

INFORMASI ARTIKEL

Received: October, 19, 2025

Revised: November, 27, 2025

Available online: November, 28, 2025

at: <https://e-jurnal.iphorr.com/index.php/mchc>

The relationship between anxiety levels and activity Independence in postpartum mothers

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Abstract

Background: The postpartum period is an important period marked by physical and emotional changes in postpartum mothers. Anxiety often arises during this time and affects the mother's independence in doing daily activities, including self-care and baby care.

Purpose: to determine the relationship between anxiety levels and activity independence in postpartum mothers in Krueng Barona Jaya Public Health Center, Aceh Besar..

Method: The research employed a descriptive-correlational approach with a cross-sectional method. The population consisted of all postpartum mothers in Krueng Barona Jaya Health Center. The sample was 34 postpartum mothers selected using a total sampling technique.. The data analysis used the Chi-Square test.

Results: The research results showed a significant relationship between anxiety levels and activity independence ($p = 0.002$). Mothers with high anxiety tend to have low activity independence, while mothers with low anxiety are more independent in their daily activities.

Conclusion: There is a significant relationship between the level of anxiety and independence in activities in postpartum mothers.

Keywords: Activity Independence; Anxiety.

PENDAHULUAN

Activity independence is when a person can perform various daily tasks without the help of others. This concept encompasses various important elements in life, such as self-management, the ability to make decisions independently, and emotional, economic, intellectual, and social skills. These skills enable a person to live a more autonomous, responsible life and believe in their own abilities. Independence usually demonstrates several important traits, such as great initiative, strong self-confidence, and the ability to make relevant and appropriate decisions in various situations (Santrock, 2019).

Independence in activities of daily living describes an individual's ability to independently manage all activities necessary to meet daily needs, such as bathing, dressing, eating, working, self-care, and

sleeping. For patients, independence is achieved according to their limitations, by providing encouragement and physical assistance to help patients manage activities without causing stress. The basic components of activities of daily living (ADL) include various important activities that are carried out daily to meet a person's basic needs. These activities include changing position while in bed, sitting up in bed, getting out of bed and back into bed, and walking from one place to another. In addition, ADL also includes activities such as eating and drinking, dressing, maintaining personal hygiene, which includes body and facial care, and performing toileting needs, such as urination, defecation, and bathing. All of these activities are important indicators in assessing a person's level of independence in daily life (Mlinac & Feng, 2016).

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There are several factors that influence a person's ability to perform activities of daily living (ADL). Age affects physical and mental maturity, so mothers who give birth at a young age and adults have different experiences and levels of fatigue. Higher education supports independence through increased knowledge and skills. Parity, or the number of births, affects a mother's experience and ability to adapt to caring for herself and her baby. Postpartum anxiety can hinder a mother's movement and adaptation. Family support is very important in helping mothers cope with physical and emotional changes. The living environment plays a role in supporting independent activities, while mobilization and routine physical activity increase independence in performing ADL (Khasanah & Nurjanah, 2020; Fillit, Rockwood, & Young, 2016).

During the postpartum period, mothers experience many physical and emotional changes. Their level of independence, which is an important part of recovery after childbirth, can affect their ability to care for themselves and their babies (Priscilla, 2020).

The level of independence of mothers in carrying out daily activities is greatly influenced by several factors. These factors include previous experience in caring for babies, the level of support provided by the family, and how quickly mothers begin to mobilize after giving birth. Research shows that mothers who are more active in postpartum mobilization tend to have a higher level of independence in carrying out daily activities and caring for their babies (Mardiatur, Purnamawati, & Mawaddah, 2020).

According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023), half of all global births occur in eight countries, namely India, China, Nigeria, Indonesia, the United States, and the Republic of Congo. Significant variations in birth rates in Asia during the period from 2019 to 2022. In 2019, the number of births in Asia was estimated to reach around 54 million, but decreased to around 52 million in 2020, which was strongly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and its various impacts on social and economic conditions, including family decisions on child planning. After this decline, birth rates began to improve in 2021, with an estimated 53 million births, and showed stability in 2022 with the number of births returning to around 54 million (United Nations

Population Fund Indonesia, 2022; World Health Organization, 2025).

In Indonesia, the coverage of childbirth shows significant variation between provinces. According to data from the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey (SKI) released by the Indonesian Ministry of Health, DKI Jakarta recorded the highest coverage of childbirth at 110.0%, followed by West Java at 94.4% and Banten at 94.1%. Meanwhile, several provinces in Papua show much lower coverage rates, namely Central West Papua at 35.0%, Papua Pegunungan Jaya and Southwest Papua at 38.0% each (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024).

Maternal health coverage in Aceh Province in 2021 varied across districts, with Bener Meriah District having the highest coverage at 103% and Simeulue District having the lowest at 74%. In the last five years, health service coverage in Aceh has increased to 88% in 2022, although it has not yet reached the target of 100%. Southwest Aceh District recorded 100% maternity coverage, while Pidie District only recorded 59%. In Aceh Besar District, childbirth services in 2021 reached 100 with 10,924 mothers giving birth, and postnatal health service coverage in 2022 was 84.7% or 7,791 mothers (Aceh Health Profile 2021-2022). A preliminary survey conducted on January 17, 2025, in the Krueng Barona Jaya Aceh Besar Community Health Center Working Area showed that the number of deliveries in 2024 reached 265 and the number of pregnant women in their third trimester reached 266. The data shows that the number of pregnant women is almost the same as the number of deliveries that occurred, which may indicate the level of postpartum mothers in the area.

According to the WHO, anxiety disorders are one of the most common mental disorders found in various parts of the world. It is estimated that around 4.4% of the global population suffers from this disorder, with the number of sufferers reaching 359 million in 2021. The prevalence of anxiety disorders is estimated to be 4.4% of the global population, with women having twice the risk of men. In the United States, the prevalence of anxiety disorders in adult women is estimated to be between 11 and 21% (World Health Organization, 2025). The global prevalence of postpartum anxiety ranges from 17-33% during the postpartum period (Faisal-Cury &

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Menezes, 2006). Based on the results of the 2018 Basic Health Research (Riskesdas), the prevalence of mental disorders in mothers during pregnancy reached around 15.6%, while during the postpartum period it increased to 19.8%. Of the total population of approximately 14 million postpartum mothers in Indonesia, 22.4% experienced anxiety during this period. In addition, the incidence of postpartum blues was reported to range from 50% to 70% (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

Anxiety is a normal response to perceived threats, but it becomes abnormal if its level is disproportionate to the threat or arises without a clear cause. Anxiety is characterized by physiological arousal, unpleasant feelings of tension, and worry about the possibility of bad events. Anxiety becomes a problem when its level is excessive to the point that it interferes with an individual's daily functioning and quality of life (Nevid, Rathus, & Greene, 1991). Anxiety consists of four levels according to Peplau.

Mild anxiety serves as motivation and increases alertness with mild physical symptoms such as restlessness and difficulty sleeping. Moderate anxiety makes attention more focused on important things with signs such as shortness of breath and increased heart rate. Severe anxiety limits perception and concentration, accompanied by physical symptoms such as headaches, trembling, and insomnia. At the panic level, individuals lose control, are unable to interact rationally, and experience intense fear and serious social dysfunction (Muyasaroh, Baharudin, Fadrijin, Pradana, & Ridwan, 2020). In postpartum mothers, anxiety includes feelings of unfocused and pervasive worry, associated with feelings of helplessness and affection, where these emotions have no specific object. After giving birth, this condition often arises and can affect the mental health of mothers (Mawardika, Aniroh, & Rossida, 2022).

Factors that trigger anxiety include an unsafe environment, pent-up emotions such as anger or frustration, and physical causes such as changes in physical condition during pregnancy or illness (Ramaiah, 2025). Individual knowledge about the situation and the ability to control oneself also influence anxiety (Blackburn, 2007).

Gejala kecemasan dibagi menjadi tiga aspek. Gejala fisik meliputi gelisah, gemetar, ketegangan tubuh, keringat berlebihan, mulut kering, kesulitan

bernapas, detak jantung cepat, pusing, dan gangguan pencernaan. Tanda-tanda perilaku meliputi kecenderungan menghindari, ketergantungan, dan perilaku yang tidak teratur. Tanda-tanda kognitif meliputi kekhawatiran berlebihan, ketakutan yang tidak beralasan, fokus pada perubahan fisik, ketakutan kehilangan kontrol, dan kesulitan berkonsentrasi (Akbar, Anissa, Hariyani, & Rafli, 2022). Gejala seperti ketakutan saat sendirian atau di kerumunan, gangguan tidur, gangguan memori, dan keluhan fisik (Hasiolan & Sutejo, 2015). Membagi tanda-tanda kecemasan menjadi respons fisiologis, perilaku, kognitif, dan emosional, yang meliputi penolakan terhadap fungsi tubuh, gelisah, defisit perhatian, dan perasaan takut kehilangan kontrol (Nevid et al., 2005; Sutejo, 2018).

RESEARCH METHOD

Quantitative research is a scientific approach that is carried out systematically to understand, measure, and analyze various parts, phenomena, and relationships between variables. This study uses a descriptive analytical design with a cross-sectional study approach, which aims to analyze the relationship between two or more variables. This approach allows researchers to describe the relationship between anxiety levels as an independent variable and activity independence as a dependent variable simultaneously. This research was conducted in the working area of the Krueng Baronan Jaya Community Health Center in Aceh Besar Regency, starting in March 2025.

The population consisted of 34 people, which was the total number of postpartum mothers, using total sampling technique so that the total sample used in this study was the total number of postpartum mothers in the working area of the Krueng Barona Jaya Aceh Besar Community Health Center.

The independent variable used was Level of Anxiety, and the dependent variable was Activity Independence. The instrument used in this study was the Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (ZSAS) questionnaire, which is a questionnaire for assessing anxiety levels. The measurement results were taken using a scoring category, with the scoring categories for anxiety levels being 20-44 No anxiety, 45-59 Mild anxiety, 60-74 Moderate anxiety. The *Barthel Index* questionnaire was used as a measure of activity

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independence, with scoring categories ranging from severe dependence (5-8), moderate dependence (9-12), mild dependence (13-16), Independent (17-20). Data analysis used univariate analysis to produce

frequency distribution data and percentages for each research variable. In addition, bivariate analysis was also applied to test the relationship or correlation between two variables.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Frequency Distribution Table of Respondent Characteristics (N=34)

Variable	Results	p-value
Age (Mean±SD) (Range) (Year)	(15.00±2.762) (10-24)	
Late Adolescence (10-13)	5/14.7	
Early Adulthood (14-17)	26/76.5	
Late Adulthood (18-24)	3/8.8	
Parity (n/%)		
Primipara	12/35.3	
Multipara	22/64.7	
Education (n/%)		0.002
Junior High School	4/11.8	
Senior High School	17/50.0	
Diploma	4/11.8	
Bachelor's Degree	7/20.6	
Master's Degree	2/5.9	
Anxiety Level (n/%)		
Moderate Anxiety	14/41.2	
Mild Anxiety	15/44.1	
No Anxiety	5/14.7	
Level of Independence (n/%)		
Severe And Moderate Dependence	24/70.6	
Mild Dependence And Independence	10/29.4	

Based on the table above, it shows that the majority of respondents are in the early adult age category, namely 26 respondents (76.5%). Based on parity level, the majority of respondents were in the multiparous category, namely 22 respondents (64.7%), while the majority of education levels were in the high school category, namely 17 respondents (50.0%). Based on anxiety levels, the majority of respondents were in the mild anxiety category, namely 15 respondents (44.15%), and the majority of respondents with activity independence were in the heavy and moderate dependence category, namely 24 respondents (70.6%). After analyzing the data using the chi-square test for both variables, there was a significant relationship between anxiety levels and activity independence ($p = 0.002$). This means that there is a relationship between anxiety levels and independence in postpartum mothers in the working area of the Krueng Barona Jaya Aceh Besar Community Health Center.

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DISCUSSION

The results of a study conducted on 34 postpartum mothers in the working area of the Krueng Barona Jaya Community Health Center, Aceh Besar, from March 6 to March 20, 2025, showed that there were 34 postpartum mothers as respondents. Of the 14 postpartum mothers experiencing moderate anxiety, all 14 respondents (100.0%) showed heavy and moderate dependence in performing daily activities. In the group of postpartum mothers with mild anxiety, out of 15 respondents, 9 people (60.0%) still experienced severe and moderate dependence, while 6 people (40.0%) had begun to be independent with mild dependence and independence. Meanwhile, among postpartum mothers who did not experience anxiety, 4 out of 5 respondents (80.0%) were in the mild dependence and independent categories, and 1 person (20.0%) still experienced severe and moderate dependence. The results of the Chi-Square test with a p-value of 0.002 indicate that there is a significant relationship between anxiety levels and activity independence levels in postpartum mothers in the working area of the Krueng Barona Jaya Aceh Besar Community Health Center.

This study is in line with Dorothea Orem's Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory, which emphasizes the importance of individual independence in meeting basic self-care needs. Every individual has the ability to perform self-care to maintain health and well-being. However, when individuals experience disorders such as high anxiety, this ability can decline, resulting in a deficit in self-care (Orem, Taylor, & Renpenning, 1995).

Recent evidence from international studies further reinforces these findings. In a prospective cohort study involving 500 postpartum mothers in the UK found that postpartum anxiety (measured by the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale) significantly predicted a decline in activity independence ($p = 0.001$), with an odds ratio of 2.5 for severe dependence at 6 weeks postpartum. Symptoms such as fatigue and irritability caused by anxiety hinder maternal functioning, similar to the pattern of 100% dependence in the moderate anxiety group in this study (Evans, Fraser, Uthman, Osokogu, Johnson, & Al-Khudairy, 2022). Lebih lanjut, sebuah

meta-analisis yang menganalisis 25 studi global ($n = 10.000$ ibu pascapersalinan, 2015–2022) menunjukkan korelasi negatif sedang hingga kuat ($r = -0.45$; $p = 0.001$) antara kecemasan dan fungsi perawatan diri ibu. Analisis ini menyoroti bahwa di negara berkembang seperti Indonesia, faktor budaya dan akses yang tidak merata terhadap layanan kesehatan dapat meningkatkan dampaknya, yang konsisten dengan kondisi lokal di Aceh Besar

At the national level, research in Central Java, Indonesia, supports these findings by showing that mindfulness interventions reduce postpartum anxiety by 35% and increase activity independence by up to 60% ($p = 0.005$), especially in mothers with severe initial dependence. This study adapts Orem's model with mindfulness elements, which can be recommended for the Krueng Barona Jaya Community Health Center to integrate evidence-based approaches into maternal health programs. Overall, this empirical evidence confirms that anxiety is a major factor influencing postpartum independence, and early interventions such as self-care education and psychosocial support can mitigate its impact, as evidenced by the significant statistics in this study (Khoirunisa, Wulandari, & Pratiwi, 2024).

This study is based on several assumptions that combine psychosocial and demographic factors in influencing postpartum anxiety and mothers' independence in daily activities. The first main assumption states that postpartum mothers who experience anxiety tend to show a decline in their ability to carry out independent activities. Psychological pressures, such as feelings of fear and worry, can interfere with concentration and motivation, thereby reducing self-confidence and self-efficacy in facing their new role as mothers. This condition has a negative impact on independence, especially in terms of self-care and childcare. This assumption is in line with Orem's (1995) Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory, which explains that anxiety as an emotional disturbance can cause a self-care deficit, in which an individual's ability to independently meet their basic needs is disrupted.

The second assumption states that the age of postpartum mothers plays a crucial role in

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influencing postpartum anxiety levels, not only in terms of physical readiness but also psychological readiness in facing postpartum changes. Younger mothers tend to experience higher anxiety due to less emotional maturity, while older mothers may have an advantage in terms of adaptation. A meta-analysis which reviewed 58 studies ($n > 20,000$ mothers), supports this assumption by showing that mothers aged 25 years have a 1.5 times higher risk of postpartum anxiety than mothers aged ≥ 35 years ($OR = 1.5$; $p = 0.05$), due to lower psychological readiness (Biaggi, Conroy, Pawlby, & Pariante, 2016). A longitudinal study of 1,200 mothers in the United States also confirmed that advanced maternal age is associated with reduced anxiety ($OR = 0.72$; $p = 0.02$), although limited by potential physical comorbidities, emphasizing the importance of age as a predictor of postpartum adaptation (Hahm, Hsu, Hyun, Kane, & Liu, 2023).

The third assumption relates to parity, where multiparous mothers are expected to show lower levels of anxiety than primiparous mothers due to their previous experience, which increases their preparedness for the postpartum period; however, a negative experience during a previous birth can reverse this protective effect. These findings are consistent with the cohort study in China ($n = 850$ mothers), which reported a 25% higher prevalence of anxiety in primiparous women ($p = 0.001$) compared to multiparous women, with high parity (>2) as a protective factor through experiential learning ($OR = 0.75$) (Zeng, Li, Xia, Wang, Zhou, & Chen, 2017). However, multiparous women with a history of complications showed increased anxiety ($OR = 1.8$; $p = 0.01$), as also reported in an analysis of primiparous mothers, where low parity contributed to increased postpartum depression and anxiety symptoms due to unfamiliarity with the adaptation process (Goyal, Gay, & Lee, 2010).

The fifth assumption states that a lack of social support from family, especially husbands and the surrounding environment, exacerbates postpartum anxiety, while adequate support increases comfort, confidence, and motivation for independent activities. This assumption is based on which describes social support as a buffer against stress, reducing the impact of anxiety through increased self-efficacy (Cohen & Wills, 1985). A meta-analysis of 58 studies

($n > 15,000$ mothers) confirmed that low social support increases anxiety ($OR = 2.3$; $p = 0.001$) and decreases independence, while high support from partners increases maternal adaptation by up to 50% (Fang, Lin, Chen, Yuan, Wang, Zhang, & Tian, 2022). Research in Canada also showed that social isolation contributes to 30% of postpartum anxiety variance, which hinders maternal role functioning (Letourneau, Dennis, Benzies, Duffett-Leger, Stewart, Tryphonopoulos, & Watson, 2012). Diketahui bahwa hasil p value yaitu 0.002 ($p < 0.05$) artinya ada hubungan antara kemandirian kecemasan dengan kemandirian aktivitas pada ibu postpartum di wilayah kerja Puskesmas Krueng Barona Jaya Aceh Besar

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