

Lactation Education by Midwives in Supporting Exclusive Breastfeeding

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Abstract

Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life is an important intervention in improving infant health and nutritional resilience, but the success rate in Indonesia has not yet reached the national target. The urgency of this study lies in the importance of understanding the role of midwives in providing lactation education as an effective strategy to improve exclusive breastfeeding practices. This study aims to analyze how lactation education provided by midwives contributes to improving mothers' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding breastfeeding. The study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method, examining five relevant national scientific publications on the topic of lactation education and exclusive breastfeeding practices. The data were analyzed thematically by identifying patterns, concepts, and relationships between research results. The results of the analysis show that lactation education by midwives has a significant impact on increasing mothers' knowledge, forming positive attitudes towards breastfeeding, and strengthening emotional and social support for mothers. In addition, continuous training for midwives has been proven to increase the competence and effectiveness of the education provided. These findings contribute to the strengthening of health behavior theory and midwifery practices based on maternal empowerment. This study concludes that the success of exclusive breastfeeding requires a holistic, innovative, and sustainable educational approach. It is recommended that future research use a triangulation approach and expand the sociocultural context to enrich the understanding of the phenomenon of lactation education in Indonesia.

Keywords: lactation education, midwifery personnel, exclusive breastfeeding, maternal and child health, breastfeeding promotion.

INTRODUCTION

Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life is one of the most effective strategies for improving infant nutrition and immunity. Breast milk contains complete nutrients needed for growth, development, and protection against various infectious diseases. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding without any additional food or liquids for the first six months, followed by breastfeeding alongside complementary foods until the age of two. However, in many developing countries, including Indonesia, the success rate of exclusive breastfeeding programs is still not optimal. Although the government has launched various policies and programs to promote breastfeeding, their implementation still faces many challenges at the individual and health service system levels.

National data shows that exclusive breastfeeding coverage in Indonesia is increasing, but has not yet reached the expected target. According to a 2024 report by the WHO and UNICEF, exclusive breastfeeding coverage reached around 66.4%, an increase from 52% in 2017. Although this shows a positive trend, the figure is still below the national target of 80%. In addition, there are still considerable variations between regions, and in some areas, exclusive breastfeeding coverage has not even reached 50%. This low success rate reflects the gap between national policy and implementation in the field, which is largely influenced by factors such as mothers' knowledge, family support, socioeconomic conditions, and the effectiveness of health workers in providing lactation education.

The role of midwives is very strategic in efforts to increase the success of exclusive breastfeeding. As the health workers closest to pregnant women, women in labor, and postpartum women, midwives are ideally positioned to provide effective and sustainable lactation education and . The education provided by midwives not only covers information about the benefits of breast milk, but also includes training in proper breastfeeding techniques, handling common problems such as incorrect latching or insufficient milk production, and emotional support for breastfeeding mothers.

Research shows that educational interventions carried out by health workers, including midwives, can significantly increase mothers' knowledge and skills in breastfeeding and extend the duration of exclusive breastfeeding (Smith & et al., 2023).

However, various studies also reveal that the implementation of lactation education by midwives in Indonesia still faces a number of obstacles. According to research by PagePress Journals (2021), maternal knowledge is one of the main determinants of exclusive breastfeeding success, but most mothers still do not receive adequate information from health workers (PagePress Journals, 2021). On the other hand, research by Mukasyan et al. (2025) shows that training and institutional support for midwives in providing lactation education is still limited (Mukasyan & et al., 2025). Many educational programs in health facilities are still one-way informative and are not based on a participatory approach that actively involves mothers in the learning process.

In addition to internal factors related to midwifery, environmental support also influences the success of lactation education. Many working mothers face obstacles in maintaining exclusive breastfeeding due to time constraints, inadequate lactation facilities, and social pressure to give formula milk. A study by BMC Public Health (2021) shows that working mothers are more likely to stop exclusive breastfeeding earlier than non-working mothers (BMC Public Health, 2021). In such conditions, the presence of midwives who are able to provide education and psychosocial support is an important factor in maintaining breastfeeding practices amid these challenges.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the role of lactation education by midwives in supporting the success of exclusive breastfeeding. Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of an effective and sustainable midwifery-based lactation education model. Practically, the results of this study are expected to serve as a basis for policymakers and health institutions to strengthen the capacity of midwives in promoting exclusive breastfeeding, thereby improving the welfare of mothers and babies and supporting the achievement of national targets in maternal and child health programs.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a literature review method. A qualitative approach was chosen because it is suitable for understanding social phenomena in depth, especially in the context of the complex and contextual role of lactation education by midwives. The literature review method was used to identify, analyze, and synthesize the results of previous studies relevant to the topic of exclusive breastfeeding and lactation education. This approach allowed researchers to obtain a complete conceptual overview of how midwives play a role in supporting the success of exclusive breastfeeding through effective education. This approach is in line with Creswell's (2018) view that qualitative research aims to understand the meaning of human experiences contextually through the exploration of narrative data (Creswell, 2018).

The data sources in this study came from secondary data, namely various scientific publications relevant to the research topic. These sources included national and international journal articles, midwifery and public health textbooks, official reports from institutions such as WHO and UNICEF, and empirical research results published in the last five years (2020–2025). The inclusion criteria used were publications that discussed lactation education, the role of midwives in promoting exclusive breastfeeding, and factors that influence the success of exclusive breastfeeding. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria included articles that were not available in full text or were not relevant to the midwifery context. The selection was carried out systematically by considering the credibility of the source and its relevance to the research focus.

Data collection techniques were carried out through systematic literature searches using academic databases such as PubMed, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and Garuda Dikti. Keywords used in the search included "lactation education," "midwifery," "exclusive breastfeeding," "breastfeeding support," and "breastfeeding education by midwives." Each piece of literature obtained was then selected based on its suitability to the topic, methodology, and contribution to the understanding of the concept of lactation education in the context of midwifery practice. The search

process was carried out with due regard to the principles of transparency and replication in order to be scientifically accountable, as suggested by Snyder (2019) in the methodology of systematic literature review(Snyder, 2019) .

The collected data were analyzed using thematic content analysis. This analysis was conducted through the following steps: (1) reading and understanding the content of each literature thoroughly, (2) identifying the main themes related to the role of lactation education by midwives, (3) grouping data based on similar themes, such as education methods, implementation barriers, and impacts on exclusive breastfeeding practices, and (4) interpreting the data to draw conclusions relevant to the research objectives. Thematic analysis was chosen because it allows researchers to find patterns and relationships between concepts in various studies that were reviewed (Braun & Clarke, 2019) . This approach also helps to produce a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of lactation education in the context of midwifery services in Indonesia.

Although this research is a literature study and does not involve direct subjects, the principles of data validity and reliability are maintained through source triangulation and reference verification. Triangulation was conducted by comparing results from various literature to ensure consistency of information. Additionally, the analysis process was conducted reflectively and repeatedly to ensure that the resulting interpretations were not biased toward certain perspectives. With this methodological design, it is hoped that the research can produce a valid scientific synthesis that can be used as a basis for developing midwifery policies or practices in supporting exclusive breastfeeding through lactation education.

RESULTS

The results of the literature study show that lactation education by midwives has a significant effect on increasing mothers' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in exclusive breastfeeding. From the five research sources analyzed, there is a consistent pattern showing that midwives play a strategic role as the main facilitators in shaping mothers' awareness of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding. Findings from Mertasari et al. (2024) confirm that health workers, especially midwives, have a major responsibility in providing education and practical support to breastfeeding mothers (Mertasari et al., 2024) . This study shows that education conducted continuously from pregnancy to postpartum increases the proportion of mothers who successfully provide exclusive breastfeeding for up to the first six months of their baby's life.

Meanwhile, research by Killianis et al. (2025) found a significant relationship between mothers' education levels, knowledge, and behavior and the success of exclusive breastfeeding (Killianis et al., 2025) . These results reinforce previous findings that lactation education not only serves as a transfer of information, but also plays a role in shaping mothers' positive attitudes and commitment to breastfeeding practices. This study highlights that midwifery interventions conducted with a personal approach—such as direct counseling and group discussions—are more effective than one-way education. Thus, midwives need to develop participatory educational communication strategies to strengthen the understanding of mothers and families.

In a psychosocial context, a study by Samosir et al. (2025) revealed that maternal mental health is an important factor influencing the success of exclusive breastfeeding (Samosir et al., 2025) . Mothers with stable emotional conditions and good social support are more likely to be able to maintain breastfeeding for a full six months. The role of midwives in providing emotional support has been proven to reduce the anxiety and stress often experienced by breastfeeding mothers. These results expand our understanding that lactation education should not only focus on technical aspects, but also need to include psychological and social dimensions that support successful breastfeeding.

In addition to interpersonal approaches, the use of educational media has also been proven effective. Research by Putri et al. (2025) shows that lactation education using audio-visual media significantly improves mothers' knowledge and practical skills in breastfeeding. Mothers who obtained information through interactive media found it easier to understand proper breastfeeding techniques compared to conventional counseling (Putri et al., 2025) . This shows that innovations in

learning media can be an important strategy in improving the effectiveness of lactation education by midwives, especially in areas with low education levels or limited time for direct consultation.

Another finding comes from a study by Elis et al. (2024), which highlights an increase in midwives' knowledge and attitudes after receiving training on lactation education (Elis et al., 2024). The training not only increased technical knowledge but also strengthened midwives' belief in the importance of promoting exclusive breastfeeding. This increase in midwives' capacity has a direct impact on the quality of education provided to mothers, thereby increasing the chances of success for exclusive breastfeeding programs in the community. These results show that the success of lactation education depends not only on mothers as recipients, but also on the competence of midwives as messengers and primary companions.

Overall, the synthesis results show that the success of exclusive breastfeeding programs is greatly influenced by three main dimensions of lactation education by midwives, namely (1) the cognitive dimension—increasing mothers' knowledge through direct education and media; (2) the affective dimension—strengthening motivation and emotional support; and (3) the professional dimension—improving midwives' capacity through continuous training. Compared to previous studies, recent studies emphasize a holistic approach that is not only oriented towards information transfer, but also towards mentoring and empowering mothers. Thus, lactation education by midwives has proven to be a key factor in the success of exclusive breastfeeding and needs to be developed as an integral part of maternal and child health services.

Table 1. Lactation Education by Midwives in Supporting Exclusive Breastfeeding.

No	Title	Author	Year	Source
1	Healthcare Professional Roles Educate Exclusive Breastfeeding Mothers in Denpasar	Luh Mertasari, Dyah Paramita Duarsa, Luh Seri Saraswati	2024	Public Health of Indonesia
2	The Relationship Between Mothers' Education Level, Knowledge, and Behavior and Exclusive Breastfeeding	Florentina Aspianti Regnat Killianis Bali, Firdawsi, Damar A.	2025	Journal of Pharmacy and Science
3	The Effect of Audio-Visual Media Education on Improving Breastfeeding Mothers' Knowledge	Meilani Putri, Elsy Juni Andri Kariny, Yetty D.	2025	Wellness and Healthy Magazine
4	Improving Midwives' Knowledge and Attitudes in Breastfeeding Education	Andi Elis, Sartika Sain, Devi Darwin, Andi Maryam	2024	Malahayati International Journal of Nursing and Health Science
5	Healthy Mother and Baby Education Services with Exclusive Breastfeeding	Rini Kristiyanti, Nur Chabibah, Milatun Khanifah	2022	EMPATI Journal (Community Education, Service, and Social Action)

DISCUSSION

Analysis of the research results shows that lactation education by midwives is a major determinant in the success of exclusive breastfeeding, both in terms of mothers' knowledge, attitudes, and breastfeeding practices. Findings from Mertasari et al. (2024) confirm that breastfeeding success depends not only on biological factors but also on the effectiveness of communication and educational interventions by health workers. This is in line with the Health Belief Model (HBM) theory of health behavior change, which emphasizes that increasing perceived benefits, reducing barriers, and the presence of external reinforcers (such as the role of midwives) can encourage individuals to adopt healthy behaviors. In this context, midwives function as agents of change who not only transfer knowledge but also foster mothers' motivation and confidence to breastfeed exclusively.

Research by Killianis et al. (2025) supports this theory by showing that mothers' education and knowledge levels have a positive relationship with exclusive breastfeeding practices. Lactation education provided by midwives can bridge the knowledge gap between low- and high-educated mothers, thereby playing a role in reducing disparities in exclusive breastfeeding practices (Killianis et al., 2025). From the perspective of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, this illustrates the process of observational learning, where mothers learn through social experiences and guidance from midwives as models of ideal breastfeeding behavior. Mothers' self-efficacy in breastfeeding also increases with consistent support from midwives.

Furthermore, the results of the study by Samosir et al. (2025) enrich the analysis by highlighting the psychological dimensions that influence the success of exclusive breastfeeding (Samosir et al., 2025). The mother's mental health plays an important role in maintaining milk production and the continuity of breastfeeding. Mothers with high stress levels tend to experience difficulties with breastfeeding due to hormonal disturbances that affect the let-down reflex. In this context, midwives have a dual role, not only as educators but also as supportive counselors who help reduce mothers' emotional stress. This is in line with the concept of holistic midwifery care, where midwifery services cover physical, psychological, and social aspects in an integrated manner. The emotional support provided by midwives is a form of promotive intervention that contributes to the success of exclusive breastfeeding.

In addition to interpersonal approaches, innovations in educational media have also been shown to increase the effectiveness of lactation counseling. A study by Putri et al. (2025) shows that education using audio-visual media has a significant impact on increasing mothers' knowledge. Interactive media helps mothers understand breastfeeding techniques more clearly and interestingly than conventional counseling (Putri et al., 2025). These findings reinforce Mayer's multimedia learning theory, which emphasizes that the use of various information channels (visual, auditory, and text) can improve understanding and retention of information. In the context of midwifery services, the application of digital media in lactation education can be an effective solution in the modern era, especially for reaching mothers with limited time or access to face-to-face services.

Meanwhile, research by Elis et al. (2024) highlights the importance of increasing the professional capacity of midwives in providing lactation education (Elis et al., 2024). Formal training and competency updates have been proven to improve midwives' knowledge, attitudes, and confidence in providing breastfeeding counseling. This shows that the success of lactation education depends not only on the readiness of mothers but also on the readiness of health workers as service providers. In the perspective of Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory, midwives act as change agents who accelerate the adoption of breastfeeding behavior through the dissemination of information and real examples in the community. Therefore, ongoing coaching and training for midwives is an important step in ensuring the sustainability of exclusive breastfeeding programs.

However, these studies also have several limitations that need to be critically examined. First, most studies are still local in nature and limited to small populations, so generalizing the results to the national level needs to be done with caution. Second, not all studies have integrated cultural and economic factors that also influence breastfeeding practices in Indonesian society. Third, some educational interventions still emphasize knowledge aspects, without measuring longitudinal behavioral changes. Therefore, future research needs to develop a more comprehensive lactation education model with a multidisciplinary approach, involving psychosocial aspects, family support, and lactation-friendly workplace policies. Strengthening the capacity of midwives through evidence-based training is also a key recommendation for improving the quality of lactation education interventions.

Overall, the synthesis of the five studies shows that lactation education by midwives is a fundamental component in promoting maternal and child health. The success of exclusive breastfeeding programs is not only measured by mothers' knowledge, but also by the effectiveness of the support system built through collaboration between midwives, families, and the community. These findings make an important contribution to the fields of midwifery and public health by

emphasizing that holistic, participatory, and sustainable educational interventions can significantly improve the well-being of mothers and babies.

CONCLUSION

The results of this qualitative research based on literature review show that lactation education by midwives plays a central role in the success of exclusive breastfeeding, particularly through increasing knowledge, positive attitudes, and emotional support for breastfeeding mothers. Findings from various studies analyzed provide an in-depth understanding that the success of exclusive breastfeeding is not only determined by individual factors of the mother, but also by the quality of educational interactions and continuous support from midwives as agents of change in the community. This study's contribution to the development of health behavior theory lies in its integration of educational, psychosocial, and professional approaches in midwifery practice, reinforcing the concepts of holistic midwifery care and the Health Belief Model in the context of mother empowerment. Socially and culturally, the results of this study emphasize the importance of creating an environment that supports breastfeeding practices through the active role of midwives, families, and the community. Academically, these findings open up space for the development of evidence-based lactation education models that are more participatory and adaptive to developments in health communication technology. The limitations of this study lie in the focus of the literature sources, which are still limited to the local context and do not explore broader socioeconomic variables. Therefore, further research is recommended to examine the effectiveness of lactation education interventions longitudinally and cross-culturally to strengthen the generalization of results and the development of more comprehensive maternal and child health policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that midwives increase their educational role through a holistic, participatory, and sustainable approach in supporting exclusive breastfeeding. Midwifery practitioners need to be provided with routine evidence-based training to strengthen their competence in lactation counseling, including empathetic communication skills and the use of innovative educational media such as audio-visual or digital media. For academics, the results of this study can be used as a basis for developing a midwifery education curriculum that emphasizes the importance of promoting exclusive breastfeeding as an integral part of maternal services. Policy makers in the health sector are expected to strengthen structural support through breastfeeding-friendly policies in health facilities and workplaces. For further research, it is recommended to conduct a broader exploration using a data triangulation approach, involving perspectives from mothers, families, and health workers, as well as longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of lactation education on breastfeeding practices. Thus, future research can enrich theoretical understanding and expand practical application in efforts to increase the success rate of exclusive breastfeeding in Indonesia.

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