

The Relationship of Health Education About Prebiotics with Maternal Knowledge in the Provision of Healthy and Nutritious Complementary Feeding

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ABSTRACT

Improper complementary feeding remains a major child health concern in Indonesia, particularly the limited utilization of prebiotics in complementary foods, despite their potential role in supporting infant gut health and immune function. Maternal knowledge regarding prebiotic-based complementary feeding is considered an important factor that may be influenced by health education provided by midwives. This study aimed to examine the association between midwife-led health education on prebiotic complementary feeding and maternal knowledge regarding healthy and nutritious complementary feeding practices. An analytical cross-sectional study was conducted in the working area of the Andalas Public Health Center, Padang. A total of 86 mothers with infants aged 6–24 months were recruited using purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire that had undergone validity and reliability testing. Univariate and bivariate analyses were performed using the chi-square test with a 95% confidence level. The findings showed that 54.7% of mothers had good knowledge, 29.1% had sufficient knowledge, and 16.2% had poor knowledge. In addition, 60.5% of respondents had received health education on prebiotic complementary feeding from midwives. A significant association was found between health education and maternal knowledge ($p = 0.002$), with mothers who received health education being 3.2 times more likely to have good knowledge than those who did not. These findings suggest that strengthening routine and structured health education programs delivered by midwives may improve maternal knowledge and promote appropriate prebiotic-based



complementary feeding practices, thereby supporting optimal infant nutrition and health outcomes.

Keywords: Health Education, Prebiotics, Complementary Feeding, Maternal Knowledge, Midwives, Infants

INTRODUCTION

Appropriate and nutritionally adequate complementary feeding (MP-ASI) plays a crucial role in supporting infant growth and development. Beginning at six months of age, breast milk alone is no longer sufficient to meet an infant's increasing nutritional requirements, making the introduction of complementary foods essential. Inappropriate complementary feeding practices may contribute to adverse health outcomes, including impaired growth, increased susceptibility to infections, and gastrointestinal disorders (Ministry of Health, 2022). Therefore, ensuring that mothers possess adequate knowledge regarding appropriate complementary feeding practices is an important public health priority.

Data from the 2022 Indonesian Toddler Nutritional Status Survey (SSGBI) indicated that approximately 55.4% of infants aged 6–24 months had not received complementary foods in accordance with recommended nutritional guidelines. One factor that may contribute to this issue is limited maternal knowledge regarding appropriate complementary feeding practices, including awareness of food components such as prebiotics that support infant gastrointestinal health (Ministry of Health, 2022). Inadequate access to nutrition-related information and health education may further contribute to these knowledge gaps.

Prebiotics are non-digestible food components that selectively stimulate the growth and activity of beneficial intestinal microorganisms. Evidence suggests that adequate prebiotic intake may support gut health, enhance immune function, and reduce the risk of certain gastrointestinal disorders in infants (Haryanto et al., 2020). Despite these potential benefits, maternal awareness and understanding of prebiotics within complementary feeding remain limited.

Midwives play an important role in maternal and child health services and are often a primary source of health information for mothers during pregnancy and the postnatal period. Previous studies have reported that nutrition and feeding education delivered by midwives is associated with improved maternal knowledge and infant feeding practices, including the timing of complementary feeding, food selection, and dietary diversity (Yuniarti et al., 2021). However, limited research has specifically examined the relationship between health education regarding prebiotics in complementary feeding and maternal knowledge of healthy and nutritious complementary feeding practices.

Previous studies have identified gaps between maternal knowledge and the implementation of recommended complementary feeding practices. Although many mothers receive information regarding infant feeding during visits to healthcare facilities, knowledge related to balanced nutrition and prebiotics remains suboptimal in some settings. For example,



Suryani et al. (2022) reported that health education interventions did not consistently result in adequate maternal understanding of prebiotics in complementary feeding. Similarly, Sari et al. (2020) found that while mothers who received education from midwives reported greater confidence in providing complementary foods, knowledge regarding the specific role and benefits of prebiotics remained limited.

The importance of improving maternal knowledge is underscored by the long-term consequences of inadequate complementary feeding practices. Poor-quality complementary feeding has been associated with suboptimal nutritional status and may contribute to growth faltering and increased vulnerability to infectious diseases. Data from the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS, 2020) indicated that the prevalence of stunting remained a significant public health concern. These findings highlight the need for effective nutrition education strategies that address both balanced nutrition and the role of prebiotics in complementary feeding.

Several studies have suggested that strengthening the capacity of healthcare providers, including midwives, may improve the quality of nutrition education delivered to mothers. However, existing educational programs often focus on general information regarding the timing and types of complementary foods, with less emphasis on specific nutritional components such as prebiotics and micronutrients (Fitriani et al., 2021). Consequently, mothers may have limited knowledge regarding the selection of food ingredients that support optimal infant nutrition.

Previous research by Sari et al. (2022) reported that educational interventions addressing prebiotics were associated with improved maternal understanding of nutritious complementary feeding. Furthermore, maternal knowledge has been linked to more appropriate food selection and feeding practices. In this context, midwives may serve as important facilitators of nutrition information and health promotion.

Evidence from international studies further supports the importance of maternal knowledge in complementary feeding practices. A study by Bimpong et al. (2020) found that higher levels of maternal knowledge and positive attitudes toward child feeding recommendations were associated with more appropriate complementary feeding practices and greater dietary adequacy among children. Similarly, Starkweather et al. (2020) demonstrated that interpersonal nutrition education significantly improved maternal knowledge and was associated with improved infant and young child feeding practices, including dietary diversity.

Given the importance of maternal knowledge and the potential contribution of health education delivered by midwives, further investigation is warranted to examine the relationship between health education regarding prebiotics in complementary feeding and maternal knowledge of healthy and nutritious complementary feeding practices. The findings of this study may provide evidence to support the development of more effective nutrition education programs for mothers of young children.

More in-depth research on the relationship between health education by midwives regarding prebiotics and maternal knowledge in providing healthy and nutritious complementary feeding is still very limited, especially in the Puskesmas area. Therefore, it is important to conduct



research that explores further how the influence of health education by midwives on maternal knowledge in the provision of nutritious and healthy complementary feeding.

The reason for the researchers' interest in this topic is based on the high number of cases of nutritional disorders in children under five in Indonesia and the low knowledge of mothers about the provision of healthy and nutritious MP-ASI. In Andalas Padang Health Center, for example, there are still many mothers who do not fully understand the importance of choosing nutritious food ingredients and prebiotics in complementary feeding. This situation encourages researchers to further explore the role of health education by midwives in improving maternal knowledge related to prebiotic-based healthy complementary feeding. Therefore, this study focuses on the relationship between health education by midwives with maternal knowledge in the provision of healthy and nutritious complementary feeding, particularly related to understanding of prebiotics.

METHODS

This study uses an analytical design with a cross-sectional approach, which aims to analyze the relationship between health education about prebiotic complementary feeding by midwives and maternal knowledge in the provision of healthy and nutritious complementary feeding. The study was conducted in the working area of Andalas Padang Health Center, with the aim to describe the conditions at the community level related to nutrition education and complementary feeding in infants. The sample used in this study was 86 mothers who had babies aged 6 to 24 months. Sample selection is done by purposive sampling technique. Inclusion criteria include mothers who have children of the target age of the study, visited the Andalas Padang Health Center during the study period, were able to communicate well, and were willing to be respondents. The exclusion criteria were mothers who did not complete the questionnaire, withdrew during the study, or had a condition that hindered the data collection process.

Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire consisting of questions that have been tested for validity and reliability to ensure the accuracy and consistency of measurement results. Validity test was conducted using Pearson product Moment correlation and reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. This questionnaire covers aspects of maternal knowledge about complementary feeding, the benefits of prebiotics in baby food, as well as an understanding of how to give nutritious and healthy complementary feeding. Health education as a research variable is education provided by midwives at Andalas Padang Health Center through maternal and child health counseling activities, both individually and in groups. Educational materials include the right time to start complementary feeding, the principles of healthy and nutritious complementary feeding, the frequency and portion of complementary feeding according to the age of the child, the selection of nutritious food ingredients, as well as the benefits of prebiotics in supporting gastrointestinal health and child growth. Education is provided using counseling media available at puskesmas, such as leaflets and direct communication. After the data were collected, the analysis was conducted univariately to describe the characteristics of respondents and the distribution of maternal knowledge, and bivariately



using the chi-square test to test the relationship between health education provided by midwives and maternal knowledge about complementary feeding. This test was performed with a significance level of 95%. Before conducting data collection, all mothers involved in the study were provided with complete information on the objectives, procedures, and benefits of the study. Mothers' participation in the study was voluntary, and they were given the opportunity to ask questions about the study before giving informed consent. Any data obtained is kept strictly confidential and is used only for research purposes.

RESULTS

1. Frequency Distribution of Maternal Knowledge about Complementary Feeding

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Maternal Knowledge about Complementary Feeding

Category Mother Knowledge	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Good	47	54,7
Enough	25	29,1
Less	14	16,2
Total	86	100

Based on Table 1, most mothers have good knowledge about complementary feeding (54.7%). However, almost half of the respondents (45.3%) are still in the category of insufficient and insufficient knowledge. These results indicate that increased education on complementary feeding is still needed to optimize the knowledge of mothers in meeting the nutritional needs of children..

2. Frequency Distribution of Health Education by Midwives on Complementary Feeding Prebiotics

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Health Education by Midwives on Complementary Feeding Prebiotics

Criteria for Health Education by midwives	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Given Health Education	52	60,5
Not Given Health Education	34	39,5
Total	86	100

The results in the table show the results regarding whether the mother has ever received health education about prebiotics in complementary feeding from the midwife. A total of 60.5% of mothers claimed to have received health education about prebiotics and complementary feeding from midwives, while 39.5% of mothers claimed not to have received such information. This shows that health education about complementary feeding, including prebiotics, has not been spread evenly to all mothers, although most mothers have received such information.



3. The Relationship Between Health Education by Midwives with Maternal Knowledge about Complementary Feeding

Table 3. Relationship Between Health Education by Midwives with Maternal Knowledge about Complementary Feeding

Health Education by Midwives	Mother's Knowledge is Good	Mother's Knowledge is Enough	My Mother's Lack of Knowledge	Total	OR (95% CI)	p-value
Ever Given	32 (61,5%)	14 (26,9%)	6 (11,5%)	52	3,2	0,002
Never Given	15 (44,1%)	11 (32,4%)	8 (23,5%)	34		
Total	47	25	14	86		

The results in the table show the results of a bivariate analysis between the health education provided by midwives and the mother's knowledge of complementary feeding. Chi-square test results showed a significant relationship between the two variables ($p = 0.002$). Mothers who had received health education about prebiotic complementary feeding from midwives tended to have better knowledge about complementary feeding (61.5%) than mothers who had never received health education (44.1%). The results of the analysis showed that mothers who received health education had a 3.2 times greater chance of having good knowledge than mothers who did not receive health education. This shows that the education provided by midwives has a significant positive impact on increasing maternal knowledge about healthy and nutritious complementary feeding.

DISCUSSION

1. Frequency Distribution of Maternal Knowledge about Complementary Feeding and Health Education by Midwives on Complementary

The results showed that most mothers have a good level of knowledge about the provision of complementary foods (MP-ASI) are healthy and nutritious. However, there are still mothers with a sufficient level of knowledge and less, which shows that the understanding of complementary feeding has not been evenly distributed among all respondents. This finding is in line with the research of Fitriani et al. (2021) which shows that although most mothers already have sufficient basic knowledge, there are still gaps in understanding related to nutritional aspects and the composition of foods that are suitable for babies. Similar findings were also reported by the World Health Organization (WHO), which emphasizes that maternal knowledge is one of the important factors in the practice of proper complementary feeding.

This study also found a significant relationship between health education provided by midwives about prebiotics in complementary feeding with the level of knowledge of mothers. The proportion of well-informed mothers was higher in the group that reported having received health education compared to the group that did not receive health education. This finding is in line with



the research of Haryanto et al. (2020) and Sari et al. (2022) which reported that health education is related to increasing maternal understanding of complementary feeding and infant nutrition.

Theoretically, health education can help improve mothers' access to relevant information about the nutritional needs of infants, the timing of complementary feeding, as well as the selection of appropriate food ingredients. In the context of this study, information about prebiotics is important because prebiotics play a role in supporting the balance of the intestinal microbiota and the health of the baby's gastrointestinal tract (Kemenkes RI, 2021). Therefore, mothers who obtain information related to the topic have the potential to have a better understanding of complementary feeding.

Nevertheless, the results of this study need to be interpreted carefully. The cross-sectional study design only allows the identification of the relationship between health education and maternal knowledge at one observation time, so it cannot be used to infer a cause-and-effect relationship. Thus, the findings of this study suggest that health education by midwives is related to the level of knowledge of mothers, but it is not certain that such health education directly leads to an increase in knowledge.

In addition, the study did not measure several other factors that in previous studies were reported to be related to maternal knowledge, such as socioeconomic status, family support, or other sources of health information. Therefore, these factors have the potential to be confounding factors that also affect the observed relationship between health education and maternal knowledge. These limitations need to be considered in interpreting the results of the study.

Compared with previous national studies, the results of this study are consistent with the findings that maternal nutrition education is related to maternal knowledge about the practice of complementary feeding. Internationally, various studies have also shown that nutritional education interventions in mothers contribute to improved knowledge and practice of child feeding. However, the effectiveness of health education is strongly influenced by the characteristics of the intervention provided, including the material, delivery methods, intensity, and duration of the program. The study did not evaluate these aspects so it is not possible to identify the most effective components of Health Education.

Overall, the results showed a significant relationship between health education about prebiotics in complementary feeding provided by midwives and the level of knowledge of mothers. However, given the limitations of the study design and the possible presence of unmeasured confounding factors, these findings need to be interpreted as an association, rather than as evidence of a causal relationship. Further research with longitudinal or experimental design and measurement of other potential factors is needed to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that affect maternal knowledge about complementary feeding.



2. The Relationship Between Health Education by Midwives with Maternal Knowledge about Complementary Feeding

This study found a significant relationship between health education provided by midwives about prebiotic complementary feeding with maternal knowledge about the provision of healthy and nutritious complementary feeding. Based on the results of the chi-square test which showed a value of $p = 0.002$, it can be concluded that the education provided by midwives affect the knowledge of mothers about complementary feeding. This is important considering that the provision of proper complementary foods is a major factor in supporting the growth and development of babies (Kemenkes RI, 2021).

Effective health education from midwives allows mothers to understand more about the importance of prebiotics in complementary feeding. Most mothers who have received health education about prebiotics from midwives have good knowledge of complementary feeding (61.5%). Research by Yuniarti et al. (2021) also showed that mothers who received nutritional education from medical personnel tended to better understand the benefits of various components in complementary feeding, including prebiotics. This confirms that education from health workers has a positive impact on the correct behavior of complementary feeding, which in turn can improve the nutritional status of infants.

The study also showed that 44.1% of mothers who did not receive health education on prebiotics from midwives had good knowledge. This figure is lower compared to 61.5% of mothers who have received an education. This shows that even if there are mothers who do not receive health education from midwives, they can still obtain information about complementary feeding from other sources, such as family, friends, or the internet. However, unstructured or untrusted information may have an impact on less precise understanding, as revealed by Fitriani et al. (2021), which states that mothers who rely on information from obscure sources often have limited knowledge of complementary feeding.

Even so, some mothers who did not receive education from midwives still showed good knowledge of complementary feeding, which indicates that there are other factors that affect the level of maternal knowledge in addition to direct education from midwives. A study by Sari et al. (2022) mentioned that access to information through social media and other sources can affect mothers' knowledge of infant nutrition, although such information may not be entirely accurate. This shows the need for supervision in the dissemination of information about complementary feeding so that mothers obtain correct and useful knowledge.

The relationship between health education by midwives and maternal knowledge about healthy complementary feeding is also influenced by how the education is delivered. Research by Pratiwi et al. (2020) emphasize that methods of delivering information, such as the use of visual media, practicums, or community-based approaches, can increase the effectiveness of Health Education. In this context, health education provided by midwives with a more applicable and easy-to-understand approach will be more influential in improving maternal knowledge about complementary feeding.



One of the things that need to be considered in providing health education is the active role of mothers in the learning process. Research by Haryanto et al. (2020) states that mothers' active participation in health education will improve their understanding and skills in providing nutritious complementary feeding to infants. Thus, it is important for midwives to not only provide information unilaterally, but also involve mothers in discussions and provide opportunities for them to ask questions and discuss the correct practice of complementary feeding.

In addition, the quality of the health education received by the mother also affects the results obtained. Although 60.5% of mothers claim to have received health education regarding complementary feeding, the quality of education provided is not always uniform. Research by Yuniarti et al. (2021) states that less in-depth education about the benefits of certain components in complementary feeding, such as prebiotics, can affect the mother's understanding of the nutritional content that should be present in the baby's diet. Therefore, more comprehensive and detailed education is needed to ensure mothers can provide optimal complementary feeding for their babies.

One of the factors that influence the success of health education by midwives is the compatibility of the material provided with the needs of mothers. Health education that is not relevant to the condition and level of understanding of the mother can reduce its effectiveness. This is in line with the findings in a study by Sari et al. (2022), which states that material adapted to the mother's level of knowledge will be easier to accept and understand. Therefore, it is important for the midwife to adapt the educational material to the characteristics of her audience.

Health education on complementary feeding also needs to be given on an ongoing basis, not just on one occasion. Research by Pratiwi et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of regular education to strengthen mothers' memories of things they have been taught. By providing education repeatedly, it is hoped that mothers will increasingly understand and apply the information provided in their daily lives.

In addition, it is also worth considering that the mother's good knowledge of complementary feeding is not always directly proportional to the practice she performs. Research by Fitriani et al. (2021) shows that although many mothers understand the importance of healthy complementary feeding, their practice does not always correspond to the knowledge they have. This can be due to a variety of factors, such as lack of skill in preparing nutritious meals or limited time and resources.

Environmental factors and social support also play a role in influencing the knowledge and practice of complementary feeding. Mothers who have support from their families or the surrounding environment tend to be better able to implement the knowledge they have about complementary feeding. According to Haryanto et al. (2020), strong social support, whether from husbands, families, or friends, can strengthen mothers' commitment to providing healthy and nutritious complementary feeding for their babies.

However, it is important to note that while social support can be helpful, it cannot replace the role of health education provided by medical personnel. Research by Yuniarti et al. (2021)



emphasizes that education provided by medical personnel has a stronger and more reliable scientific basis, while social support focuses more on emotional and practical aspects. Therefore, both need to go hand in hand to ensure that mothers can provide complementary feeding in accordance with nutritional guidelines.

In addition to health education, other factors such as social support and socioeconomic status are also reported to influence complementary feeding knowledge and practices. Research by Sari et al. (2022) showed that mothers with better economic conditions tend to have easier access to healthy and nutritious foodstuffs, potentially supporting better complementary feeding practices. However, these factors were not assessed in the study. Therefore, the influence of social support and socioeconomic status as unmeasured confounding factors needs to be recognized as a limitation of the study, as both may have influenced the observed relationship between health education and maternal knowledge. In contrast, mothers with less well-off economic backgrounds may face difficulties in selecting the necessary foodstuffs for complementary feeding, even though they have good knowledge. In conclusion, although most mothers who received health education on complementary feeding had better knowledge, there were still other factors that influenced the application of such knowledge. Therefore, health education provided by midwives needs to be improved in quality and reach. In addition, social and economic factors must also be considered in an effort to ensure that all mothers can provide optimal and nutritious complementary feeding for their babies.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows a relationship between health education provided by midwives and the level of knowledge of mothers about healthy and nutritious complementary foods. The results of the univariate analysis revealed that the majority of mothers have good knowledge about complementary feeding, although there is still a small percentage of mothers who have less knowledge. These findings indicate a relationship between health education provided by midwives and the level of knowledge of mothers about complementary feeding. In addition, 60.5% of mothers claimed to have received health education about complementary feeding prebiotics from midwives, which shows a significant effort in providing education to mothers. Bivariate analysis showed a significant relationship between health education by midwives with maternal knowledge about complementary feeding ($p = 0.002$), with mothers who received education had a 3.2 times greater chance of having good knowledge than mothers who did not get education. This confirms that health education provided by midwives can be a major factor in improving mothers' understanding of the importance of providing healthy complementary foods, especially those based on prebiotics.

However, this study has some limitations. First, the cross-sectional design of the study only gives an idea of the relationship between the variables at a certain point in time, so it cannot clearly show the cause-and-effect relationship. Second, although the sample used in this study is quite representative, namely Mothers with babies aged 6-24 months in Andalas Padang Health Center,



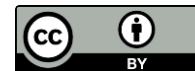
the results may not be fully generalizable to other regions with different population characteristics. In addition, although health education from midwives has been shown to affect maternal knowledge, other factors such as family support, access to nutritious food, and economic status can also affect the implementation of such knowledge in everyday life. Therefore, further research with longitudinal design and taking into account other external factors is necessary to obtain a more comprehensive picture of how health education can affect optimal complementary feeding.

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