The Strategy of Successful Exclusive Breastfeeding of Policewomen in Regional Police Department, East Nusa Tenggara

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Summary

Exclusive breastfeeding is an effort to obtain optimal growth, as breast milk contains essential nutrients required for the growth and development of infants as well as antibodies for the immune system. This study aimed to explore the strategies of successful exclusive breastfeeding among policewomen in East Nusa Tenggara Regional Police. This was a qualitative study with an explorative design consisting of 10 female police as informants. The result showed that: (1) The informants knew the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for the growth of their children; (2) The informants perceived that occupation was not a barrier to provide exclusive breastfeeding; (3) The informants were adequately exposed to information from mass media related to exclusive breastfeeding; (4) Breastfeeding room was unavailable at the office resulting in their decision to breastfeed at home; (5) Husbands gave support by forbidding their wives to give formula to babies before 6 mo of age; (6) The family provided support to exclusive breastfeeding by taking care of the babies during work time; (7) The chief gave support on exclusive breastfeeding; and (8) The strategy for achieving successful exclusive breastfeeding was originated from the willingness and acceptance of the nature as a woman. Informants had good knowledge, attitudes and information exposure and received support from husbands, families, and supervisors. East Nusa Tenggara Regional Police Office needs to provide breastfeeding rooms to support successful exclusive breastfeeding.

Key Words

exclusive breastfeeding, successful, policewomen, qualitative study

The quality of children today determines the quality of human resources in the future. Therefore, preparing children, including giving exclusive breast milk for supporting their physical and mental growth and development and intelligence, is significant (1).

Breast milk is the milk produced by secretions from the breast after giving birth. Breast milk is an ideal natural food for babies, particularly in the first months of life. The milk contains all the nutrients needed to provide energy for optimal growth and development of infants (2, 3). Exclusive breastfeeding is providing only breast milk for babies for six months without any additional fluids, such as formula milk, orange juice, honey, tea, water as well as the addition of other food supplements, such as bananas, milk porridge, biscuits, porridge or rice (4).

The World Health Organization (WHO) in 2016 shows that the average rate of exclusive breastfeeding across the globe only reaches around 38%. In East Nusa Tenggara Province, the percentage of exclusive breastfeeding in infants aged 0–6 mo is 38.3% while for those aged 0–5 mo is 79.9% (5).

The practice of starting breastfeeding less than one hour after the baby is born and colostrum feeding in East Nusa Tenggara is considered relatively good when compared with the national figure which is 56.2% (national figure 29.3%) and 75.1% (national figure 74.7%) (6).

One of the factors causing the failure of exclusive breastfeeding is the employment status of mothers. Exclusive breastfeeding is often limited by time allocation, workload, stress, and self-efficacy associated with the short period of maternity leave. In addition, many working mothers assume that breast milk does not meet the needs of babies leading to the provision of formula milk (7). Mothers who work outside home will be more unlikely to give exclusive breast milk.

Similar to other career women, policewomen are required to be responsible for managing and fostering their family as well as showing excellent performance at work (8). This condition influences the success of exclusive breastfeeding for mothers working as policewomen due to the difficulty of managing the time between work and the family and time to giving breast milk to babies.

According to the data from East Nusa Tenggara Regional Police, there were 180 policewomen; 32 of them had infants 0–24 mo and 10 policewomen managed to breastfeed exclusively for 6 mo. This study aimed to elaborate strategies of policewomen who had successful exclusive breastfeeding in East Nusa Tenggara Regional Police.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study design and participants. This is qualitative research with explorative design on issues related to the
achievement of exclusive breastfeeding by policewoman as a member of East Nusa Tenggara Police Region. This research was conducted at the workplace of East Nusa Tenggara Regional Police from April to June 2018.

The policewomen within East Nusa Tenggara Police Region were divided into several units. In total, there were 180 policewomen; of those 127 were married. Among those married policewomen, 32 had infants 0–24 mo and 10 were successful to give exclusive breastfeeding for 6 mo. Those 10 policewomen were recruited in this study.

Approvals from the Independent Ethics committee of the University of Nusa Cendana were obtained for the conduct of the study. All subjects provided their informed consent prior to the participation into the study.

Data collection and analysis technique. Data collection was conducted by in-depth interview directly to the informants using a guided questionnaire. The interview was recorded.

The recorded data was transcripted into verbatim. The data was analysed based on emerged themes using the phenomenology approach.

RESULTS

The informants were 26–42 y old, while their babies were 6 mo–2 y old. Nine informants had educational level of senior high school and 1 had university degree.

Knowledge

The informants were well understood that exclusive breastfeeding was very significant to the future of children growth, improved baby’s immunity and prevented sickness. Exclusive breastfeeding meant to give babies only breastmilk without supplementary foods for six months. Mothers understood that breastmilk contained antibodies for babies compared to formula milk. As the informant stated that:

"... in my opinion exclusive breastfeeding is very significant for children growth. (better) for the growth, immune system, future health, and for the kids' body than those babies who do not get exclusive breastmilk ..." (LL).

Furthermore, the informant RA stated the same ideas as follows:

"... in my own opinion, exclusive breastfeeding means to give breastmilk to baby ... pure means without other food supplement ya ... breastfeeding starts from 0 to 6 months old but especially my baby, I give it until 6 months old without supplementary food ..." (RA)

Also, the informant NK added that:

"... according to me, breastmilk contains antibodies for the baby, so it is very important to be consumed by the baby and it is better compared to formula milk ..." (NK)

Attitude

Most of the informants had positive attitude to give exclusive breastfeeding. Even though they were so busy as policemen, but the informants still gave exclusive breastfeeding and accepted the woman’s nature to take care of the children and enjoy their job. As stated by the informant as following:

"... take an example that this public service (as police) is not conducted individually, but we do it with other partners so I can manage time. Our friend has called us for duty, but I will say let me help the baby to sleep first or breastfeed the baby. Let him sleep again, then I go back to the office. Also, the house is so close to the office. ..." (SD).

As well as YP that had the same opinion:

"... it does not really matter, just fun, as long as the baby is healthy, in fact, we all here are parents who really understand that breastfeeding is the task of a mother ..." (YP).

Additionally, the informant RA mentioned that:

"... Actually if the woman accepts her nature as a woman, you just need to enjoy it ..." (RA).

Exposure of information

The informants got information about exclusive breastfeeding from media such as mass media, social media, and printed media. The information accessed by informants such as the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding for the babies and the mothers. The informants also received information from health workers, colleagues, and parents. One informant stated as follows:

"... for exclusive breastfeeding, it is from the doctor, Google, and I watched milk advertisements on TV and the public advertisements ..." (RA).

The same opinion was told by YP as follows:

"From the parents, rather than the internet, or even from our parents, I will find detailed information on the internet if required, knowing from experienced people that said the baby should get exclusive breastfeeding so they got privilege this and that, and honestly I see my kids are stronger and better, their body shape are different compared to babies without exclusive breastfeeding who are not so fit ..." (YP).

While informant NK mentioned that

"... from a pediatrician, browsing its benefits from the internet. We will share our problems (related to breastfeeding) with friends in office ..." (NK).

Facility provided

The facility for breastfeeding room or the corner for breastfeeding was unavailable, but the informants did not consider that as an obstacle. The informants used the meeting room to pump breastmilk because the room is clean. The breastmilk was then stored in cool box and ask people from home to bring it home. Informants used electric pump as it is fast and smooth.

Even though the facility was unavailable, the colleagues’ motivation and the short distance between the house and office supported to the success of exclusive breastfeeding. The informants also mentioned that they always pumped breastmilk at home before leaving for work because they never brought the baby to the office. As stated by the informants as follows:

"(I pump) in an empty room at the left side, it has the keys that we can keep it when we go to that room, we will find two compartments, we can choose left or right side. (another option is) the bathroom, but it is dirty, it is not hygienic, is it? ..." (LL).

Additionally, another informant, RA mentioned as following:

"... it is always pumped at home. I go home because the distance is very close, right? I consider the time too, sometimes. My friends can understand it, so I go home just for an hour then return to work again ..." (RA).
The same opinion was conveyed by the informant YP as follows.

"... that is the point, we pump it for 2 or 3 bottles, she drinks milk up to 3 or 4 baby bottles at the beginning. I pump a lot at home, not in the office. Fortunately, my house is closed so I used to go back home ...." (YP).

Husband support

The husbands gave adequate support because they help find information related to exclusive breastfeeding for the baby's health. If there was an advertisement on TV about exclusive breastfeeding, the husbands suggested their wives to watch it, so the informants could apply as the advertisements said. Husband always accompanied the informants for antenatal care and they disagreed if the baby was fed with formula milk.

Another support given was that they helped with household chores when the informants breastfed the baby. The husbands' support shows a give-and-take interaction between the spouses. The informant's statement was as follows.

"... oh he really supports, accompany me to check up in pregnancy time until delivering the baby, even he never allows me to give formula milk. If I am in a tight schedule and at the same time he is free, he will heat up the milk ..." (EB).

The same opinion was stated by informant SD as follows.

"... when he watches TV in doctor OZ, he will call me 'Mom ... Mom ..., come here. Take a look, this is good for exclusive breastfeeding. Sometimes my husband reminds me to breastfeed our baby, 'don't give our child formula milk. So you should come home on time ...'." (SD).

The chief support

The support from the chief was very good for the success of exclusive breastfeeding. The chief did not understand about exclusive breastfeeding, but he promised that mothers should breastfeed their babies, and get interlude time to go back home for breastfeeding.

The informants mentioned that the chief always allowed them to take low risk job and not to take jobs outside the city. It is as stated by the informants as follows.

"... oh ya, the chief is not familiar with exclusive breastfeeding, but he understands that the baby needs breast milk so he gives us flexible time to go home to feed the baby ..." (LL).

The additional same ideas are stated by the informant YP that:

"... we request some flexibility, we do not have to take many tasks when we are breastfeeding, like doing night shift. Many of us support it ..."). (YP).

Family support

The support from the family was very significant to ensure mothers to continue exclusive breastfeeding. When the informants worked in the office, the babies were entrusted to parents or parents-in-law. The reasons were parents or parents-in-law are the right persons to help implement exclusive breastfeeding. An informant also trusted their parents to take care the children, because the informant's mother is working in posyandu (community integrated post for mothers and children) and considered more knowledgeable about exclusive breastfeeding.

As it was stated by the informants as follows.

"... Mother. She gives more support because she is a posyandu cadet so she knows better about the significance of breastfeeding for the baby ..." (LL).

The same idea was stated by the informant SD as follows.

"... oh, the family really supports me especially my husband and parents-in-law. So, if I am late to breastfeed the baby, they will grumble a bit... ha ha ha ..." (SD).

Furthermore, the same idea was stated by informant SD as follow:

"... I prefer my father and mother to look after the baby and even I have to ask my neighbour to watch my child it will be only for a short time ...." (YP).

The strategy

Most of the informants did not have a specific strategy for the success of exclusive breastfeeding. It was started from inner motivation and the woman accepted the nature that they should give birth and breastfeed the baby for baby’s optimal health. This was asserted by the informants as follows.

"... the first thing starts from intention. Sometimes we are jealous for our friends. If she can do it (breastfeed) then why can’t I? Then it is supported by reading information about breastfeeding also help strengthen my motivation. There is no special strategy, but the most important thing is that you should have the motivation ..." (LL).

The same idea was also emphasized by the informant SD as follow:

"... we are able to take some times out of the office and because of the location of our houses too. Many fails because of the distance too ..." (SD).

Additionally, another SD mentioned that:

"... I breastfeed my baby when I am at home, then I get ready to the office for meetings, after that I spend some time in my room for a while, then about 15 minutes, I ask permission to go home. One hour at home then I go back to the office to finish my work. Then I ask permission to go back home for breastfeeding at 11 am ..." (RA).

DISCUSSION

The informants had good knowledge about exclusive breastfeeding. According to the informants, exclusive breastfeeding was the best food for the baby because it contained antibodies for the baby to prevent from illness. Breast milk was more sterile compare to formula milk, so the informants prefer to breastfeed in the first six months breastfeeding period. They said that breastfeeding could improve the inner relationship between mother and baby even separated with work time.

The mothers that had experience exclusive breastfeeding had better knowledge about breastfeeding com-
pared to those who first experienced exclusive breastfeeding. The mother who have better knowledge about breastfeeding will be more likely to achieve successful exclusive breastfeeding (9).

Mothers were convinced that breast milk is the best food for the baby, therefore they had the intention to breastfeed in the first six months. The more positive attitude of the mother, the bigger chance for the mother to give exclusive breastfeeding (10).

Even though mothers worked outside the house, they are exposed to more information related to breastfeeding from their colleagues. So it will help build mothers' positive attitude to exclusively breastfeed (11). Information were obtained from health officers, their peers, their families as well as self-searched from internet. More detail information enabled the mother to apply proper breastfeeding practices. (7).

The availability of supportive environment including breastfeeding corner will encourage mothers to breastfeed. Lestari (12) showed that the nursing room and other facilities (such as freezer) was correlated with more exclusive breastfeeding practice. Despite stated in government regulation, the East Nusa Tenggara Regional Police office had no nursing room facility. However, this study showed that the lack of nursing room and other facilities was not seen as barrier to exclusive breastfeeding due to the short distance between houses and the office. In addition, family members would collect the pumped breastmilk from the office if the location was quite far.

Husband was the best supporter for the young breastfeeding mothers (15). It is commonly referred to as breastfeeding father for those fathers who support exclusive breastfeeding (14). Habits supported mothers both emotionally (giving motivation) and physically (carrying out household chores). Support from other family members, such as parents, parents-in-low and relatives were also significant toward the success of exclusive breastfeeding. Study showed that family support determined mothers' attitude in giving exclusive breastfeeding (13). External support for exclusive breastfeeding also came from the office chief who provided consent for pumping breastmilk or short-time leave for breastfeeding (14).

This research highlighted certain strategies applied by mothers for successful exclusive breastfeeding as follow: 1) Able to manage time between housework and officework for breastfeeding, 2) Have strong self-motivation, 3) Avoid stress, and 4) Receive family support.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The success of exclusive breastfeeding was attributed to the very good support from family, especially husband, and from the office chief. The lack of nursing room was circumvented by making use the existing facilities. Above all, self-motivation and commitment played the biggest role. It is recommended that office/institutions provide nursing room to support exclusive breastfeeding.

**Disclosure of state of COI**

No conflicts of interest to be declared.

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