she is now 2,5 years, breastmilk is still very good for my baby.

Kitty said:

I heard from my doctor, formula milk as milk consists of leftover or garbage from the process if manufacturing, and of course formula is harmful to our baby. I think because you can breastfeed, it sure as you have manifested your life as a natural mother, and you should be grateful about that.

Rose said:

Before getting married, I never thought I could give ASI (in Indonesia Air Susu Ibu), I have some health problems during the first and second pregnancy, but luckily my babies are all in good health even until now. For me, breastmilk is always the best, healthier, and compatible to the baby's stomach.

2. *The capability of taking care of breastfeeding problems*

Generally, there will always be problems that mothers face during the breastfeeding period and altogether needs continuous support (Renfrew, 2007). The mothers in this study have a very high Perceived Self-Efficacy, which is extracted from their statement when they had to take care of breastfeeding problems.

Donna stated:

I am very grateful that I did not have problems of giving breastmilk, just like my friends or my neighbors. There were problems like nipple blisters but in my experience. it was not a difficult case and it was cured just by applying my own breastmilk around the nipple. For me, although I have been very busy taking care of my family, breastfeeding my two babies were prioritized.

Elina stated:

The problems of breastfeeding are faced by every maternal mother, and in my experience, I am capable of handling the problems. I have been very convinced because I have a strong will for

breastfeeding, I have benefits instead of difficulties.

Kitty stated:

During the period of breastfeeding, I had problems of relationship with my husband, not a baby problem or breastfeeding problem. We had so many disagreements and finally decided to divorce. It was the best decision for both of us and the baby.

Rose stated:

The biggest problem of breastfeeding then, our family was running out of money, so I cannot eat a portion of nutritious food, but because breastmilk is always the best, no matter how the mothers' intake, my baby is healthy and do not have a serious problem of health.

3. Perception of baby's development

The theme about the perception of baby's development consists of the comprehension of mothers toward their children progress and developmental stages. Breastfeeding mothers attach securely to the children from the first day the baby was born, and they feel confident concerning her development.

Donna said:

Breastfeeding is an intuitive process for women, for as long as we try hard, we do not have to worry about that. And for me, both of my kids were breastfed until they feel it is cessation time. The first child had the same process of cessation as the second one. I can see that they have developed well, the first one

is getting good grades in school, the second one also achieves may progress.

Elina said:

I always compare my kids with others, and I am proud of my kid's development. They are rarely getting sick and they have progressed that my husband and I feel so proud of. Our pride has something to do with the fact that both were exclusively breastfed, they are close to us parents, and we can teach them many things.

Kitty said:

Although I am a single parent, I can make my son capable of reaching his developmental stages. This is also a reason that I want to get a master's degree as a professional psychologist. During the breastfeeding period, my son and I spend a lot of time together and he is attached to me very well, up until now. I hope my son will become a good man.

Rose said:

We were a poor family, thank you, God, our life has changed now. And we are so grateful, during hard times, we still can give the best nutrition for the baby, because of breastfeeding. I can see that my first child and also my second child could survive and develop well, due to exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months old and continued into 2 years.

4. Social support

Research results showed that in all cases, we can find an array of narration referred to the social

support of breastfeeding. The most important was the support of the husband, extended family members, and mother support group (MSG), whether it was found online or offline. Here are some significant excerpts.

Donna said:

My husband, parents and, in-laws are all very supportive for me to focus on breastfeeding, they also have some thoughts in common that formula milk is not a good product for baby, that is why they support all the women in our family who is keen enough to fight for the success of breastfeeding. But I did not engage in MSG. I only follow one WhatsApp group, which originates from high school alumnae, all women WhatsApp group, but does not deal with breastfeeding.

Elina said:

My husband works at an NGO, called Perinasia (note: Perhimpunan Perinatologi Indonesia), an NGO which has a vision to help neonates or newborn babies and breastfeeding mothers. Convincingly, my husband is the biggest supporter and we all work together through every problem. MSG is important, I join one MSG specifically for supporting breastfeeding mothers. We talk a lot about how to solve the problem such as nipple blisters, lack of breastmilk, infection and, so on.

Kitty said:

It has never been easy being a single parent, but since the baby was born, I

fought hard to breastfeed, as I believe breastfeeding will enhance the relationship between me and my son. I learn a lot from my family and friends, but also I read some online groups (MSG) that answers all questions about breastfeeding benefits and problems. Yes, I am just a passive member, an information consumer.

Rose said:

My husband comes from a family that likes to interfere into anything in this world. They hate breastfeeding but also support breastfeeding. I did not care about their support, but I always consult bidan (midwives) near my home, she is kind to everybody and helps us by spending time to discuss breastfeeding and babies' problems.

5. Technological use

Digital technology has become a solid and influential part of human life, and also these 4 women have proximity to digital technology, such as smartphone and laptop. When they were asked about what kind of digital technology they are attached to and what is the relevance with breastfeeding? Here is what they think.

Donna stated:

I use my smartphone heavily every day and it serves the needs of maternity demands

Elina stated:

I have a dependency to smartphone and laptop both has been very helpful for accomplishing my tasks

Kitty stated:

As a dual role woman, I use both smartphone and laptop for connecting with anything up to date about breastfeeding, and now about toddler's positive development

Rose stated:

Though I am not good at technology, I use my smartphone to help me deal with problems as a mother and worker

Breastfeeding is a kind of health behavior that is not just oriented toward babies but also for mothers, which we can call a bi-orientation health behavior. However, this study explores more on the psychology of breastfeeding for answering the research question: how the research result can be applied to help mothers extend breastfeeding time. Breastfeeding cannot be detached from the social context where the mother and baby live (Leeming et.al., 2013). From the very first time, mother and father decide the path of the baby to have breastmilk as his or her source of life, the extended family (grandmother, a grandfather from both sides, etc), even neighbors and friends of family intervene into maintaining or rejecting the process. In Indonesia, the social context of breastfeeding is very significant as part of contextual support for optimal dan qualified breastfeeding.

The study has found that breastfeeding is a narration of negotiation of knowledge and ideas about the development of a baby to be a healthy human being. This negotiation has been known widely. The parent is very keen on the possibility of the growth and development of the kids. Husband and wife involved in communication and negotiating on breastfeeding, especially how they can extend the process and support it. But what has been neglected, breastfeeding should be viewed as a self-narration of a mother. Mothers everywhere in the world are conducting breastfeeding basically as an experience, something that is private and very close to her self-awareness. This is an

important finding, if health professionals want to suggest breastfeeding during antenatal care (ANC), it can be proposed with the premise in mind, that breastfeeding to mothers, is not just some “governmental program”. Breastfeeding also refers to mothers’ hope of having a well-developed child with consistency of breastfeeding. The 4 cases showed commitment to breastfeeding, no matter how the burdens and problems on the mother’s side of that behavior.

The research result is in line with Narvaez (2020). Narvaez (2020) conducted a systematic review about ecocentrism and how it affects sustainable society. It was mentioned that one of the baselines which are very significant for the human development and morality of an individual is breastfeeding. Breastfeeding lays a foundation for proper biopsychosocial development from the first day the baby was born (Narvaez, 2020). In this study, we have found that maternal mothers who are breastfeeding baby believes breastfeeding reflects a sign of a natural mother, compared to mothers who prefer formula milk. We also found a common thought about our research result and from Nadesan and Sotirin (1998). Nadesan and Sotirin (1998) elaborated that the choice between breastfeeding or not breastfeeding is a romanticized contradiction among women labeled as natural and selfless mother and women who chose to deal with impurities. In this context, breastmilk-substitutes given to infants can be inferred bringing the infants toward sickness and problems. With the thought of a natural mother comes a strong perceived self-efficacy in breastfeeding. Belief about a “natural mother” enables a maternal woman to deal with the crisis and problems of breastfeeding. Dennis (1999) in a study about breastfeeding confidence said that for the duration, a maternal mother should be intervened with psychosocial factors, including a subjective belief on breastfeeding and the attachment with infants.

The study also represents the significance of digital technology in the life of a mother and breastfed baby. Mother Support Group (MSG) currently is

dependent on features in digital technology. For example, WAG or WhatsApp group is becoming a popular channel for MSGs to be well-known. And also, digital technology disseminates information, although not all information has been updated and consisting scientific information. WHO (2021) in its Global Breastfeeding Scorecard 2021 stated 9 points of priorities that need call for action to ensure exclusive and prolonged breastfeeding duration around the world. One of those priorities are community support programs. It has been proven in 72 countries with increasing target groups, community support for breastfeeding helps mothers and families maintain breastfeeding and overcome challenges throughout the journey of giving the best nutrition for infants.

CONCLUSION

From the study, we can conclude that breastfeeding is not just a natural and physical process but also a social experience. As a social experience, breastfeeding involves many people, and mothers should take care of themselves and the baby and convince her social milieu that breastmilk is the best nutrition for the baby, and how a baby can continue his or her life. Saving newborn baby, until 6 months old and continued, relied heavily on breastfeeding. Psychological point of view has some fresh thinking of helping mothers and health professions. The result of this study represents a coherent description of psychological factors that can be used for intervention to prolong breastfeeding duration. Perceived self-efficacy in maternal mothers means that mothers have confirmed beliefs and power to deal with every crisis during the breastfeeding period. Especially, to maintain exclusive breastfeeding until the babies 6 months old, maternal mothers should be supplied with scientific and reliable information, supported by MSG, learn about babies' development and breastfeeding problems, and take care of herself and be confident that she has given the best as a natural mother.

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