

## The Relationship Between Social Support and Anxiety Levels in Breastfeeding Mothers in Luwu District

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### ABSTRACT

**BACKGROUND:** The breastfeeding period is a vulnerable time for mothers, with increased risk of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. One way to reduce anxiety in breastfeeding mothers is through social support from those closest to them. Objective: This study aims to examine the relationship between social support and anxiety levels among first-time breastfeeding mothers.

**METHODS:** This quantitative study used a cross-sectional design. The population consisted of 114 first-time breastfeeding mothers from three public health center areas in Luwu Regency. Total sampling was used to select participants. Data were collected using two questionnaires: a social support questionnaire adapted from the Hughes Breastfeeding Support Scale and the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS) for anxiety.

**RESULTS:** The findings showed significant relationships between informational support ( $p = 0.004$ ), instrumental support ( $p = 0.003$ ), and emotional support ( $p = 0.000$ ) with anxiety levels in breastfeeding mothers. However, no significant relationship was found between appraisal support and anxiety ( $p = 0.77$ ).

**CONCLUSION:** Social support is significantly associated with anxiety levels among first-time breastfeeding mothers and plays an important role in supporting the success of exclusive breastfeeding.

**Keywords:** Social Support, Anxiety levels, Mothers breastfed

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The breastfeeding period is a vulnerable time for women to experience anxiety, sadness and depression that can hurt themselves and their babies. These symptoms significantly occur in women with a range of 15-20% towards mental disorders that can appear at any time starting from pregnancy to 12 months postpartum (1)

Breastfeeding achievements in Southeast Asia show varying figures, with Myanmar at 24%, Vietnam at 27%, the Philippines at 34% and India at 46%. Meanwhile, research in Indonesia found that mothers who experienced breast milk production disorders were in the range of 56.7% to 74.2%. The high rate of poor breast milk production in Indonesia is caused by improper breastfeeding techniques, poor family support, and poor psychological state of the mother (2). Data from Indonesia's Basic Health Research (Riskesdas) in 2018, states that the prevalence of mental disorders such as depression and anxiety disorders in mothers is 15.6% during pregnancy and 19.8% after childbirth from around 14 million people from the Indonesian population. Maternal anxiety after childbirth and during breastfeeding was recorded at 22.4% (3)

Psychological factors such as anxiety are something that a woman should be aware of and overcome as early as possible before entering the breastfeeding period. Natural distress is dominated by mental symptoms such as excessive anxiety, difficulty making decisions and

difficulty concentrating, which can also cause physical symptoms such as tachycardia (above normal heart rate), sweating, tremors and headaches (4)

First-time mothers are considered inexperienced compared to mothers who have previous breastfeeding experience. In some first-time mothers, the problem that often arises is the frequent occurrence of nipple blisters due to lack of knowledge and the unpreparedness of a mother in breastfeeding both physiologically and changes that occur in the shape of the body causing mothers to be lazy to breastfeed (5)

Multiparous mothers (who have given birth to children more than once) and primiparous (first time giving birth to a baby) have differences in anxiety levels during the breastfeeding process. The level of anxiety that occurs in primiparous mothers is higher than multiparous mothers. This is due to the fact that most primiparous mothers have no experience in caring for and breastfeeding their babies (6)

In mothers who enter the postpartum and breastfeeding phase, there are several factors that can affect adaptation to psychological disorders in the form of anxiety, namely the feeling of discomfort and fatigue that occurs after pregnancy and the labor process experienced, maternal knowledge related to the needs of the baby, maternal attitudes, baby characteristics, and the presence of social support (7)

One of the efforts that can be made to overcome anxiety in breastfeeding mothers is through social support provided by the closest people. Social support is a form of attention, appreciation and assistance felt by others. Social support consists of emotional support, appreciation support, instrumental support, and information support. Breastfeeding mothers need support from the people around them, husband, family, friends, even from health workers and cadres to be able to adjust to the new role as a mother (8)

Social support can help a person overcome the pressure they receive. The support in question is providing something to meet the needs of others, providing encouragement, enthusiasm and advice to the person in a situation in making decisions. Social support from others indicates that a person is loved, cared for, valued, respected, and involved in a reciprocal network of communication and obligations (9).

Based on data collected by researchers, it was found that the percentage of breastfeeding in South Sulawesi was 77.20% in 2023 (BPS, 2024). One of the districts in South Sulawesi, Luwu District, showed that the percentage of breastfeeding for infants <6 months by breastfeeding mothers in all health centers in Luwu District in 2023 was 62.9%. There are several Puskesmas working areas in Luwu District that show that the percentage of exclusive breastfeeding achievements with infants <6 months of age is still low, namely Puskesmas Larompong 70%, Puskesmas Larompong Selatan 58.8%, Puskesmas Suli 65.4%.

The results of the data obtained show that the target achievement has not met the government target of 80%. The decrease in the percentage of breastfeeding mothers who provide breast milk to babies <6 months, so the researcher concluded that this case could be studied in order to be able to identify and analyze more deeply the relationship between social support and anxiety of mothers who breastfeed [10]

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Research Design and Location**

The type of research used was quantitative research using cross sectional. This study was conducted in Puskesmas Larompong, Puskesmas Suli and Puskesmas Larompong Selatan, South Sulawesi, Indonesia from November 20 to December 20, 2024.

### **Research Sample**

Sample for this study comprised first-time breastfeeding mothers in 2024, The number of samples in this study were 3 sub-districts of Puskesmas working area with the sample selection technique using the total sampling method.

### **Instrument and Prosedures**

Primary data for this study will be collected through the completion of a standardized questionnaire. In this study, the researcher visited one by one the respondents' homes from the three working areas of the health center. The respondents then filled out the questionnaire according to the feelings they experienced during breastfeeding. The data was then collected by the researcher after the questionnaires were completed by the respondents.

### **Data Analysis**

Univariate analysis was conducted to describe the demographic characteristics of the sample, with the results presented in the form of frequencies and percentages. Bivariate analysis using Spearman's test was conducted to see the strength of the relationship between social support and the dependent variable, anxiety level. Univariate and bivariate analyses were conducted using SPSS 27.

## Results

### Univariate Analysis

#### Social Support

The results of the data analysis of the forms of social support received by breastfeeding mothers in Luwu District are attached in the following table:

**Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Forms of Social Support Received by Breastfeeding Mothers in Luwu District**

Social Support	Level of Social Support					
	High		Enough		Low	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Information Support	5	4,4	15	15,8	91	79,8
Instrument Support	18	15,8	62	54,4	34	29,8
Emotional Support	34	29,8	69	60,5	11	9,6
Appreciation Support	53	46,5	47	41,2	14	12,3

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Based on table 1 above, it is known that the highest form of social support and most instrumental in breastfeeding mothers is the form of social support appreciation, namely 53 (46.5%) breastfeeding mothers have high social support appreciation. While the lowest social support obtained by breastfeeding mothers is information social support 91 (79.8%). Furthermore, sufficient social support is obtained by breastfeeding mothers, namely emotional social support 69 (60.5%)

#### Anxiety Level

The results of the analysis of anxiety symptoms felt by breastfeeding mothers in Luwu Regency are attached in the following table:

**Tabel 2. Frequency Distribution of Anxiety in Breastfeeding Mothers in Luwu District**

Anxiety Level	n	%
No anxiety	43	37,7
Mild Anxiety	34	29,8
Moderate Anxiety	23	20,2
Severe Anxiety	13	11,4
Panic	1	0,9
Total	114	100,0

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Based on the results of the analysis of the table above, it shows that out of 114 breastfeeding mothers, there are 43 people who do not experience anxiety symptoms, there are 13 (11.4%) mothers experiencing mild anxiety symptoms and 1 (0.9%) mother experiencing severe anxiety.

#### Bivariate Analysis

The results of data analysis in the form of the relationship between social support and the level of anxiety received by breastfeeding mothers in Luwu District are attached in the following table 3

**Table 3 The Relationship between Types of Social Support and Anxiety Levels of Breastfeeding Mothers in Luwu District**

Social Support	Anxiety Level					n	%	P-Value
	None	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Panic			
<b>Information Support</b>								
High	6	1	0	0	0	7	7%	
Fair	16	17	6	0	1	40	40%	0,04
Low	21	16	17	13	0	67	67%	
Total	43	34	23	13	1	114	100%	
<b>Instrument Support</b>								
High	8	6	3	1	0	18	18%	
Fair	27	21	10	3	1	62	62%	0,03
Low	8	7	10	9	0	34	34%	
Total	43	34	23	13	1	114	100%	
<b>Emotional Support</b>								
High	17	12	4	1	0	34	34%	
Fair	24	19	18	7	1	69	69%	0,00
Low	2	3	1	5	0	11	11%	
Total	43	32	23	13	1	114	100%	
<b>Appreciation Support</b>								
High	19	19	11	4	0	53	53%	
Fair	19	12	8	7	1	47	47%	0,77
Low	5	3	4	2	0	14	14%	
Total	43	34	23	13	1	114	100%	

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Based on the results of the analysis of the table above shows that there is a significant relationship between the type of social support information p value  $0.04 < 0.05$ , social support instrument p value  $0.03 < 0.05$ , emotional social support with anxiety level p value  $0.00 < 0.05$ . While the type of social support that is not significant to the level of anxiety of breastfeeding mothers is social support appreciation

## 2. DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the study, the chi-square correlation test shows that  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_a$  is accepted, meaning that there is a significant relationship between social support information and anxiety levels in first-time breastfeeding mothers. A value of  $0.004 < 0.005$  was obtained, which means that there is a relationship between information support and anxiety levels in primiparous mother. Forms of social support, such as informational support, can help reduce the anxiety of primiparous mothers that breastfeed in caring for and feeding the baby. This information is very important since the mother does not yet have a baby care experience. The information provided can be useful and constructive, such as the benefits of long-term immunization, how to properly feed a baby, and not providing food before the baby is more than six months old to increase the success of breastfeeding provided by parents who properly feed the baby.

These results are in line with research by Walangadi (2020), which states that primiparous mothers' knowledge about how

to take care of babies is influenced by many things, one of which is the source of information received from people around them. The information support received will be very useful for minimizing errors during the process of caring for and breastfeeding the baby and reducing the psychological pressure felt by the mother when she first takes care of the child [11]

Based on the results of the study, the value obtained is  $0.03 < 0.05$ , which means that the form of instrumental support is related to the level of anxiety in primiparous mothers. Instrumental support is a form of social support in the form of material provision such as financial donations or helping the mother's work. This support is direct and practical, so it can help the person overcome their difficulties. Instrumental support provided to breastfeeding mothers will make individuals feel they have someone who is always there for them. Instrumental support provided to breastfeeding mothers, not only in the form of material but also in the form of attention such as accompanying and helping in taking care of the baby. This support is very necessary for postpartum mothers, especially for mothers who have given birth for the first time and have a baby

This is in line with the research of Permatasari et al., (2020) which states that instrumental support is direct assistance such as objects, money, and energy. Instrumental support to breastfeeding mothers affects (increases) the hormone oxytocin. Husband and family support for breastfeeding mothers in caring for the baby such as carrying the baby to the mother when it will be breastfed or burped, changing diapers and bathing the baby, massaging the mother's shoulders, and helping with household chores. husband's help in the form of: accompanying, looking after and taking the time and giving attention and the benefits of a light massage are believed to relieve muscle tension and calm the mother's mind [12]

Based on the results of the study, the value of  $0.00 < 0.05$  was obtained, which means that there is a relationship between emotional support and the level of anxiety in breastfeeding mothers. Emotional support from husbands, family, and loved ones given to first-time breastfeeding mothers is needed to restore the mother's psychological and mental condition after childbirth. Emotional support such as accompanying, listening to her complaints, giving attention, and affection will make the mother feel heard, cared for, and cared for and so that the mother is comfortable and peaceful to rest, recover and help master with her emotions.

This is in line with the research of Orisinal et al., (2020), among various supports, emotional support has the greatest contribution to the success of mothers to breastfeed, emotional support increases the chances of exclusive breastfeeding success by 5.26 times. Emotional support from the family, especially by believing in the mother's ability to be a good mother, plays an important role in the success of exclusive breastfeeding. When families, especially spouses and parents, show trust and provide emotional encouragement, mothers feel valued and supported. The confidence that comes from family reassurance gives mothers the motivation to continue their breastfeeding efforts, even when facing challenges or difficulties [13]

Based on the results of the study obtained a value of  $0.77 > 0.05$  that appreciation support is not closely related to the level of anxiety experienced by breastfeeding mothers. Anxiety experienced by breastfeeding mothers is caused by several factors, including age, education, and occupation. Expressions of appreciation usually cannot have a good effect without direct help and concrete actions.

This is in line with Aryani's research (2020), which states that appreciation support is important for breastfeeding mothers if followed by providing assistance, feedback, guidance and mediating problem solving experienced by individuals. Appreciation support is provided through positive expressions of respect for others to build self-confidence, appreciate themselves and feel valuable [14]

### 3. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research conducted in Gowa Regency with reference to the formulation of problems and research hypotheses, the following conclusions can be drawn:

There is a relationship between information support and the anxiety level of breastfeeding mothers who are breastfeeding in Luwu Regency

There is a relationship between instrumental support and the anxiety level of breastfeeding mothers who are breastfeeding in Luwu Regency

There is a relationship between emotional support and the anxiety level of breastfeeding mothers who are breastfeeding in Luwu Regency

There is no relationship between appreciation support and the anxiety level of breastfeeding mothers who are breastfeeding in Luwu Regency.

#### Conflict of interest

There are no conflicts of interest between the authors and any other financial organization regarding the subject matter of the research.

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The authors declare and report that no financial sponsorship was obtained that could influence the results of the research.

#### Authors' Contributions

The lead author contributed to conceiving and designing the study, collecting primary and secondary data using SPSS 27. Drafting from the beginning, revising the final draft until the publication stage. The second, third and fourth authors provided advice, guidance, support at all stages of the study, supervision, including methodological design, problem identification, data analysis and manuscript submission. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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The authors certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial organization regarding the material discussed in the manuscript.

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#### Authors' contributions

The first author contributed to designing and planning the study, collecting and analyzing primary and secondary data using Stata 14, drafting the initial manuscript, revising the final draft, and approving the final version for publication. The second and third authors provided guidance, supervision, and support throughout all stages of the research, including problem identification, methodological design, data analysis, and manuscript submission. The fourth, and fifth authors contributed by reviewing the study before and after obtaining the research findings, focusing on methodology, analysis, and conclusions, and providing constructive feedback and suggestions to improve the research quality. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript

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#### Congresses

This paper has not been presented as a poster at any congress.

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