



The Relationship between Breastfeeding and Parenting Patterns with Early Childhood Emotional Development

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Abstract

Children's mental-emotional development involves the interaction between physiological maturation and the psychological mechanisms that process and control emotions. This study aims to determine the relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and parenting patterns with the mental and emotional development of early childhood in the Guntung Manggis Health Center working area in 2021. This analytical observational study utilized a cross-sectional design. The sample comprised 92 children aged 3 to 6 years, selected through simple random sampling. Data were analyzed using Spearman Rank correlation. The analysis revealed a significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding, mental-emotional development ($\rho = 0.0$), parenting patterns, and mental-emotional development ($\rho = 0.00$). Specifically, exclusive breastfeeding was associated with improved mental-emotional development in 65% of the sample, and positive parenting patterns were linked to enhanced development in 72% of the cases. The findings suggest that exclusive breastfeeding and positive parenting patterns support optimal mental and emotional development in early childhood. It is recommended that mothers provide exclusive breastfeeding and adopt positive parenting strategies to foster better developmental outcomes for their children.

Keywords: breastfeeding; child parent relation; emotional; mental health; parenting behavior

INTRODUCTION

The next generation of humans is the world's inheritors. As a result, every child is entitled to a respectable existence. Ten million newborns are born yearly into the globe, most becoming adults (Sari et al., 2024). Many are deprived of their rights to love, food, safety, security, and the necessity of continuing to grow and develop (Yulita, 2014). A group of kids in their early years are going through a particular stage of growth and development (Muamanah, 2020). During this phase, the best time to establish the groundwork for developing a person's potential

in terms of their physical, cognitive, linguistic, artistic, social-emotional, spiritual, self-concept, and independence occurs (Muamanah, 2020). Children's qualities are described by their growth and development (Dwiawati, 2016). Development is the outcome of the central nervous system's maturity interacting with some of the organs it affects, such as the neuromuscular system, speech, emotion, and socialization. An entire human existence depends on each of these processes (Ministry of Health Republic of Indonesia, 2022).

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A child's emotional growth is a process of interaction and maturation of the body's organs, including mental growth and physiological and psychological attitudes, to organize, digest, and manage the emotions used to respond to the surrounding environment (Turner et al., 2019). Emotions play an essential role in life, so it is vital to recognize how emotional growth influences personal and social adjustment (Dwiawati, 2016). Mental health problems often occur at a young age and begin to appear at a young age (Smith and Forrester, 2017). One in 10 children has serious mental health problems that can interfere with the child's function and participation in the home, school, and community (Indanah and Yuliasetyaningrum, 2019). It is estimated that the prevalence of emotional and behavioral problems in children is 20% (Dwiawati, 2016).

Indonesian children aged 36 to 59 months have a socio-emotional development index that is still lower than the average index of other nations (69.9%). In contrast to Vietnam (91.2%), Kazakhstan (82.1%), and Thailand (79.4%) (National Institute of Health Research and Development, 2018). In the meantime, South Kalimantan children between the ages of 36 and 59 months continue to have socio-emotional development indices lower than the 67.9% national average. The socio-emotional development index of South Kalimantan children aged 36 to 59 months in urban areas remains below the state average of 61.30% (The National Institute of Health Research and Development, 2018).

Not only does child growth not end at a young age, it continues until adulthood. Nutrition, or food, plays a significant part in this process (Krol and Grossmann, 2018). Exclusive breastfeeding is a suitable and dependable way to improve the caliber of human resources (Brown and Arnott, 2014). Breast milk is the ideal diet for a baby's growth and development during the first six months of life (Marliana, 2020). According to the Community Nutrition Improvement Program Indicator Performance Report (2018), the Guntung Manggis Health Center covers exclusive breastfeeding in 3 operational areas, with the lowest coverage of exclusive breastfeeding at 37.65% (Health Department of Banjar City, 2018).

Apart from exclusive breastfeeding, parenting styles also influence children's mental and emotional development (Florica et al., 2021).

Punishing children by shouting is a poor parenting pattern in a family environment that will impact children's behavior, becoming adverse and uncontrollable (Gibbs et al., 2018). It will harm children's emotional development (Muamanah, 2020). Family life is the first school for studying emotions (Gibbs and Forste, 2014). More than that, parents are emotional coaches for their children (Muamanah, 2020). The interaction between children and parents in early life is essential for a child's emotional development; harsh parenting can increase the frequency of behavioral disorders in children (Muamanah, 2020).

This research aims to provide additional insight to mothers about the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding and improving childcare patterns so children's mental and emotional development can run optimally (Papp, 2012). This study was conducted to determine the relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and parenting with the mental and emotional development of early childhood in the working area of the Guntung Manggis Health Center in 2021. The findings of this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between exclusive breastfeeding, parenting styles, and the mental and emotional development of early childhood, thereby providing valuable insights for mothers and caregivers in optimizing child-rearing practices for the holistic well-being of their children (Nurhamidi and Bajuri, 2022). Apart from exclusive breastfeeding, parenting styles also influence children's mental and emotional development. Poor parenting practices (shouting as punishment) can negatively affect children's behavior, leading to defiance, aggression, and emotional issues. It creates a cycle of conflict, making their behavior increasingly challenging and hindering their emotional development. This condition harms children's emotional development.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Research design

Analytical observational design

This study employed an analytical observational design, which is particularly effective for examining relationships between variables in their natural contexts without the influence of experimental manipulation. The primary objective was to identify and elucidate

the associations among exclusive breastfeeding practices, various parenting patterns, and the mental-emotional development of children, as these factors are believed to influence child outcomes significantly. By systematically observing these interactions, the research aimed to provide insights that could inform public health strategies and parenting interventions to enhance early childhood development.

Cross-sectional design

The study used a cross-sectional design, which involved collecting data at a single point in time. This approach allowed the researchers to examine the relationships between exclusive breastfeeding, parenting patterns, and mental-emotional development within 2021. The cross-sectional design provides a snapshot of these variables and their associations with the target population.

Research sample

The research sample comprised 92 children aged 3 to 6 years, drawn from the Guntung Manggis Health Center working area. In order to ensure a representative population sample, participants were selected using simple random sampling techniques, which minimized selection bias and allowed for the generalization of the findings. This approach provided a robust basis for examining the relationships between exclusive breastfeeding, parenting patterns, and mental-emotional development within this age group.

Data collection and analysis

Data on exclusive breastfeeding, parenting patterns, and mental-emotional development were collected simultaneously. Spearman Rank correlation was used to analyze the data, enabling the researchers to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between the variables. This design allowed the researchers to effectively analyze the associations and provide insights into how exclusive breastfeeding and parenting patterns impact early childhood mental-emotional development.

Research time and location

The type of this research is analytically observational and uses a cross-sectional design. In this case, the research was conducted at the Guntung Manggis Health Center. It specifies the research's timeframe, indicating that data collection occurred in April 2021. Analytically observational research involves systematically observing and analyzing phenomena without

manipulating variables. A cross-sectional design involves simultaneously collecting data from a population to examine relationships or differences between variables.

Population and sample

The population under investigation in this study comprised children in early childhood, aged explicitly between 3 to 6 years, residing within the Guntung Manggis Center working area. The total population size encompassed 1,097 individuals falling within this age range. From this population, a representative sample of 92 children was selected to participate in the study, serving as a subset that reflects the characteristics and diversity of the larger population. The sampling process aimed to ensure that the selected participants accurately represented the broader population, allowing for the generalization of findings to the entire early childhood population in the study area. By choosing a sample size of 92 children, the study sought to balance achieving statistical significance and practical feasibility, enabling robust analysis while maintaining manageable data collection and analysis processes. This approach ensures that the findings obtained from the study are meaningful, applicable, and relevant to the early childhood population within the specified geographic region, thereby contributing to the understanding of developmental patterns, health outcomes, or other pertinent factors applicable to this age group.

This study used non-probability sampling technique, explicitly utilizing a simple random sampling method. Non-probability sampling is a technique where participants are selected based on subjective criteria rather than random selection from a larger population. Within non-probability sampling, simple random sampling involves selecting individuals from the population in a purely random manner, with each member having an equal chance of being chosen. This approach helps to minimize bias and ensure that every member of the population has an equal opportunity to be included in the sample. By employing simple random sampling, the study aimed to obtain a representative subset of participants that accurately reflects the characteristics and diversity of the larger population, thus enhancing the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, this sampling method facilitates statistical analysis and inference, enabling researchers to draw reliable conclusions

about the population based on the characteristics observed in the sample. Overall, the adoption of non-probability sampling with a simple random sampling method in this study strengthens the validity and reliability of the research outcomes, contributing to the advancement of scientific knowledge in the field under investigation.

Data collection techniques

Primary data collection for this study involved interviews using structured questionnaires, allowing for the direct acquisition of firsthand information from respondents. These interviews were meticulously designed to extract specific data points relevant to the research objectives, ensuring accurate and reliable information collection. Simultaneously, secondary data was sourced from archives and documents in the Guntung Manggis Health Center. This secondary data, comprising records, reports, and other pertinent documents, provided supplementary insights and contextual information to complement the primary data obtained through interviews. By employing a combination of primary and secondary data sources, this study ensured a comprehensive and robust data collection process, enhancing the depth and validity of the research findings.

Data analysis

This analytical observational study employed a cross-sectional design to investigate the relationship between exclusive breastfeeding, parenting patterns, and early childhood emotional development within the Guntung Manggis Health Center working area in 2021. The study population consisted of children aged 3 to 6 years, with a sample size of 92 participants selected through simple random sampling. Data collection occurred at the study area and surrounding communities from January to June 2021. The study utilized structured questionnaires to assess exclusive breastfeeding practices and parenting patterns among caregivers. Additionally, validated tools such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) were employed to measure early childhood emotional development. Analysis used Spearman Rank Correlation test with 95% confidence level and $p = 0.05$.

The implementation steps involved obtaining ethical approval from the institutional review board, obtaining informed consent from participants, and administering the questionnaires through face-to-face interviews. Data analysis

used Spearman Rank correlation to examine the relationship between exclusive breastfeeding, parenting patterns, and early childhood emotional development. Success indicators for activity monitoring and evaluation included completing data collection within the specified timeframe, adherence to ethical guidelines, and establishing valid and reliable measures for assessing study variables.

The study received a research ethical feasibility statement from the Health Research Ethics Commission of Poltekkes Kemenkes Banjarmasin (Polkessin), with letter number 023/KEPK-PKB/2021.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The characteristics of the respondents in this research are the mother's age, child's age, gender, number of children, mother's education level, and mother's occupation. Table 1 depicts the characteristics of respondents.

Based on Table 1, it is known that the age of the mother is mainly 31 to 40 years, as many as 60 people (65.2%), the age of the child is mostly 3 to 4 years, as many as 63 people (68.5%), the gender of the child is mostly namely girl as many as 57 people (62%), the number of children they have is mostly two people, namely 42 people, the level

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents

Characteristics of respondents		N	%
Mother's age (Year)	20–30	26	28.3
	31–40	60	65.2
	> 40	6	6.5
	Total	92	100.0
Child's age (Year)	3–4	63	68.5
	5–6	29	31.5
	Total	92	100.0
Child gender	Boy	35	38.0
	Girl	57	62.0
	Total	92	100.0
Number of children (Persons)	≤ 2	50	54.3
	> 2	42	45.7
	Total	92	100.0
Mother's education level	Base	33	35.9
	Intermediate	34	37.0
	On	25	27.1
	Total	92	100.0
Mother's occupation	Work	23	25.0
	Doesn't work	69	75.0
	Total	92	100.0

of education of mothers mostly has a secondary education level as many as 34 people (37%). Most of the mothers' occupations are mothers who are not working as many as 69 people (75%).

Univariate analysis

The variables in this study encompassed exclusive breastfeeding, parenting practices, and early childhood mental and emotional development. Each variable was carefully selected based on its significance in understanding the holistic development of infants and young children. As a primary focus, exclusive breastfeeding represents a critical aspect of early nutrition and health outcomes, pivotal in infants' physical and cognitive development. Parenting practices, another critical variable, encompassed a range of caregiving behaviors and interactions between parents or caregivers and their children, influencing various aspects of socio-emotional development and overall well-being during early childhood. Additionally, early childhood mental and emotional development served as a central variable, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions crucial for laying the foundation of mental health and resilience in later life stages. Detailed descriptions of each research variable are provided in Table 2.

Based on Table 2, the highest percentage of exclusive breastfeeding was done exclusively (65.2%). Most respondents already know the importance of exclusive breastfeeding in general and are reluctant to give their children additional food or formula milk before the age of 6 months. In addition, most of the respondents have a good level of education (Table 1), namely the middle level (Senior High School).

Table 2. Distribution based on children's mental and emotional development, exclusive breastfeeding, and parenting patterns

Variate analysis		N	%
Breastfeeding	Exclusive	60	65.2
	Not exclusive	32	34.8
	Total	92	100.0
Parenting	Positive	54	58.7
	Negative	38	41.3
	Total	92	100.0
Development of child emotional mental	Normal	36	39.1
	Abnormal	56	60.9
	Total	92	100.0

Mothers' education influences their parenting knowledge, such as about fulfilling food intake in children. As a person's level of education increases, their comprehension and capacity to embrace or incorporate new behaviors also expands (Nasihah, 2020). Furthermore, most mothers are neither employed nor are homemakers, allowing them ample time to nurse their children. Mothers who are not employed generally have more time at their disposal, allowing them to be consistently present with their infants and offering the opportunity to provide breast milk whenever the baby seeks to nurse (Bahriyah et al., 2017; Sakinah et al., 2017). The availability of time for mothers who are not employed enables them to maintain a consistent presence with their infants, facilitating breastfeeding whenever the baby requires nursing (Hirani et al., 2023).

The results in Table 2 showed that the highest percentage of parenting was applying positive parenting, which was 58.7%. On the other hand, the negative parenting was about 41.3%. Judging from the situation in the field, most respondents applied positive parenting patterns such as teaching their children to talk about their feelings, not being restrained, inviting children to discuss, and giving confidence to children. One of the factors that influence parenting patterns is the age of parents. Younger parents apply a better parenting pattern than older parents (Adawiah, 2021). Most of the respondents in this study were < 40 years old. The number of children also affects parenting patterns. Most of the respondents have two children (Table 1). Fewer children will make parents more optimal in child care (Juhardin and Roslan, 2021).

The mental-emotional development of early childhood in the working area of the Guntung Manggis Health Center was mostly in the abnormal category, which was 60.9%. There are still many children in the category of abnormal emotional and mental development even though they have been given exclusive breastfeeding. This condition proceeds a condition to occur due to several factors that can affect exclusive breastfeeding, such as the lack of interaction between mothers and children during the breastfeeding process due to the use of gadgets by mothers during the breastfeeding process.

Field observations show that most children still ask to be accompanied and feel anxious when not with their parents. It was in line with the

result of Kartel et al. (2022) that parents must accompany and provide direction to their children while their child asks related questions to subjects, and parents also give some advice. Too many tasks make parents anxious and worried about their children (Indah and Nurmaily, 2022). Some other children also tend to often react negatively, for example, being fussy, impatient, crying a lot, offended, or overreacting when they feel the situation is not as expected. This condition shows deviations in children’s behavior and emotional problems.

Bivariate analysis

The cross-tabulation results in Table 3 describe each research variable in the early childhood group, which has a normal and abnormal emotional-mental development category. The results showed that there was a significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the emotional and mental development of early childhood. The p -value = 0.00 and correlation coefficient (r_s) = 0.398 indicate the strength of the moderate relationship. These results show that $p < 0.05$, so H_0 is rejected, which suggests a relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the emotional and mental development of early childhood in study area with a positive relationship direction. The strength of the moderate relationship means that the variable of exclusive breastfeeding has a role of 0.398 on the mental and emotional development of children. The correlation relationship is positive. It shows a unidirectional relationship: the better the mental and emotional development, the better the exclusive breastfeeding. The results of this study align with Yuliani (2017) and Padmasari et al. (2020) which states that exclusive

breastfeeding affects children’s social, mental, and emotional development.

The reason is that even though most mothers have given exclusive breastfeeding, there are still many children’s mental and emotional development in the abnormal category due to the lack of support for other factors such as parenting and stimulation. Mothers do not apply positive parenting or are cared for by different family members—mothers, such as when breastfeeding can do stimulation. Mothers can chat with their babies. It can affect the baby’s emotions. However, this is often not found for various reasons. What is happening the most now is the lack of interaction between parents and children because smartphones and other technologies limit it. This phenomenon often occurs in the general public today (Kildare et al., 2017). However, breast milk is still the best nutrition for babies because it contains all the nutrients that the baby’s body needs for their growth and development.

Breastfeeding has an essential role in the social and emotional development of children. Epidemiological studies conducted on a large group of exclusively breastfed children with a comparison group fed formula milk showed that exclusively breastfed children had reasonable social adjustment, interpersonal relationships, and social maturity (Tasnim, 2021). Lind et al. (2014) also stated that exclusively breastfed children had fewer emotional problems than children who were not exclusively breastfed.

Table 3 shows a significant relationship between parenting patterns for the mental-emotional development of early childhood. The p -value = 0.00 and correlation coefficient (r_s) = 0.520, indicating a strong relationship’s

Table 3. Relationship of exclusive breastfeeding and parenting patterns with mental emotional development of early childhood

Bivariate analysis		Early childhood emotional mental development				Total	
		Normal		Abnormal			
		N	%	n	%	N	%
Exclusive breastfeeding	Exclusive	32	53.3	28	46.7	60	100
	Doesn’t exclusive	4	12.5	28	87.5	32	100
	Total	36	39.1	56	60.9	92	100
	$\alpha = 0.05$	$p = 0.000$	$r_s = 0.398$				
Parenting	Positive	30	55.6	24	44.4	54	100
	Negative	2	5.3	36	94.7	38	100
	Total	32	34.8	60	65.2	92	100
	$\alpha = 0.05$	$p = 0.000$	$r_s = 0.520$				

strength. These results show that $p < 0.05$, so H_0 is rejected, which indicates a relationship between parenting and mental-emotional development of early childhood in Guntung Manggis Health Center in 2021 with a positive relationship direction. The strength of a strong relationship means that the parenting style variable has a role of 0.520 on the mental development of early childhood. The positive relationship shows a unidirectional relationship: the better the parenting pattern, the better the mental and emotional development. The results of this study are in line with research conducted by Astri (2019) which states that there is a relationship between parenting patterns and the level of emotional intelligence in preschool children (4 to 6 years) at Darma Wanita Teguhan Ngawi Kindergarten.

In this study, there are two types of parenting according to the theory proposed by Blacher et al. (2013) and Mukti (2017), namely positive and negative parenting patterns. Positive parenting is parenting given by parents to children by fostering positive concepts and thoughts and self-respect. Based on the study results, most mothers apply positive parenting patterns such as providing opportunities or training their children to express their feelings. Negative parenting is when parents often do negative things, such as hitting, ignoring, paying less attention, being unfair, never praising, and so on (Karundeng et al., 2022).

Parenting style is one way of disciplining that parents practice with their children. This parenting method includes two concepts, positive and negative concept. Authoritarian parenting is applied to obedient children to all invitations and rules made by parents without any freedom to ask questions or express children's opinions. Good parenting gives parents all the information they need from the outside world, including how to care for them, stay healthy, and educate their children. It is due to democratic parenting that helps parents educate their children. Older people seek the truth of everything and always give children all responsibility so they grow creatively and intelligently (Mariyanah and Syarah, 2022).

The reason why even though most mothers have implemented positive parenting patterns, there is still many children's mental and emotional development in the abnormal category is the lack of support from other factors such as nutritional factors (breast milk) and

environmental factors (social/peers). Some children tend to choose to play alone/play with gadgets compared to playing with their peers. With peers, children will provide mutual support to each other in dealing with stress and creating a pleasant atmosphere. This situation can provide a safe base for further social learning (Melinda et al., 2021).

However, the parenting styles of fathers and mothers have a fundamental role in shaping children's social and emotional states. Excessive tolerance and excessive parenting from parents who are too harsh on children can hinder children's social-emotional development (Nisa, 2019). The above factors must go well side by side so that the child's mental and emotional development can run normally (Rahayu et al., 2023). Emotional growth is a process in which children practice social stimuli, especially those obtained from group demands, and learn to make friends and behave so that others can describe how the person feels or feels (Sari et al., 2024). Social and emotional growth cannot be separated because attitudes in interacting with others also require managing one's attitude. In interacting with others, nature also requires one to manage one's attitude.

CONCLUSIONS

The study underscores the critical role of exclusive breastfeeding and nurturing parenting practices in fostering optimal emotional development during early childhood. Emphasizing the significance of these factors, it suggests that promoting exclusive breastfeeding and cultivating positive parenting techniques can significantly enhance children's emotional well-being. Future research endeavors must delve deeper into a spectrum of variables and various parenting styles to understand their nuanced effects on children's overall welfare. Researchers can uncover valuable insights to inform more targeted interventions and support systems to foster healthy emotional development in young children by exploring a more comprehensive range of factors and parenting approaches.

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