

## Study of Breastfeeding Father Behaviour as an ideal Role in Exclusive Breastfeeding Practices

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### Abstract

Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) is one of the best strategy for Scaling up Nutrition (SUN). EBF in accordance with the objectives of Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). EBF is specific intervention that aims are reducing infant mortality and improving the mother's health status. Not only the infants growth that can be achieved optimally, but also malnutrition can be prevented by EBF. In reality, the EBF prevalence is still below 80% of the target coverage in Indonesia. The objective of this research was exploring the specific behavior of breastfeeding father in EBF practices. This research using qualitative study with postive deviance approach was conducted from April to August 2013 in Kecamatan Ciputat dan Ciputat Timur Kota South Tangerang. Data collection using focus group discussions and indepth interviews techniques. FGD was conducted on 2 group and indepth interviews on 4 couples mothers and fathers. The parents who lives with the mother-fathers as key informaants. There were many specific behaviors of breastfeeding father such as providing a warm towel when breast swelling, help provide breast milk has been milked when the mother was tired, participate in preparing fot the baby, massaging the mother's shoulders and arms, always motivate that mothers can breastfeed. It also comforting to the mothers that breastfeeding is a responsibility both of mother and father. The government should make policies to help breastfeeding father as giving off a few days to help mothers breast feed. The specific behavior of breastfeeding can be disseminated to the others fathers so that the prevalence of EBF increase continously in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF), breastfeeding father, *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs), *Scaling up Nutrition* (SUN).

### Kajian Perilaku *Breastfeeding Father* sebagai Peran Suami Ideal dalam Pemberian ASI Eksklusif

#### Abstrak

Pemberian ASI eksklusif adalah salah satu strategi dalam program percepatan perbaikan gizi (*Scallin Up Nutrition*) yang sesuai dengan target pencapaian *Millenium Development Goals* (MDGs). Pemberian ASI eksklusif merupakan intervensi spesifik yang bertujuan untuk menurunkan Angka Kematian Bayi (AKB) dan meningkatkan derajat kesehatan ibu. Pertumbuhan bayi dapat optimal dan terhindar dari berbagai masalah gizi Kenyataannya, cakupan ASI eksklusif di Indonesia, masih dibawah target 80%. Tujuan dari penelitian adalah untuk menggali secara mendalam perilaku *Breastfeeding father* yaitu ayah yang mendukung pemberian ASI eksklusif. Penelitian ini menggunakan studi kualitatif dengan pendekatan *positive deviance*. Penelitian dilakukan pada Bulan April-Agustus tahun 2013 di Kecamatan Ciputat dan Ciputat Timur Kota Tangerang Selatan. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan teknik diskusi kelompok terarah (FGD) dan wawancara mendalam (WM). FGD dilakukan pada 2 kelompok ibu-bapak yang anaknya tidak diberikan ASI ekksklusif. WM dilakukan pada 4 pasang ibu-bapak yang memberikan ASI ekksklusif. Orangtua merupakan Informan kunci dalam penelitian ini. Beragam perilaku khusus yang ditemukan pada ayah yang berperan sebagai *Breastfeeding Father* antara lain memberikan handuk hangat saat payudara ibu membengkak, membantu memberikan ASI yang sudah diperas saat ibu lelah, membantu menyiapkan kebutuhan bayi, memijat pundak dan tangan ibu, dan selalu memberikan motivasi bahwa ibu dapat berhasil memberikan ASI eksklusif. Ibu juga merasa nyaman juga saat memperoleh dukungan dari suami maupun orangtuanya. Pemerintah perlu membuat kebijakan untuk mendukung peran *breastfeeding father*. Perlu adanya pemberian ijin cuti untuk ayah yang bekerja dalam membantu ibu memberikan ASI eksklusif. Perilaku khusus breastfeeding dapat diseminasi pada masyarakat luas untuk meningkatkan cakupan pemberian ASI eksklusif di Indonesia.

**Kata Kunci:** ASI eksklusif, *breastfeeding father*, *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs), *Scaling up Nutrition* (SUN).

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## Background

Exclusive breastfeeding is one of the strategic efforts in scaling up nutrition. EBF can help reduce child mortality and improve maternal health in accordance with one of the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). WHO (2009) stated that approximately 15% of the total deaths of children under five years due to early complementary feeding.<sup>1</sup> It can also lead to malnutrition in infants and can continue into adulthood.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the provision of EBF in Indonesia which has not reached the target of 80% coverage.

EBF prevalence, based on Indonesian Demographic and Health Survey (1997-2007) showed a decrease gradually from 40,2% (1997) to 39.5% (2003) and further decreased in 2007 as many as 32%. In South Tangerang EBF prevalence showed around 50%.<sup>3</sup> Unclear reporting cause the data does not describe the real number of EBF coverage. Various studies have described the low coverage of EBF is caused by many factors, particularly the mother's commitment to breastfeeding and breastfeeding support from the father as breastfeeding father.

Breastfeeding father is a popular term for father who support and play an active role in helping mothers during breastfeeding periode so that EBF can succeed.<sup>4</sup> Various studies showed that were significant association between paternal involvement with EBF success.<sup>2</sup> Fathers has many types of role in supporting of EBF success.<sup>5</sup> However, in Indonesia the number of fathers who who have a role as breastfeeding fathers are still low.

The Research about EBF in line with Kadarzi (Keluarga Sadar Gizi or Nutrition

Conscious of Family) program that integrated with counseling in posyandu (integrated services post). This activity involves the family, particularly the father's role in assisting the mother during the counseling was given. This study using the approach of Positive Deviance (PD). PD is a method to observe and imitate the behavior and strategies that are not commonly mothers-fathers who succeed in EBF.<sup>6</sup> The principle of this method is to look at the success of a minority of individuals or couples in general condition and have equal opportunities in the resources.

The objective of this study is to explore and find specific behaviors of breastfeeding father. This study is done based on the strength, settlement and community empowerment that allows them to obtain success in EBF. The results of this study are expected develop a plan of action to increase adoption of specific behaviors in a provision of EBF by mother-father pairs extensively. Therefore, with this study is expected coverage of EBF can be increased according to the target coverage of 80%, especially in South Tangerang.

## Method

Study of breastfeeding father using qualitative study design with positive deviance approach. Data was collected by in-depth interview and focus group discussion (FGD). This was conducted in South Tangerang since April to September 2013. Informants criteria in this study were married couples who have children over the age of 6 months to 2 years, that couples have two children maximum, and the mothers still be breastfed. The FGD consists of 2 groups: mothers and fathers whose infants are not given EBF, which is 9



mothers and 6 fathers (FGD group number as many as 15 people). In-depth interviews consisted of 4 mothers and 4 fathers whose babies were breastfed exclusively. The instrument used in this study are in-depth interview guidelines and FGD guidelines.

Validity of data used triangulation of method (FGD and in-depth interview) and triangulation of data sources. Triangulation of data sources consists of the parents of the mothers and 2 cadres of posyandu (integrated services post). The data collection was done by using depth Interviews (WM) and FGD. The instrument used is the interview guidelines, a digital voice recorder and notes during in-depth interview and FGD. The recordings of in-depth interview and FGD then made in the form of transcripts were then arranged in a matrix WM and FGD results. The next step is checking the data that has been collected and then analyzed and interpreted the data to obtain a conclusion of the research.

## Results and Discussion

The results of preliminary survey of this research used questionnaire, showed that mothers who exclusively breastfeed their children up to 40 people (40.0%), while the mother who did not gave EBF as many as 60.0%. Mother who gave the EBF does not already provide food and drink or others than breast milk before the age of 6 months including not provide the water, honey, formula as well as complementary feeding such as porridge, bananas, etc. This concept based on WHO definition, 2009.<sup>1</sup> Next step is data screening to determine who really give EBF to their babies. Actually, only 4 mother

who gave EBF of 40 mothers who claim that her gave EBF (10%).

Based on in-depth interviews to breastfeeding father about the benefits of breastfeeding, one of 4 father said that:

*"Breastfeeding exclusively is to provide nutrition to the baby, particularly since birth until six months which is the sustenance from Allah and be grateful."*

*"The benefits of breastfeeding is that breastmilk contains good nutrition and immune for infant growth. I usually motivate my wife that breast milk is the best nutrition for baby immunity, health, to prevent the diseases such as diarrhes. Breast milk is setril, contains natural nutritions and certainly healthier for the baby... no preservatives and no additivies."* (in-depth interview of breastfeeding father)

Specific behavior of breastfeeding father that found in this study such as support mothers to give EBF, helping his wife prepare a warm towel when breast swelling, helping mothers do some houseworks, provide breast milk that has been milked to his baby while the mother sleep at night, massaging the back and mother's arms, hold the baby and give the mother to breastfeed when crying, providing a buffer cushion when breastfeeding. This is one of the statements that gave by father:

*"When my wife looked so tired, I cook my vegetables specially made for her with love. Finally, my wife willing to eat with relish and make her smile and rilex. Particularly in early weeks, her nipples were often injured due to suction the baby, and I helped to provide hot water and relieve her pain."* (in-depth interview of breastfeeding father)

All of mothers who gave EBF to her



babies have a good knowledge and attitude of EBF. They also have an amazing experience while providing the benefits of EBF and feel that is invaluable both medical and non-medical aspects both for the mother, baby, and father. EBF have many benefits for baby and mother health. The baby can growth optimally and mother's health get well soon.<sup>7</sup> This is one of mother's statement about breastfeeding:

*"Breastfeeding is the best food for my baby and have many benefit for me also. In my opinion..... hmmm, breastfeeding is very amazing experience that i ever had. I felt closer with my baby, when he sucking, crying and i hug....wawww.... I only said that I am a mother, now!"* (in-depth interview of mother,2013).

Although breast milk is the best food and a memorable experience for some mothers, but for other women have different opinion. Oftenly, they doubt that breast milk is not enough for their babies. They also thinks that their babies still hungry even though they produce milk with a sufficient amount. It can be seen from the results of the FGD on a non EBF mother:

*"... Eh..eh..my baby need extra nutrition from complementary feeding. My baby still hungry and always fussy"* (FGD of mother, 2013)

In addition to the support of her husband, external factors such as from the parents, health workers are influence to the EBF. Generally, the husband of mothers who did not give EBF always support their wives. Unfortunately, their wives as a decision makers. It is one of the father's statement:

*"...Breastfeeding did you men?...yaaaap, I always support my wife to breastfeed. but I*

*was worried if her breasts are often injured. My wife often tired and....hmmmm, finally I agreed to give formula for our baby."* (FGD of father, 2013).

The parents of mother who give EBF, said that their daughter need extra effort to give EBF to their babies. They were helping to increas breastmilk production during lactaion period, particularly In the first 6 months of baby's life. Simple activities such as cooking vegetables, helping baby bathe, wake the mother when the baby needs breastfeed at night, etc oftenly they are doing . The biological mother's who her daughter give EBF statement to confirmed EBF practices is below:

*"ok....I always remember my experience when i breastfeed her....., I often worry if my daughter produce breastmilk slightly. I help small things such as cooking vegetables, wake her when the baby wants to breastfeed at night, and other things that can help her works."*

Information from cadres of Integrated services sector or posyandu also be used as confirmation of mothers who give EBF. It is so difficult to know the truth that the mother gives EBF or not. EBF data collection was done when the weigth measurement of the babies in posyandu. If they saw the baby feeds, then they categorize that the baby given EBF. So that, they visited the mothers to observe EBF practices at home regularly, at least twice in a week. below is the question of a cadre posyandu:

*"I had come to the mother's hpuse who gave EBF, based on data in posyandu". I observed their breastfeeding practices. I also ask about what foods that were already given to their babies. They answer breast milk only*



*without any complementary feeding including water, honey, banana, etc . Their babies seem comfortable while feeding. The babies have ideal weight gain and good health because that babies sick rarely."*

Baker, et.al (2007) describes that maternal nutritional status of mothers before and during pregnancy. Furthermore, exclusive breastfeeding period in the first 6 months of baby's life also have strong significant with baby's nutritional status.<sup>8</sup> However, all of the elements who can motivate the mothers to give EBF should be done including health workrs, the parents, and partocularly the husbands that have strategic role as breastfeeding father.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Mother will be comfortable and confident to provide EBF if their husbands motivating and supporting them during lactation period. The role of the husband as the breastfeeding father determines of EB. However, breastfeeding is the responsibility of the mother and father. The participation of parents, particulary biological mother's support and cadres posyandu have strong sinificant correlation with mother's commitment to provide EBF. Special behavior of breaftfeeding father can be adopted as a model of behavior by mothers and fathers in the wider community.

The success of EBF needs berastfeeding father as an ideal role in EBF practices and also support of family, social environment and health institutions. Breastfeeding father's specific behaviors can be disseminated to candidates brides and new mothers and fathers were married. Further research needs to be

done in other areas with different characteristics of mothers and fathers.

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