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The relationship between mother's knowledge and attitudes toward infant massage performed by traditional birth attendants

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Abstract

Background: Baby massage is a traditional practice still often performed by traditional birth attendants (dukun) in various regions of Indonesia, including Amparita Village, Sidenreng Rappang District.

Purpose: To determine the relationship between mothers' knowledge and attitudes with the practice of baby massage performed by traditional attendants.

Method: This research used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design. The sample consisted of mothers who have babies and live in Amparita Village. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed with the Chi-square statistical test.

Results: The results showed a significant relationship between mothers' knowledge and baby massage performed by traditional attendants ($p < 0.05$). Mothers' attitudes were also significantly associated with the decision to choose traditional attendants for baby massage ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: It is concluded that mothers' knowledge and attitudes significantly influence the practice of baby massage by traditional attendants.

Suggestion: Educational interventions from health workers are needed to improve mothers' understanding of the benefits and risks of baby massage and to encourage safe practices in accordance with health standards.

Keywords: Attitude; Baby Massage; Knowledge; Mothers; Traditional Attendants.

INTRODUCTION

An infant is a human child from birth up to approximately 12 months of age. During this stage, infants undergo very rapid development in physical, cognitive, and emotional domains¹. Infancy aged 0–12 months represents a golden period of growth and development, thereby requiring special attention. During this stage, growth occurs continuously, particularly marked by the maturation and increasing function of the nervous system (World Health Organization, 2025).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2017), the under-five mortality rate was 42.5 per 1,000 live births. Furthermore, WHO estimates that by 2030, countries worldwide share a common goal to reduce neonatal mortality, aiming to achieve at least 25 deaths per 1,000 live births among

newborns and children under five (Putri, Sari, Ningrum, & Puspitasari, 2024).

Based on the Indonesian Health Profile in 2022, a total of 18,281 neonatal deaths were recorded. Approximately 75.5% of these deaths occurred during the early neonatal period (0–7 days of age), while 24.5% occurred during the late neonatal period (8–28 days of age) (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023). Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency in 2022, there were 1,117 infant deaths, which increased in 2023 to 1,438 cases (Central Agency of Statistics, 2020).

Based on available infant mortality data, the leading causes of death among infants are pneumonia (36%), congenital disorders (13%), and diarrhea (10%). In addition, several factors increase

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the risk of infant mortality, including preterm birth, neonatal infections (infections present in the infant at birth), low birth weight (LBW), and asphyxia or oxygen deprivation (Central Agency of Statistics, 2020). Based on data obtained from the Department of Health and Population Control of Sidenreng Rappang Regency, the neonatal mortality rate in 2022 was 9.9%, which increased to 10.9% in 2023. In addition, the infant mortality rate recorded in 2023 was 1.7% (Sidrap Regency Health Office, 2024).

To reduce infant mortality rates, efforts should focus on maintaining infants in a healthy and high-quality condition, both in terms of growth and development, so that these can be optimized. Infant massage is a form of tactile stimulation that serves as one approach through which communities can enhance infant health and promote optimal growth (Putri et al., 2024).

Several studies have shown that infant massage stimulates the vagus nerve, which enhances intestinal peristalsis, facilitates gastric emptying, and stimulates infants' appetite. In addition, massage improves blood circulation and increases cellular metabolism, thereby contributing to weight gain in infant (Damanik, Simanjuntak, & Sinaga, 2022). Massage is performed in the form of gentle strokes or light tactile stimulation applied to the surface of the skin. The manipulation of tissues or body structures aims to produce effects on the neuromuscular system and the respiratory system, as well as to improve blood circulation (Sari, Aprillia, Mawarni, Ariyanti, & Sanusi, 2023).

In Indonesia, the practice of infant or toddler massage in the community is still largely carried out by traditional birth attendants or healers. To date, massage is not only performed when infants or toddlers are healthy, but also when they are ill or fussy, and it has become a routine aspect of toddler care (Sibero, Sartika, Wardani, & Padilah, 2020).

Infant massage performed by traditional healers is also regarded as a means of strengthening the bond between parents and their children, as well as supporting infants' physical and emotional development. Such massage practices often involve gentle techniques and the use of natural oils, which are believed to help relieve muscle tension, improve blood circulation, and provide comfort for infants (Nugraheni, Sukanto, Kusmawati, Putri, &

Argaheni, 2024). Based on interviews with five community members in Amparita Village, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, it was found that all five frequently take their infants to traditional healers for massage. This practice persists because they strongly adhere to customs and traditions passed down from their ancestors, which require every infant to be massaged by a traditional healer to address various health problems experienced by the infant.

A study conducted by Sri Wahyuni, Risa Amalia, and Riri Maharani in 2021 revealed that infant massage is a form of touch therapy involving direct contact with the body that can provide a sense of safety and comfort. However, if infant massage is performed in ways that do not comply with medical standards, it may result in negative effects, such as swelling, bruising, pain that causes the infant to become fussy, tendon or muscle displacement, injury, and in severe cases, even death (Wahyuni, Amalia, & Maharani, 2021).

A study conducted revealed that maternal education level has a significant influence on mothers' behavior in choosing infant massage services provided by traditional birth attendants. Mothers with lower levels of education tend to prefer traditional healers due to limited access to information regarding the benefits and risks of infant massage based on medical standards (Sartika & Damanik, N2022). Mothers with limited knowledge tend to take their infants to traditional birth attendants for massage without understanding medical standards. This tendency is driven by information obtained solely from hereditary traditions. Low maternal knowledge also influences their attitudes in choosing infant massage services (Salsabila, 2024).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design to examine the relationship between maternal knowledge about infant massage and attitudes toward infant massage performed by traditional birth attendants. The sample population consisted of mothers living in Amparita Village with infants aged 0-12 months. This population was selected because mothers are directly involved in decisions regarding infant care, including infant massage practices. After conducting observations, 61 respondents were selected. The sample size for this

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study was 52 respondents, using a purposive sampling technique. A questionnaire was used to measure maternal knowledge and attitudes toward

infant massage. Data were analyzed using the Chi-square test to examine the relationship between variables.

RESEARCH RESULT

Table 1. Distribution Frekuensi of respondents (N=52)

Variable	Results	P-value
Age (Mean±SD)(Range)(Year)	(28.42±6.488) (18-40)	
<20 tahun	6/11.5	
21-30	26/50.0	
31-40	20/38.5	
Number of children (n/%)		
1	16/30.8	
2	16/30.8	
3	16/30.8	
4	1/1.9	
5	1/1.9	
6	1/1.9	
7	1/1.9	
Education (n/%)		
No Education	2/3.8	
Elementary School	8/15.4	
Junior High School	15/28.8	
Senior High School	18/34.6	
Bachelor	9/17.3	
Occupation (n/%)		
Housewife	43/82.7	
Self-Employed	6/11.5	
Civil Servant	3/5.8	
Knowledge (n/%)		0.000
Good	10/19.2	
Poor	42/80.8	
Attitude (n/%)		0.003
Good	31/59.6	
Poor	21/40.4	
Baby Massage (n/%)		
Often	42/80.8	
Rarely	10/19.2	

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The table above shows that the average age of respondents and standard deviation is (28.42 ± 6.488) with an age range of 18-40 years. The majority of respondents have a number of 1-3, each with the same number of 16 (30.8%) with the majority having an SHS Education Level of 18 respondents 18 (34.6) and the majority are housewives. Based on knowledge, the majority of mothers have poor knowledge, namely 42 (80.8%) with a good attitude of 31 (59.6%) and the majority of mothers often do baby massage.

The chi-square test yielded a P-value of 0.000–0.05, indicating that H_0 is rejected and a statistically significant relationship exists between the variables studied and the chi-square test yielded a p-value of 0.003 (<0.05), indicating that H_0 was rejected. Statistically, this indicates a significant relationship between maternal attitudes and infant massage performed by traditional birth attendants in Amparita Village, Sidenreng Rappang Regency.

DISCUSSION

Table show regarding the respondents' knowledge variable in Amparita Village shows that the majority of respondents had poor knowledge, with 42 respondents (80.8%). In this study, mothers' knowledge regarding infant massage performed by traditional healers was classified as poor. Presents the relationship between mothers' knowledge and infant massage performed by traditional healers in Amparita Village, Sidenreng Rappang Regency. The chi-square test results showed a p-value of 0.000, indicating that $0.000 < 0.05$; therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. This finding indicates a significant relationship between mothers' knowledge and infant massage performed by traditional healers in Amparita Village, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, in 2025. The results further demonstrate that 42 mothers with poor knowledge frequently took their infants to traditional healers for massage, whereas 10 mothers with good knowledge rarely relied on traditional healers for infant massage.

The higher an individual's level of knowledge, the easier it is to accept new ideas. Conversely, limited knowledge makes it more difficult to develop appropriate attitudes and behaviors. Knowledge is the result of knowing, which is obtained through an

individual's five senses sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste toward a particular object (Octaviana & Ramadhani, R2021).

Factors influencing mothers' behavior in taking their children to traditional healers for massage, personal knowledge level affects patterns of thinking and the information acquired during behavioral development, which may lead to negative behavioral outcomes. Insufficient knowledge regarding proper techniques and potential risks to infants causes mothers to choose traditional birth attendants for infant massage (Octaria, Mahayanti, & Widiarti, 2023).

This study also aligns with previous research, which found that maternal education significantly influences maternal behavior and attitudes. Mothers with lower levels of education tend to choose traditional birth attendants. In this study, the majority of respondents had a high school education and were housewives, and they primarily obtained information about infant massage from family members and the surrounding community (Sartika & Damanik, 2022). The researcher assumes that knowledge refers to information, understanding, and awareness obtained through education and experience regarding a particular matter. However, in seeking knowledge, individuals must be able to recognize both the positive and negative aspects of the information obtained, so that it can support accurate and effective decision-making.

Table presents the distribution of respondents' attitudes in Amparita Village, Sidenreng Rappang Regency. The results show that the majority of respondents demonstrated a good attitude, with 31 respondents (59.6%), while 21 respondents (40.4%) exhibited a less favorable attitude. Thus, this study found that mothers generally had a positive attitude toward infant massage performed by traditional healers in and table presents the relationship between mothers' attitudes and infant massage performed by traditional healers. Following the chi-square test, the p-value obtained was 0.003, indicating that $0.003 < 0.05$; therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. Accordingly, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between mothers' attitudes and infant massage performed by traditional healers in. Attitude is a

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tendency to behave in a particular manner toward an attitude object; therefore, attitude can influence an individual's actions (Wahyuni et al., 2021).

According to a study entitled *Analysis of Infant Massage Practices in Geneng Village, Sukoharjo*, a positive maternal attitude toward infant massage plays an important role in the practice of taking infants to traditional healers. Attitudes that reflect emotional and cognitive evaluations of an action can influence mothers' decisions to routinely entrust their infants to traditional healers for massage (Setiani & Indriati, 2025).

Another study stated that mothers' attitudes are influenced by personal experiences, knowledge, and values acquired from the social environment. Positive attitudes, reinforced by favorable experiences in practicing infant massage, encourage mothers to be more consistent in engaging in this practice (Rahman & Putri, 2021). The results of this study are also consistent with Green's theory (1980), which states that attitude is a predisposition that underlies changes in an individual's behavior. Attitude is also an expression or evaluation of an object, event, or idea that creates feelings of liking or disliking. In the context of social psychology, attitude is defined as an evaluation made by individuals toward other people, objects, or ideas (Gustriandini & Hariyanto, 2024).

An individual's attitude is formed through the processing of information obtained from knowledge and personal experiences, including in the context of child care practices such as infant massage. Higher levels of knowledge provide a more comprehensive cognitive framework for evaluating the risks and benefits of a practice, while direct experience with the practice strengthens the individual's evaluative values. The positive relationship between knowledge level and attitude indicates that the greater a person's understanding of an object, the stronger the tendency of their attitude to support or reject that object, which subsequently influences the behavior performed. This is consistent with empirical studies demonstrating that knowledge has a positive influence on attitudes and behaviors in the context of public health (Gustriandini & Hariyanto, 2024).

Positive attitudes, reinforced by favorable experiences and adequate understanding, promote behavioral consistency. Social support and environmental norms further strengthen the

relationship between attitudes and actions, thereby encouraging mothers to practice infant massage more routinely and safely (Baierl, Paul, & Bogner, 2025). According to the researcher's assumption, attitude is a tendency to respond or react to an object, situation, or idea in a particular way, in which attitudes consist of feelings or evaluations that influence an individual's behavior and decision-making. Mothers choose to have their infants massaged by traditional healers due to a lack of trust and confidence in health professionals who provide infant massage services.

CONCLUSION

The majority of mothers have poor knowledge regarding the benefits and risks of infant massage. Forty-two respondents (80.8%) were in the poor knowledge category, while only ten respondents (19.2%) had good knowledge. Mothers have positive attitudes toward infant massage performed by traditional birth attendants. Thirty-one (59.6%) respondents had positive attitudes and 21 (40.4%) respondents had positive attitudes toward infant massage performed by traditional birth attendants. Respondents in Amparita Subdistrict, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, when massaging their babies with a traditional healer, the frequency of massaging their babies was 42 (80.8%) respondents often massaged their babies with a traditional healer, 10 (19.2%) respondents rarely massaged their babies with a traditional healer. There is a relationship between knowledge and infant massage performed by traditional birth attendants in Amparita Village, Sidenreng Rappang Regency. This is proven by the results of the chi-square test, which obtained a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ and there is a relationship between maternal attitudes and infant massage performed by traditional birth attendants in Amparita Village, Sidenreng Rappang Regency. This is also proven by the results of the chi-square test, which obtained a p-value of $0.003 < 0.005$.

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