

The Interpretation of Peucicap Culture from the Perspective of Breastfeeding Mothers in Aceh, Indonesia

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Abstract. This research investigates the cultural significance of "Peucicap" in the eyes of breastfeeding mothers in the Aceh Province. Peucicap is a distinctive Acehnese tradition involving the introduction of various flavours of food to newborns. This qualitative study involves breastfeeding mothers as participants and utilises in-depth interviews and group discussions to gather data. The research was conducted on Sabang Island from January to September. The results of the data analysis reveal diverse understandings and viewpoints among breastfeeding mothers regarding the meaning of Peucicap.

Some mothers view Peucicap as an initial effort to introduce their babies to various food flavours, including sour, salty, and sweet, to enrich their taste senses from an early age. However, some interpretations focus on the traditional and cultural aspects of Peucicap, where this practice is considered an ancestral heritage that must be preserved. In some cases, there is disagreement regarding how Peucicap may affect exclusive breastfeeding, with some breastfeeding mothers expressing concerns that this tradition may interfere with the recommended breastfeeding practices according to health guidelines.

These findings illustrate the complexity of integrating local cultural values with global health guidelines in infant care. Furthermore, they underscore the importance of a deeper understanding of culture's role in breastfeeding mothers' decision-making processes concerning infant nutrition and breastfeeding practices. This research provides valuable insights into how breastfeeding mothers in Aceh perceive and interpret the Peucicap culture and how this tradition continues to preserve cultural identity and ancestral heritage amidst changing global health environments.

Keywords: Peucicap culture; interpretation; breastfeeding mothers.

INTRODUCTION

Babies require adequate nutrition for their early growth in life. Breast Milk (ASI - Air Susu Ibu) is a complex biological fluid containing all the necessary infant nutrients [1, 2]. The body's easy digestibility of breast milk makes it the primary source of nutrition, fulfilling the needs for the growth and development of babies. The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby's life, and after that, breastfeeding can continue for up to 2 years. This aligns with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, emphasising that breastfeeding is one of the crucial initial steps in

achieving a healthy and prosperous life for humanity [3, 4].

In Indonesia, exclusive breastfeeding for infants under six months still faces significant challenges [4]. Only 1 out of 2 babies receive exclusive breastfeeding, and only 5 % of children continue to receive breast milk at 23 months of age. Therefore, nearly half of Indonesia's children do not receive the necessary nutrition during their first two years [5-7].

The introduction of complementary foods alongside breastfeeding is also a concern, as more than 40 % of babies are introduced to additional foods too early, before reaching six months of age. Alt-

though the coverage of exclusive breastfeeding across Indonesia has shown improvement, reaching 66.1% in 2020 (though slightly lower than 67.74% in 2018), it has surpassed the 2020 strategic plan target of 40% [8, 9].

However, significant disparities are evident in the coverage of exclusive breastfeeding across different regions. For example, in Aceh Province, exclusive breastfeeding coverage in 2020 reached 59.2%, an increase from the previous year's 55.24%. However, in the city of Sabang, only about 29% of babies receive exclusive breastfeeding, while in Pidie Jaya, it's around 31% [10].

This data illustrates the need for further efforts to increase awareness and support for exclusive breastfeeding throughout Indonesia and expand education and promotion regarding its benefits for infant growth and development.

Low coverage of exclusive breastfeeding has severe implications for infant well-being. Providing exclusive breastfeeding during infancy can reduce the risk of stunting because breast milk contains essential fats and proteins that support optimal physical growth. Breast milk also contains antibodies that boost the baby's immune system [11-13].

Various factors contribute to the low coverage of exclusive breastfeeding, including a lack of early breastfeeding initiation (EBF) and exclusive breastfeeding and a lack of commitment to implementing government regulations, such as Health Ministerial Decree No. 450/2004. Specifically, the implementation of this regulation has not been optimal in healthcare facilities such as hospitals and maternity clinics [14].

Furthermore, inadequate family support, low maternal education levels, and mothers who must work outside the home are also significant factors. Ineffective breastfeeding counselling, premature births, and cultural factors, such as the tradition of introducing complementary foods like honey or bananas before the baby reaches six months of age, also play a role in the low coverage of exclusive breastfeeding [15].

Research conducted in the Work Area of Woyla Barat Community Health Center in West Aceh District in 2018 showed that local culture and traditions can hinder the practice of exclusive breastfeeding [16]. Other research findings in the Work Area of Pulasaren Community Health Center in Cirebon City in 2018 also revealed that so-

cio-cultural factors and the role of healthcare workers influence the practice of providing complementary foods (MP-ASI) to infants aged 0-6 months [17].

The tradition of providing food and drinks to newborns in Acehese culture, as seen in the Peucicap ceremony, plays a significant role in the community. In this tradition, babies are introduced to various tastes for the first time, such as sour, salty, and sweet. This is considered an exercise to develop the baby's ability to distinguish flavours. This tradition also holds high religious and philosophical value [18].

The Peucicap procession is designed to build collective responsibility in monitoring the baby's growth and development [19, 20]. This ritual stimulates the baby's taste buds to become more sensitive and links it to developing good morals. It's a way to ensure that the child's character will be "sweet" or virtuous as they grow up.

It's important to note that the Peucicap ritual does not conflict with Islamic teachings and is even considered a Sunnah with ijmak (consensus) [21, 22]. Its implementation typically occurs at various stages of a baby's age, adjusted to the parents' economic conditions. However, after the Peucicap ritual is performed, a challenge arises in the community: the belief that exclusively breastfed babies tend to be fussy due to hunger [23]. This triggers the introduction of foods other than breast milk to the baby. To support sustainable and optimal breastfeeding practices, UNICEF and WHO have called on governments and stakeholders to increase investment in protecting and supporting breastfeeding. This includes improving services and programs that promote breastfeeding, providing quality counselling for breastfeeding mothers, accurate nutrition information, and Baby-Friendly Hospital services. Additionally, it's crucial to end the promotion of breast milk substitute products so that mothers and caregivers can make the best decisions regarding infant feeding.

METHODS

This study adopts a carefully designed qualitative research approach to explore the perceptions of breastfeeding mothers regarding the Peucicap culture in the Sabang City region. The sampling in this research employs the Purposive Sampling Technique, considering several specific criteria: Acehese Ethnicity: Samples are selected from

mothers of Acehese ethnicity to understand their perspectives within the context of Acehese culture. Mothers with infants under six months: The study focuses on mothers currently breastfeeding infants under six months, given the relevance to the common practice of Peucicap, which often occurs with young infants. Healthy mothers and infants: Informants are chosen from mothers in good health and their infants in good health, ensuring that the research results reflect perceptions unaffected by health issues. Willingness to be respondents: Prospective informants must be willing to participate in the research, including providing insights and experiences related to the Peucicap culture. Informants in this study consist of 15 mothers who meet the above criteria. They were selected to provide rich and varied information about their perceptions of the Peucicap culture. In addition to mothers, informants include family members, healthcare professionals, and other stakeholders in the Sabang City region. This was done to gain a more holistic understanding of how the Peucicap culture influences the practice of exclusive breastfeeding in Acehese society.

This research employs a qualitative method with data collection techniques such as in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and analysis of supporting documents to understand breastfeeding mothers' perceptions of the Peucicap culture in the Sabang City region and its impact on the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. The data is then transcribed, coded, and thematically analysed to identify key themes that emerge from breastfeeding mothers' perceptions of the Peucicap culture. The analysis results are presented in narrative form, describing the main findings, supported by direct quotations from informants. The research also considers the region's social, cultural, and economic context to understand better how the Peucicap culture influences the practice of exclusive breastfeeding. The results of this research are interpreted to answer research questions and provide deeper insights into the factors affecting the practice of exclusive breastfeeding, with the hope of providing a foundation for improving interventions or policies related to exclusive breastfeeding in the region.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Peucicap Practice and Exclusive Breastfeeding. In this research, we explore mothers' perspec-

tives in Sabang City regarding the practice of Peucicap and how it influences the provision of complementary foods to infants after the Peucicap ceremony. Interestingly, this practice is similar to that in Aceh Besar District, where mothers do not provide additional food to infants after Peucicap. This indicates that exclusive breastfeeding remains the primary focus in caring for infants in their early lives.

However, what makes this practice intriguing is the understanding that the decision not to provide additional food after Peucicap is not solely based on health guidelines prioritising exclusive breastfeeding but is also influenced by cultural factors and social norms in Sabang City. This reflects the complexity of infant care practices that cannot always be explained by health guidelines alone. This finding underscores the importance of understanding the diversity in infant care practices across various communities, as reflected in local cultures, beliefs, and health guidelines.

Most informants in Sabang City adhere to the practice of exclusive breastfeeding for the first few months of an infant's life, reflecting an awareness of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding. However, there are some cases where additional foods are given in water or solid foods like rice porridge, potatoes, and carrots. This variation may reflect factors such as culture, the specific conditions of the infant, or family preferences within the community. Further understanding of the context and reasons behind this variation can be obtained through more profound interviews with individuals involved.

This data provides intriguing initial insights into how Peucicap is practised in these two locations, and further research or public health analysis may reveal more about the implementation of this practice and the influencing factors in different communities. The results of the FGD in Sabang City regarding the cultural practice of Peucicap on infants provide in-depth insights into the implementation, meaning, and maintenance of this practice in the community. Firstly, there is a prominent theme regarding the purpose of Peucicap, which is to introduce flavours to the baby. This theme reflects the essence of Peucicap, where babies are given sensory experiences with various food flavours, such as fruits and Zamzam water. This practice is relevant in sensory education for infants in their early lives.

However, it should be noted that concerns have arisen regarding the impact of Peucicap on the

practice of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby's life. Some community members feel that Peucicap may disrupt this practice, which aligns with modern health guidelines. This disagreement creates dynamics between local tradition and global recommendations in infant care, sparking debates within the community about how these two aspects interact.

Furthermore, the findings highlight a deep appreciation for the cultural values and traditions passed down from generation to generation. Peucicap is considered a tradition rich in cultural heritage, and even though a detailed understanding of its purpose may not always be present, the practice continues because it is an integral part of the community's cultural identity.

The importance of local culture and customs in daily life is also reflected in the fact that Peucicap is seen as a necessity in the community. This demonstrates the strength of cultural values and traditions in guiding the actions of individuals and the community.

Overall, the practice of Peucicap in Sabang City reflects a blend of culture, handed-down traditions, and modern health considerations. This indicates the complexity of preserving local wisdom while striving to understand and integrate global health guidelines. Despite differing opinions about the impact of Peucicap on the practice of exclusive breastfeeding, this tradition remains an integral part of the community's cultural identity and cultural heritage. This analysis provides a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics between local tradition and global health guidelines in infant care and the efforts of individuals and communities to strike a balance between the two.

The Significance of Peucicap in the Lives of the Sabang Community. The results of the FGDs in Sabang City regarding the meaning of Peucicap for babies reflect a range of perspectives and understandings within this community.

Firstly, there is an emphasis on Peucicap as part of a series of traditional ceremonies involving various actions, such as bathing, peusunteng/peusujuk (a traditional Acehese ritual for newborns), reading of salawat (Islamic prayers), and splitting coconuts. These ceremonies are often linked to the "turun tanah" (descend to the ground) ceremony, an integral part of Acehese culture. While this perspective does

not explicitly mention meaning, it indicates the integration of Peucicap into a broader cultural practice, underscoring the importance of preserving traditions and social norms.

Secondly, some community members express that in their experience, Peucicap may not have a clear meaning or be directly related to introducing fruit flavours to their children. There is doubt about the connection between Peucicap and their children's food preferences. This reflects a level of uncertainty and a possible lack of in-depth understanding of the purpose or meaning of this practice in some cases.

Thirdly, a perspective associates Peucicap with introducing babies to the world's taste of water and fruits. This view reflects the belief that Peucicap has an important sensory introduction dimension, although this meaning may not always be explicitly detailed.

Fourthly, the importance of ancestral traditions in carrying out Peucicap is emphasised, so the practice is an inseparable part of the culture and traditions passed down by previous generations.

Fifthly, a viewpoint indicates that Peucicap may not have specific spiritual or symbolic meaning but is still considered an essential part of the tradition and customs that must be respected and followed because adherence to tradition and social norms is a top priority.

The practice of Peucicap in Sabang City reflects a diversity of understandings and perspectives on the meaning and benefits of this ritual. The Peucicap ceremony involves a series of actions such as bathing, peusunteng, reading Salawat, and coconut splitting, but the meaning and benefits are not always uniform.

Some individuals may see Peucicap as a way to introduce babies to the taste of fruits to provide early sensory experiences to infants. On the other hand, others emphasise the value of tradition and culture in the practice of Peucicap. The ceremony is an inseparable part of cultural heritage that must be preserved.

However, there is also misunderstanding and uncertainty regarding the meaning and benefits of Peucicap. Some do not see a clear connection between Peucicap and their children's food preferences. This indicates a diversity of understandings within the Sabang community about this practice.

Overall, this analysis reflects the complexity of views and understandings of the meaning of Peucicap in the Sabang community. This practice involves cultural elements, traditions, and sensory introduction, and the knowledge of Peucicap's meaning varies among individuals in the community. It also illustrates how local culture and customs play a central role in daily life, even if the meaning or purpose of specific practices is not always clear or uniform.

Providing Food After Peucicap for Babies. Various perspectives emerged in the context of the FGDs, which discussed giving food to babies after undergoing Peucicap. While we do not specifically mention informants, we can see that participating mothers have diverse experiences and approaches when providing nutrition to their infants.

Some mothers, in their first experiences, shared how their babies were given formula milk in the hospital because breast milk was not available. However, upon returning home, they wholly adhered to health guidelines recommending exclusive breastfeeding until the baby reached six months of age. This decision reflects their commitment to the recommended feeding practices by health authorities.

Conversely, some mothers emphasised the importance of providing exclusive breastfeeding and receiving full support from their partners. They noted that their partners even helped by massaging their breasts to ensure an adequate supply of breast milk. Despite facing challenges, such as the unavailability of breast milk for their second child, they still prioritised breast milk as the primary source of nutrition.

Some experienced situations where their babies were given formula milk in the hospital and transitioned to exclusive breastfeeding when breast milk became available at home. They emphasised that their babies did not receive additional food besides breast milk.

However, there were also those with more complex experiences. They may have started with formula milk in the hospital and continued it after returning home, especially in cases where there were specific challenges with breastfeeding. Some of them also noted that their families sometimes gave sugar water to the baby, highlighting how cultural factors and social environment can influence decisions regarding infant nutrition.

These diverse perspectives provide insight into the complexity of decision-making related to infant feeding. In addition to recommended health guidelines, social support, including from partners and families, also plays a crucial role in the final decisions about infant nutrition. Individual circumstances, such as caesarean section surgery or issues with breast milk, can also be factors influencing these decisions. Overall, the experiences of these mothers in providing infant food reflect a range of considerations involving unique situations and social support.

Breastfeeding After the Peucicap Tradition. Breastfeeding practices after babies undergo the Peucicap tradition in Kota Sabang reflect a firm commitment from mothers to provide breast milk as the primary source of nutrition for their children. It also creates an exciting context for decision-making regarding infant nutrition. In the various experiences they shared, the importance of understanding the health benefits and nutrition provided by breast milk in supporting the well-being of their children is evident.

For example, some mothers faced situations in hospitals where their babies received formula milk immediately after birth due to various reasons, such as initial low breast milk production or specific medical conditions. However, when they returned home, they diligently prioritised exclusive breastfeeding until the baby reached six months of age, following recommended health guidelines.

In some cases, mothers encountered challenges in maintaining exclusive breastfeeding, such as when breast milk became insufficient after several months. They then decided to provide formula milk as an alternative, but this decision was also made while considering proper nutrition guidelines. Nevertheless, the continuity of the commitment to breast milk as the primary source of nutrition remained a highly valued principle for these mothers. This reflects a deep understanding of the benefits of breast milk in providing optimal nutrition for the growth and development of their babies and demonstrates their determination to adhere to relevant health guidelines.

Furthermore, the unique experiences of some mothers who received positive support from their partners in breastfeeding exemplify how the family's role can influence infant nutrition decisions. This opens the door to further research on the role of family support in breast-

feeding practices and the community's understanding of infant nutrition in the context of local culture and traditions.

The peucicap culture in Acehese society is a tradition that continues to be practised and holds significant value in daily life. However, it is essential to highlight that this culture does not interfere with or contradict the practice of exclusive breastfeeding, which healthcare experts recommend.

In Acehese culture, peucicap is a ritual that introduces flavours to infants. Typically, the ritual involves applying fruit extract to the baby's lips. Peucicap is considered part of the cultural heritage, which has a special meaning and symbolism in Acehese society. This culture is often conducted to honour ancestral customs and traditions and to acquaint the child with the flavours present in their surroundings.

Nevertheless, despite peucicap being part of this culture, it is crucial to emphasise that this practice does not replace or disrupt the practice of exclusive breastfeeding as the primary source of nutrition for infants. The recommended practice of exclusive breastfeeding, advocated by international health organisations such as the WHO and UNICEF, is upheld and practised by mothers in Aceh. This means that after the peucicap ritual is performed, infants continue to receive exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of their lives.

This demonstrates a wise cultural adaptation in maintaining harmony between traditional and modern health practices. Acehese society wisely preserves and respects their local wisdom while prioritising their children's health and optimal development. In this context, peucicap culture is seen as an additional element that does not interfere with the practice of exclusive breastfeeding, which is crucial for the growth and development of infants.

However, it is still essential to continue educating the community about the significance of exclusive breastfeeding and ensuring that traditional practices such as peucicap do not cause any disruption or misunderstanding regarding exclusive breastfeeding. Proper education to the community, including mothers and families, about the benefits and importance of exclusive breastfeeding can help ensure that cherished cultural practices align with the health guidelines recommended by experts.

Thus, Acehese society can continue to preserve and celebrate their peucicap culture while giving appropriate attention to exclusive breastfeeding as the primary health practice for their infants. This reflects a harmonisation between tradition and scientific development in safeguarding the health and well-being of children in Acehese society.

CONCLUSIONS

From the various analyses conducted, it can be concluded that the Peucicap practice in Kota Sabang is a tradition with diverse meanings and understandings within the community. Perspectives on the meaning of Peucicap range from introducing flavours to infants and preserving cultural traditions to introducing infants to the tastes and sensations of the natural world. Despite this variation in understanding, Peucicap is consistently practised as a part of cultural identity and ancestral heritage.

Furthermore, in feeding infants after they undergo Peucicap, mothers in Kota Sabang exhibit a solid commitment to breastfeeding as their children's primary source of nutrition. While some mothers face challenges in maintaining exclusive breastfeeding, such as insufficient breast milk production or specific medical conditions, they diligently prioritise exclusive breastfeeding until the recommended age of 6 months, following health guidelines.

Decision-making regarding infant nutrition is also influenced by positive support from partners and healthcare professionals, which plays a crucial role in maintaining this commitment.

Moreover, the Peucicap practice and breastfeeding in Kota Sabang reflect the complexity of preserving local wisdom while striving to understand and adopt global health guidelines. Despite debates about how Peucicap affects exclusive breastfeeding, this tradition remains strong in the community as an essential part of cultural identity and ancestral heritage. It also demonstrates how local culture and traditions play a role in daily life, even when the meaning or purpose of specific practices is not always clear or uniform.

In conclusion, Peucicap and breastfeeding in Kota Sabang exemplify how culture, tradition, local understanding, and global health guidelines can interact and shape infant care practices. In this

context, a deep understanding of the meaning of Peucicap and a commitment to breastfeeding are crucial factors in maintaining a balance between local values and global health guidelines.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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