

LACTATION EDUCATION MANAGEMENT THROUGH THE CONSUMPTION OF STIR-FRIED PAPAYA LEAVES TO IMPROVE POSTPARTUM MOTHERS' KNOWLEDGE

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ABSTRACT

Problems such as not producing breast milk smoothly, especially for mothers who have given birth for the first time, are very normal, and often they do not carry out IMD (Early Initiation of Breastfeeding) shortly after birth because awareness has not yet recovered, so it can be a factor in hampering the release of breast milk. To overcome this problem, you can consume papaya leaves which contain the enzymes papain and potassium, which are useful for breaking down the protein you eat, while potassium is useful for meeting potassium needs during breastfeeding. The aim is to determine the educational effect of giving stir-fried papaya leaves on postpartum mothers' knowledge about smooth breast milk production. Quantitative research method, posttest only control group design approach, January-August 2024. Place in Tanjung Balai Karimun. The study population was all postpartum mothers who were breastfeeding. The sampling technique in this research was Accidental Sampling with a total of 34 respondents. Analysis used the T Test. The average knowledge of post-partum mothers about giving stir-fried papaya leaves to facilitate breast milk production in the pretest was 14.26, posttest was 17.50, the statistical test obtained a p value = 0.001 ($\alpha < 0.05$). Conclusion: There is an educational effect of giving stir-fried papaya leaves on the knowledge of postpartum mothers regarding the smooth production of breast milk.

Keywords : ASI, Papaya Leaves, Education, Postpartum, Knowledge

INTRODUCTION

Exclusive breastfeeding remains a major global public health priority because of its significant contribution to infant survival, growth, and development. The World Health Organization (WHO) has established a global target of achieving an exclusive breastfeeding rate of 50% among infants under six months of age. However, the global prevalence remains approximately 38%, indicating that this target has not yet been achieved (WHO, 2019). In Indonesia, the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding is reported to be 33.6%, meaning that only one in three infants receives exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months

of life (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Furthermore, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that approximately two million infants in Indonesia do not receive exclusive breastfeeding, placing the country among the four developing nations with the lowest exclusive breastfeeding coverage (Suja, 2022).

The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of an infant's life, without the introduction of any additional food or beverages, including water. Breast milk provides all the essential nutrients and energy required to support optimal growth, development, and

immune function during early infancy. After six months, nutritionally adequate complementary foods should be introduced while breastfeeding is continued until the child reaches two years of age or beyond, ensuring sustained nutritional and developmental benefits (WHO, 2018; Taberima et al., 2019).

Breast milk provides numerous health benefits for both infants and mothers. For infants, breastfeeding enhances immune protection, promotes skin-to-skin bonding, and provides optimal nutrition essential for healthy growth and development. Exclusive breastfeeding has also been shown to reduce the incidence of allergies, respiratory tract infections, diarrhea, and childhood obesity (Riskani, 2012). Conversely, the absence of exclusive breastfeeding is associated with adverse health outcomes. Infants who are not exclusively breastfed have a 3.94-fold higher risk of death from diarrhea than those who receive exclusive breastfeeding (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2010, as cited in Salamah & Prasetya, 2019). Moreover, breastfed infants generally experience better health outcomes than those who are fed infant formula.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognize breastfeeding as a fundamental practice for promoting good health and well-being from the earliest stages of life. Despite its well-established benefits, optimal breastfeeding practices have not been universally adopted. In both developed and developing countries, including Indonesia, many working mothers experience reduced breast milk production, partly due to inadequate dietary quality and unhealthy eating habits, such as the frequent consumption of fast food. These factors may contribute to suboptimal lactation performance and ultimately reduce the likelihood of

exclusive breastfeeding (Aliyanto, 2019).

Delayed or insufficient breast milk production is a common challenge during the early postpartum period, particularly among first-time mothers. Women who undergo Cesarean section are also more likely to experience delayed lactogenesis because they are often unable to initiate Early Initiation of Breastfeeding (EIBF) immediately after delivery due to postoperative recovery and delayed maternal consciousness. This condition may hinder the onset of effective breastfeeding and reduce milk production. One intervention that has been shown to promote breast milk secretion is oxytocin massage, which stimulates the release of oxytocin and facilitates lactation among postpartum mothers (Nilawati & Rismayani, 2020).

Several factors contribute to the failure of exclusive breastfeeding, including insufficient breast milk production (32%), nipple problems (28%), and breast engorgement (25%) (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020). Setyowati et al. (2015) reported that the most common barriers to breastfeeding are delayed onset of milk secretion and inadequate milk production. These conditions are primarily associated with insufficient stimulation of the hormones prolactin and oxytocin, both of which play essential roles in milk synthesis and milk ejection. Similarly, Marmi (2016) identified inadequate breast milk production as one of the leading reasons why mothers discontinue breastfeeding prematurely.

The low achievement of exclusive breastfeeding targets is closely associated with delayed or inadequate breast milk production. Insufficient milk supply often discourages mothers from continuing breastfeeding and increases the likelihood of introducing complementary foods before infants reach six months of age. Therefore, comprehensive community-based interventions are needed to

improve maternal knowledge and breastfeeding practices. Such interventions should emphasize the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, discourage the early introduction of complementary foods, and provide evidence-based strategies to enhance breast milk production and support successful lactation (Nurainun, 2021).

Optimal breastfeeding practices contribute substantially to reducing infant morbidity and mortality while providing long-term benefits for cognitive development and productivity in adulthood. Children who are not exclusively breastfed have been reported to be 61 times more likely to develop stunting than those who receive exclusive breastfeeding. In addition, the occurrence of diarrhea among children under five years of age is strongly associated with behavioral factors, particularly the absence of exclusive breastfeeding, as well as environmental factors such as poor sanitation and inadequate personal hygiene. For mothers, breastfeeding offers important health benefits, including a reduced risk of postpartum hemorrhage and postpartum depression (Asnidawati, 2021).

Several nutritional interventions have been proposed to improve breast milk production, one of which is the consumption of galactagogue-containing foods. According to Gopalakrishnan, natural galactagogues include katuk leaves (*Sauropus androgynus*), papaya (*Carica papaya*), banana blossom (*Musa paradisiaca*), and moringa leaves (*Moringa oleifera*). These plants contain bioactive compounds that may stimulate lactation. For example, moringa leaves are rich in phytosterols, including campesterol, stigmasterol, and β -sitosterol, which have been reported to possess lactogenic properties that enhance breast milk production. Fresh moringa leaves also provide essential minerals, including calcium (440 mg),

potassium (259 mg), magnesium (42 mg), and iron (0.85 mg) per 100 g (Monica, 2016). Consequently, the consumption of plant-based galactagogues has been recognized as a promising nutritional strategy for supporting breast milk production among postpartum mothers.

According to Gopalakrishnan, one nutritional approach to enhancing breast milk production is the consumption of foods with galactagogue properties. Several traditional foods have been identified as natural galactagogues, including katuk leaves (*Sauropus androgynus*), papaya (*Carica papaya*), banana blossom (*Musa paradisiaca*), and moringa (*Moringa oleifera*). These plants contain various bioactive compounds that may stimulate lactation by promoting the secretion of prolactin and oxytocin, the primary hormones involved in milk synthesis and milk ejection. Therefore, the use of plant-based galactagogues has gained increasing attention as a safe and affordable nutritional strategy for improving breast milk production among postpartum mothers (Monica, 2016).

Among these natural galactagogues, papaya leaves (*Carica papaya* L.) have attracted considerable interest because of their rich nutritional composition and potential lactogenic effects. Previous studies have demonstrated that papaya leaf extract can significantly improve breast milk production in postpartum mothers (Aprilia et al., 2020). Papaya leaves are rich in proteins, vitamins, calcium, iron, and other essential micronutrients that support maternal nutritional status during lactation. In addition, they contain bioactive compounds such as papain, flavonoids, alkaloids, saponins, and polyphenols, which are believed to enhance lactation by stimulating hormonal activity and improving maternal metabolism. The high iron content contributes to hemoglobin synthesis and oxygen transport, thereby

supporting cellular metabolism, while potassium helps maintain electrolyte balance, reduce fatigue, and support maternal psychological well-being during the breastfeeding period. These nutritional and phytochemical properties suggest that papaya leaves represent a promising functional food for promoting successful breastfeeding and improving lactation outcomes among postpartum mothers (Turlina, 2015).

Previous studies have demonstrated the beneficial effects of papaya leaves (*Carica papaya* L.) on lactation among breastfeeding mothers. Kusumaningrum (2017) reported that the administration of papaya leaves in the form of traditional herbal preparations, combined with the topical application of papaya leaves to the breasts, significantly improved breast milk production. These findings suggest that papaya leaves may serve as an effective natural galactagogue for postpartum women. The lactogenic effects of papaya leaves are attributed to their rich mineral composition, particularly potassium and manganese, which are believed to stimulate the secretion of prolactin and oxytocin, the key hormones responsible for milk synthesis and milk ejection (Wijayanti et al., 2019).

In addition to nutritional interventions, lactation education plays a crucial role in promoting successful breastfeeding. Comprehensive education on the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding, appropriate breastfeeding techniques, and evidence-based natural approaches to enhancing breast milk production can improve maternal knowledge and breastfeeding practices, thereby supporting the achievement of exclusive breastfeeding targets. Various medicinal plants, including red spinach (*Amaranthus tricolor*), katuk leaves (*Sauropus androgynus*), moringa leaves (*Moringa oleifera*), and papaya leaves (*Carica papaya* L.), have traditionally

been used to stimulate lactation. Among these, papaya leaves are particularly advantageous because they are widely available and easily accessible in many regions of Indonesia.

Papaya leaves are rich in quercetin, a flavonoid with potential lactogenic activity that may stimulate prolactin secretion, as well as papain, a proteolytic enzyme that facilitates protein digestion and improves nutrient utilization during lactation. In addition, their potassium content contributes to maintaining maternal physiological function throughout the breastfeeding period. Owing to these nutritional and phytochemical properties, papaya leaves have been recognized as a promising natural galactagogue that may enhance both breast milk production and milk ejection among postpartum mothers (Desyanti, 2022).

In Indonesia, disparities in exclusive breastfeeding coverage remain evident across provinces. The Riau Islands Province is among the regions where exclusive breastfeeding rates remain below the national target. According to the Riau Islands Provincial Health Profile (2018), the exclusive breastfeeding coverage was 44.5%, representing a slight decline from 44.9% in 2017. During the same period, the province recorded an infant mortality rate of 15 per 1,000 live births, highlighting the importance of strengthening breastfeeding promotion programs. Considerable variation was also observed across districts, with the highest exclusive breastfeeding coverage reported in Lingga Regency (62.8%) and the lowest in Anambas Islands Regency (36.7%).

In Tanjung Balai Karimun, exclusive breastfeeding coverage has remained consistently low. Local health records indicate that the proportion of infants who received exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life was 8.6% in 2014, increased to 11.5% in 2015, and

declined again to 8.4% in 2016. These findings suggest that exclusive breastfeeding remains a significant public health challenge in the region and underscore the need for effective interventions to improve maternal knowledge and breastfeeding practices. Although previous studies have demonstrated the potential of papaya leaves as a natural galactagogue, limited research has examined the integration of structured lactation education with the consumption of stir-fried papaya leaves as a comprehensive educational intervention for postpartum mothers. Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of lactation education management through the consumption of stir-fried papaya leaves in improving postpartum mothers' knowledge regarding breast milk production in Tanjung Balai Karimun.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study was to determine the effect of lactation education management through the consumption of stir-fried papaya leaves on postpartum mothers' knowledge regarding breast milk production in Tanjung Balai Karimun, Indonesia.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design. The study involved postpartum breastfeeding mothers who received a single session of lactation education on efforts to support breast milk production through the consumption of stir-fried papaya leaves. Participants' knowledge was assessed before the intervention using a pretest questionnaire and reassessed after the intervention using a post-test questionnaire. The study focused specifically on changes in maternal knowledge and did not directly measure breast milk volume or production.

The educational session was delivered directly by the researcher using structured educational materials covering the importance of breastfeeding, factors affecting breast milk production, breastfeeding practices, and the potential use of papaya leaves as a food option to support lactation. The session lasted approximately 20–30 minutes and was followed by a question-and-answer session to reinforce participants' understanding. The post-test was administered after the educational session using the same knowledge indicators as the pretest.

The study was conducted from January to August 2024 in Tanjung Balai Karimun, Indonesia. The study population comprised breastfeeding postpartum mothers in the study area, with 34 participants recruited using accidental sampling. Data were collected using a researcher-developed knowledge questionnaire based on the relevant theoretical framework. The primary outcome was the change in postpartum mothers' knowledge regarding efforts to support breast milk production. Data were analyzed using a paired *t*-test to compare pretest and post-test knowledge scores. Statistical significance was determined at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Table 1. Results of the Normality Test

Variable	N	Mean	<i>p</i> -Value
Pretest Knowledge	34	14,26	0.200
Post-test Knowledge	34	17,50	

The normality test results presented in Table 1 using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test showed that the data were normally distributed, with a *p*-value greater than

0.05 ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, the assumption of normality was met, indicating that parametric statistical analysis using the paired t -test was appropriate for evaluating the effect of the educational intervention on postpartum mothers' knowledge.

Table 2. Comparison of Mean Knowledge Scores Before and After the Educational Intervention

Group	N	Mean	SD
Pretest	34	14,26	±1,421
Posttest	34	17,50	±1,973

Based on Table 2, the mean knowledge score of postpartum mothers regarding the consumption of stir-fried papaya leaves to promote breast milk production was 14.26 before the educational intervention. Following the intervention, the mean knowledge score increased to 17.50, indicating an improvement in participants' knowledge after receiving lactation education.

Table 3. Effect of Lactation Education on the Consumption of Stir-Fried Papaya Leaves on Postpartum Mothers' Knowledge of Breast Milk Production

Group	N	Mean ±SD	p -value
Pretest	34	14,26±1,421	0.001
Posttest	34	17,50±1,973	

Based on Table 3, the mean knowledge score of postpartum mothers regarding the consumption of stir-fried papaya leaves to promote breast milk production was 14.26 at the pretest and increased to 17.50 at the post-test, representing a mean difference of 3.24 points.

The paired t -test revealed a statistically significant difference between the pretest and post-test knowledge scores ($p =$

0.001, $p < 0.05$). These findings indicate that lactation education on the consumption of stir-fried papaya leaves significantly improved postpartum mothers' knowledge regarding breast milk production.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrated that lactation education on the consumption of stir-fried papaya leaves significantly improved postpartum mothers' knowledge regarding breast milk production. The mean knowledge score increased from 14.26 before the intervention to 17.50 after the intervention, with a mean difference of 3.24 points. Furthermore, the paired t -test showed a statistically significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores ($p = 0.001$), indicating that the educational intervention effectively enhanced participants' knowledge.

The improvement in knowledge can be attributed to the educational intervention, which provided participants with evidence-based information on the nutritional benefits of stir-fried papaya leaves and their potential role in supporting breast milk production. Improved knowledge is an important outcome because it enables postpartum mothers to make informed decisions regarding breastfeeding practices and the use of locally available foods that may support successful lactation. These findings suggest that integrating nutrition-based lactation education into routine postpartum care may contribute to strengthening mothers' understanding of breastfeeding management and promoting exclusive breastfeeding practices.

Optimal breastfeeding provides substantial health benefits for both infants and mothers. Adequate breastfeeding has been shown to reduce infant morbidity and mortality while contributing to improved cognitive development and

long-term productivity in adulthood. Children who are not exclusively breastfed have been reported to be at a substantially higher risk of developing stunting than those who receive exclusive breastfeeding. In addition, the incidence of diarrhea among young children is strongly associated with behavioral factors, particularly the absence of exclusive breastfeeding, as well as environmental factors such as poor sanitation and inadequate personal hygiene. For mothers, breastfeeding is associated with a reduced risk of postpartum hemorrhage and postpartum depression, highlighting its important role in promoting maternal health and well-being (Asnidawati, 2021).

Knowledge is an individual's understanding and awareness of information that influences attitudes and behavioral decisions. According to Notoatmodjo, as cited by Albunsyary (2020), knowledge is not determined solely by formal education but is also acquired through personal experiences and interactions with the surrounding environment. Nevertheless, educational attainment plays an important role in facilitating an individual's ability to receive, process, and understand new information.

Similarly, Bagia (2015) defined knowledge as meaningful information that individuals possess within a particular field of study. Prasetyo, as cited by Maspriyadi (2019), further explained that knowledge encompasses everything stored in an individual's cognitive system and is developed through accumulated learning experiences. In the context of this study, the observed improvement in postpartum mothers' knowledge following the educational intervention suggests that structured health education can effectively enrich mothers' understanding of breastfeeding management and the potential benefits of consuming stir-fried

papaya leaves to support breast milk production.

The postpartum period is closely associated with the establishment of lactation, and successful breastfeeding is strongly influenced by the mother's readiness to adapt to the physical, physiological, and psychological changes that occur after childbirth. During this period, mothers undergo substantial adjustments as they recover from delivery while simultaneously developing the knowledge and skills required to care for their newborns. They often experience a combination of excitement, emotional adaptation, and increased responsibility as they transition into the maternal role. These changes may occasionally lead to feelings of uncertainty, stress, or difficulty in managing new responsibilities. Consequently, the postpartum period represents a critical phase during which mothers are particularly receptive to guidance, education, and professional support. Providing appropriate health education during this period can facilitate maternal adaptation, strengthen breastfeeding confidence, and improve knowledge related to effective lactation management (Soetjiningsih, 2017).

Papaya leaves (*Carica papaya*) are a nutrient-rich plant that contains several vitamins and minerals beneficial for both maternal health and infant growth. They provide relatively high levels of protein, healthy fats, vitamins, calcium, and iron, all of which contribute to improving maternal nutritional status during the postpartum period. Adequate iron intake supports hemoglobin synthesis and oxygen transport, thereby enhancing cellular metabolism and overall physiological function. In addition, papaya leaves contain papain, a proteolytic enzyme that facilitates protein digestion, and potassium, an essential mineral required to maintain electrolyte balance and support maternal well-being during lactation.

The potential lactogenic effect of papaya leaves is also associated with their mineral composition. Potassium and manganese are believed to stimulate the secretion of prolactin and oxytocin, the two primary hormones responsible for the synthesis and ejection of breast milk. Adequate potassium intake may also help reduce fatigue and stabilize mood during the postpartum period, thereby supporting successful breastfeeding. These nutritional properties suggest that papaya leaves may serve as a valuable natural dietary source for promoting lactation and improving maternal health among breastfeeding mothers (Aprilia, 2020).

Knowledge is the understanding acquired through processes such as observation, seeing, listening, experiencing, and interpreting information based on an individual's beliefs, experiences, and available evidence. Knowledge can develop through various sources, including traditions, observations, personal experiences, and experimentation.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Endarti et al. (2025), who investigated the effect of health education on postpartum mothers' knowledge regarding the benefits of boiled moringa leaves for supporting breast milk production in Bangun Rejo Village, Tanjung Morawa District. Their study demonstrated a significant improvement in maternal knowledge following the health education intervention ($p = 0.000$, <0.05). These findings support the role of health education as an important approach to improving mothers' understanding of breastfeeding and strategies that may support lactation.

Sutarno, Sarwa, and Apriani (2023) stated that one of the main objectives of health education is to encourage behavioral changes toward practices that are more appropriate based on the knowledge and information acquired.

Notoatmodjo also emphasized that educational level plays an important role in behavioral development, as higher educational attainment is generally associated with greater awareness, better comprehension of information, and more appropriate decision-making.

In the context of breastfeeding, mothers with broader knowledge tend to be more proactive in seeking information and adopting various practices to support successful breastfeeding. This is consistent with Pratiwi et al. (2022), who reported that an individual's knowledge is closely related to the information they receive. Similarly, Syamson and Kenre (2019) explained that behavioral changes supported by adequate knowledge and awareness are more likely to be sustained because they are based on conscious understanding.

Knowledge may be acquired through formal and informal education, mass media, social and cultural environments, and previous experiences. Therefore, improving mothers' knowledge of strategies that may support breast milk production is an important component of lactation education. In the present study, the increase in knowledge scores following the educational intervention indicates that the information provided regarding the potential role of stir-fried papaya leaves as a dietary option to support lactation was understood by the participants.

The findings of the present study further emphasize that maternal education is a key determinant of successful breastfeeding. Adequate knowledge acquired through structured lactation education serves as an important predisposing factor for the successful practice of exclusive breastfeeding (Fikawati & Syafiq, 2009). In addition to education, maternal nutritional intake plays a crucial role in supporting lactation. The quality and nutritional adequacy of the maternal diet are considered more

important than meal frequency or portion size in maintaining optimal breast milk production (Widayati et al., 2020). Therefore, integrating evidence-based lactation education with nutrition counseling on the consumption of natural galactagogues, such as stir-fried papaya leaves, may represent an effective strategy to improve maternal knowledge and support successful breastfeeding outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the mean knowledge score of postpartum mothers regarding the consumption of stir-fried papaya leaves to promote breast milk production was 14.26 before the educational intervention and increased to 17.50 after the intervention. The paired *t*-test demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the pretest and post-test knowledge scores ($p = 0.001$, $p < 0.05$). These findings indicate that lactation education on the consumption of stir-fried papaya leaves was effective in improving postpartum mothers' knowledge regarding breast milk production. Therefore, incorporating this educational approach into routine postpartum care may support breastfeeding promotion and strengthen exclusive breastfeeding practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Healthcare Professionals

The findings of this study suggest that healthcare professionals, particularly midwives and maternal health providers, should incorporate lactation education on the consumption of stir-fried papaya leaves into routine postpartum care. Providing evidence-based education on natural dietary approaches to support breast milk production may improve postpartum mothers' knowledge and strengthen exclusive breastfeeding practices. Healthcare professionals are also encouraged to promote appropriate

nutritional counseling by introducing locally available, nutrient-rich foods, such as papaya leaves, as complementary strategies for supporting successful lactation.

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