

What Indonesia “Breastfeeding Fathers” Say about Breastfeeding in COVID-19 Pandemic: A Content Analysis of AyahASI Instagram Feeds

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ABSTRACT

Breastfeeding in Corona Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic era becomes an issue that implicates the health aspect of maternal-baby dyad, especially for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 mother. Though its various benefits such as preventing breast and ovarian cancer for the mother and as a passive immunization for the baby, breastfeeding, specifically the direct one, of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 mother has a potency of virus transmission from mother to the baby. Various precautions that consider natural breastfeeding was enforced to prevent the potential for the information, including hygiene precautions, provisioning of expressed breast milk, even temporary separation of mother and the baby. This issue, then, was highlighted by a group of “Breastfeeding Fathers” in Indonesia, who called themselves as AyahASI, who considering COVID-19 as an issue in their nine-year breastfeeding campaign. AyahASI is a group of fathers formed in 2012 and committed to supporting their wives and every mother in Indonesia to breastfeed their children. This study was conducted to describe how COVID-19 issue was framed in AyahASI Instagram. From 743 Instagram feeds of @id_ayahasi, 15 of them is related to the breastfeeding practice in pandemic COVID-19 era. The description about how AyahASI framed COVID-19 in its Instagram account explained further by content analysis method in this study.

Keywords: *Breastfeeding, Pandemic, COVID-19, Precautions, AyahASI, Instagram.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The spread of the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) implicates various aspects of human life. Since World Health Organization (WHO) announced as a disease outbreak on March 2019 [1], various adjustments have been made to reduce the transmission of the COVID-19. Some studies, especially in the public health sector, were studied to understand the transmission process of the virus. One of them is about the social anxiety about the possibility of vertical transmission from a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 mother to the baby [1]–[3]. The vertical transmission of COVID-19 from suspected or confirmed COVID-19 mother to the baby is possible during the prenatal period through placental blood, the delivery route, and postpartum breastfeeding [4].

However, this transmission process still requires further study for the valid results. Various studies have shown that the COVID-19 virus was not found in samples of amniotic fluid, umbilical cord blood, placental tissue, and the breast milk from suspected or

confirmed COVID-19 mother [2], [5], so the possibility of virus transmission after delivery and during breastfeeding is through respiratory droplets and skin-to-skin activity [6], [7]. But, another study stated otherwise. Study in [3], for example, explains that the COVID-19 virus was positive contained in samples of amniotic fluid, placenta tissue, and breast milk from suspected or confirmed COVID-19 mother during postpartum, but its role as a vehicle for the virus transmission was unclear [1].

This information uncertainty creates various precautions for reducing the spread of COVID-19 from suspected or confirmed COVID-19 mother to the baby, such as hygiene precautions, physical contact restrictions, temporary separation of mother and baby, provisioning of expressed breast milk for baby, and formula feeding for mother in serious condition [1], [8], [9]. In fact, WHO has officially announced recommendations to continue breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic by emphasizing rooming-in or the placement of mother and the baby in one room, physical contact,

and kangaroo mother care for both mother and the baby, whether the mother or the baby is suspected or confirmed COVID-19, particularly during the postpartum and breastfeeding [10]. However, this guidance does not necessarily become a worldwide reference for breastfeeding practices in this pandemic era. For example, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, and Spain do not include maternal proximity in their some health facilities breastfeeding guidance document. Baby of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 mother are advised to be placed in a separate incubator and provisioning of expressed of breast milk is highly recommended. Even the provisioning of breast milk substitute products can be an alternative if the mother really can not breastfeed [8]. The American Academi of Pediatrics (AAP) issued similar guidance, which recommends the temporary separation and expressed breast milk to reduce the risk of virus transmission through the mother's respiratory secretion [1].

The restriction of mother and baby physical contact and maternal proximity have negative impact on the physical and emotional health of mother and the baby [1], including the opportunity for breastfeeding. Even though, in pandemic, breastfeeding provides more significant benefits than the potential risks, for example, health benefits as the protection for baby through the formation of passive immunity [11] and the complete nutrition contained in breast milk [4], [8]. As well as economic benefits by reducing spending on formula or other substitute product [12]. In addition, maternal proximity through physical contact can improve psychological health due to the maintenance of the psychological relationship between mother and the baby during the breastfeeding process [13]. For these reasons, breastfeeding must be promoted and supported as a priority for public health, especially during this COVID-19 era [2].

Support for breastfeeding also comes from various global communities such as WHO, UNICEF, ISUOG, RCOG, and ABM by recommending the optimization of mother and baby physical contact and rooming-in with certain precautions, in example, hand hygiene, mask as droplet protection, and provisioning of expressed breast milk by others when mother is in serious ill [4], [7], [11]. Other support also emerged from the

Global Alliance for Newborn Care (GLANCE) which campaigns for Zero-Separation through social media with a focus on increasing global public awareness about zero benefit of mother and baby separation [11]. In addition, alternatives such as delivery rooms, the establishment of a home environment with hygiene measures, breast milk donation, and the use of technology such as telemedicine [12], [14] are also recommended steps to support breastfeeding in this pandemic period.

A group of "Breastfeeding Father" in Indonesia, called "AyahASI", also supports breastfeeding in any circumstances, especially in this pandemic era. This group also made COVID-19 as one of the issue in its 9-year campaign to support every mother, especially in Indonesia, to breastfeed. AyahASI is a group initiated by eight husbands who have exceptional attention to breastfeeding. During the COVID-19 pandemic, AyahASI through his Instagram @id_ayahasi, also campaigned for every mother to breastfeed, whether the healthy or the confirmed COVID-19 one. This study was conducted to describe how the COVID-19 issue was framed in AyahASI Instagram.

2. METHODS

This study was conducted by filtering 743 AyahASI Instagram feeds (as of August 21, 2021) that write about breastfeeding and COVID-19 theme. Researchers created a list of keywords to determine feeds with the theme of breastfeeding and COVID-19. The keyword list is described in Table 1 below. Through these keywords, 18 meals related to COVID-19 were found. Then, researchers refined the analysis and found 15 feeds that specifically mentioned the keywords of breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic theme (see Table 2). Although the qualitative content analysis method allows to be used to analyze verbal data, images, symbols, and other communication data [15], the researchers focus on the text in the caption of the feeds which are visualized as image. In this case, feeds related to breastfeeding and COVID-19 that are imagined as videos are not included as the object of this study. The original text in the feeds becomes coding instrument that can be used to read the theme of the text [16] and generate patterns which are described by researchers as Feeds Category.

Table 1. The Keywords of the Feeds

Baby	Interaction	Suspect
Breastfeeding	Isolation	Symptom
Breast milk	Mask	Transmission
Child	Mother	Vaccine

Baby	Interaction	Suspect
Confirmed	Positive	Virus
Corona	Precautions	Wash hands
COVID-19	Pregnant	
Infected	Self-isolation	

Table 2. Feeds with Research Keywords

No	Upload Date	Keywords	Feeds Content	Number of Slide	Feeds Category
1	March 2, 2020	Child, Breast milk, Corona, COVID-19, wash hands, Suspect, Confirmed, Symptom, Mother, Interaction, Mask, Breastfeeding, Transmission, Infected, Virus	Short guidance of breastfeeding for infected COVID-19 mother based on UNICEF guidance	2	Guideline
2	March 3, 2020	COVID-19, wash hands, Mask, Suspect	Information about the required moment to wear mask and guidance for proper wash hands	1	Information and Guideline
3	March 8, 2020	COVID-19, wash hands, Symptom, Isolation, Mask	Guidance about safe trip using public transportation in pandemic and suggestion to socialize the cough or sneeze etiquette in public space	1	Guideline and Recommendation
4	March 23, 2020	Baby, wash hands, Pregnant, Mother, Breastfeeding	Guidance for breastfeeding based on WHO guidance	4	Guideline
5	March 27, 2020	Child, COVID-19, Mother	Information about mother and baby health in pandemic updated in AyahASI website	1	Information
6	June 17, 2020	Breast milk, COVID-19, Mother, Breastfeeding, Positive, Infected	Information about the urgent of washing breast before breastfeed for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 mother	1	Information
7	June 25, 2020	COVID-19, wash hands, Pregnant, Mother, Precautions	Guidance of self-protect for pregnant mother in pandemic	1	Guideline
8	September 9, 2020	Baby, COVID-19, Mother, Breastfeeding	Information about the benefits of breastfeeding in pandemic	1	Information
9	September 9, 2020	COVID-19, Mother, Breastfeeding	Guidance of breastfeed for ill or suspected COVID-19 mother	3	Guideline
10	September 9, 2020	COVID-19, Mother, Breastfeeding	Suggestion to get support from professional to reduce anxiety about suspected or confirmed COVID-19 mother or child	1	Recommendation
11	December 31, 2020	COVID-19, Transmission	Suggestion to keep the house clean to prevent stunting and COVID-19 transmission	5	Recommendation
12	January 4, 2021	COVID-19	Guidance to prevent stunting in COVID-19 era	2	Guideline
13	July 14, 2021	COVID-19, Mother, Breastfeeding, Vaccine	Information about vaccine effectiveness for breastfeeding mother and suggestion to continue to breastfeed after the vaccination	4	Information and Recommendation
14	July 15, 2021	Breast milk, COVID-19, Mother, Breastfeeding, Positive	Information and guidance to continue to breastfeed for confirmed COVID-19 mother	5	Information and Guideline
15	August 4, 2021	Child, Breast milk, COVID-19, Mother, Breastfeeding, Transmission, Vaccine, Virus	Information about vaccine safety for breastfeeding mother and security to continue breastfeeding after vaccination	4	Information

3. RESULTS

The researchers found 15 feeds with captions related to breastfeeding and COVID-19 theme. Based on the keywords in Table 1, it was found that “wash hands” was mentioned in 5 feeds caption (33%). More significant percentage is 93% of “COVID-19”, 73% of “Mother”, and “Breastfeeding” (60%). In this case, 14 of 15 feeds on the theme of COVID-19 mention “COVID-19” keyword, while 1 dinners that did not mention this keyword is about breastfeeding guidance based on WHO guidelines. The caption in the feed that did not say “COVID-19” represents the content of the meal that visualized as 4 images containing questions and answers about pregnant mother, the baby birth, and breastfeeding during pandemic with 3 questions highlighted on each slide, namely 1) Can confirmed COVID-19 mother breastfeed?; 2) I am COVID-19 positive (re: confirmed) and can not breastfeed, what should I do?; and 3) Can confirmed COVID-19 mother hold and carry the baby?. In this case, the researchers saw that the text in the feed’s image specifically represented important points about breastfeeding during COVID-19 pandemic.

The keyword “wash hands” is written in the feeds about 1) A brief guideline on breastfeeding for mothers infected with COVID-19 based on UNICEF guidelines; 2) Information about required moment to wear a mask and the guidance for proper wash hands, 3) Guidelines on safe travel using public transportation during the pandemic and recommendations for socializing coughing and sneezing etiquette in public places, 4) Breastfeeding guidelines based on WHO guidelines; and 5) Guidance for self-protect for pregnant mother during the pandemic. A total of 11 feeds (73%) mentioned “Mother” as a specific subject that was emphasized in the COVID-19 themed feeds. The keyword “Breastfeeding” in 9 of 15 meals (60%) emphasized the particular condition of subject “Mother” which was highlighted more than “Pregnant” condition (13%).

The 15 feeds of this study’s research objects represent various patterned content which is categorized by researchers into 5 groups, those are 1) Guideline, 2) Information, 3) Recommendation, 4) Information and Guideline, and 5) Guideline and Recommendation. The most feeds category is Guideline (33%) which is total 5 of 15 feeds which explain about 1) A brief guideline on breastfeeding for infected COVID-19 mother based on UNICEF guideline, 2) Breastfeeding

guideline based on WHO guideline, 3) Guideline for self-protect pregnant mother during COVID-19 pandemic, 4) Breastfeeding steps for sick mother or feel COVID-19 symptom, and 5) A brief guideline for preventing stunting during COVID-19 pandemic. The variety of these categories indicates the richness of message content in each feed.

4. DISCUSSION

Corona Disease 2019 (COVID-19) becomes one of issues in AyahASI breastfeeding campaign in Indonesia which is also delivered through its Instagram account @id_ayahasi. AyahASI suggests and guides all mothers to start and continue breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic. This stated from the majority of @id_ayahasi feeds about COVID-19 which contain guidelines for safe breastfeeding during the pandemic, especially for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 mothers. These guidelines are oriented towards the hygiene precautions and transmission from respiratory droplets potency from suspected or confirmed COVID-19 mothers recommended by WHO, such as wearing a mask when breastfeeding or interacting with children, washing hands before and after breastfeeding, and disinfecting surfaces that children frequently touch. Same as [2] and [5], AyahASI emphasizes that there are no studies that stated the COVID-19 virus contained in breast milk so the precautions of respiratory droplets transmission potency become the best solution. AyahASI support for the continuation of breastfeeding during the pandemic is also based on the WHO recommendation which states that the benefits pf breastfeeding outweigh the its risks.

AyahASI also concerns pregnant mothers to breastfeed and maintain physical contact with their infant after giving birth. Through its Instagram account, AyahASI supports physical contact for mother and their infant and offers breast milk from the first day with hygiene precautions. Mothers’ psychological health is also an important thing stated in @id_ayahasi by suggesting professional support when mothers feel anxiety when the mother or baby is suspected or confirmed COVID-19. To increase the immunity of breastfeeding mothers against exposure to COVID-19. AyahASI recommends vaccination because the passive immunity produced by vaccinated mothers will be transmitted to baby through breast milk.

AyahASI's perspective on the issue of breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic still requires further research. The information in the AyahASI Instagram account @id_ayahasi can be developed through future studies, especially those that validated the COVID-19 virus contamination in breast milk of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 mothers. These studies are projected to change the message about breastfeeding and COVID-19 that is stated by AyahASI on its Instagram. The development of WHO recommendations is also one of the variables to develop more studies in this theme. In addition, the studies about this theme can also be enriched by other methods that specifically explain the individual or group perspective in making feeds about breastfeeding and COVID-19 pandemic. Several considerations for the development of further studies are expected to complement the theme in this study.

5. CONCLUSION

This study shows that COVID-19 is one of issues highlighted in the AyahASI breastfeeding campaign. The categories created by researchers based on each feed indicate various types of messages that are informative and educational. In these messages, AyahASI consistently supports breastfeeding by presenting alternative solutions for challenges pregnant and breastfeeding mothers face, especially for suspected or confirmed mothers, to start and continue breastfeeding. Through @id_ayahasi, AyahASI presents the COVID-19 issue as something that necessarily stop a mother from breastfeed.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed equally for this study.

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