



POSTPARTUM AND NEWBORN CARE IN THE KARO ETHNIC

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ABSTRACT

Traditional medicine is still an important part of Karo people's lives and is still believed in today, especially in postpartum care for mothers. The herbs used are generally based on local plants. This practice not only functions medically according to local beliefs. Kuning Las, Tawar, massage oil, Sembur, and Oukup or steam bath, spray, and Sira lada porridge. But also has cultural and spiritual values that strengthen social ties and family support during the postpartum period. This study was conducted to determine the Karo Tribe's Traditions in Caring for Postpartum Mothers and Newborns Method: This study uses a quantitative research approach with a cross-sectional design.. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed statistically to see the relationship between dependent and independent variables. This study was conducted in Pancur Batu District, North Sumatra. The reason for choosing this area as a research location is because the area includes the Batak Karo ethnic community. The population in this study were postpartum mothers and newborns in Pancur Batu District. The sample in this study is part of the population used as a research object that meets the inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria totaling 50 people. The data was obtained through questionnaires and interviews, then the data was subjected to univariate and bivariate analysis. Conclusions: Postpartum and newborn care for Karo people includes several treatments, oukup, kuning las, tawar (karo herbal medicine), sembur and sira lada porridge. The benefits of the treatment itself can be to make the mother healthier and stronger, to prevent the mother from catching a cold. In infants, the use of param on the crown so that the baby's head hardens quickly, sira lada porridge as one of the treatments to facilitate breast milk.

Keywords: karo culture; newborns; postpartum maternal care

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INTRODUCTION

The global maternal mortality rate (MMR) remains high in 2023, with around 260,000 women dying from complications of pregnancy and childbirth, equivalent to one death every two minutes (WHO, 2024). The global maternal mortality ratio is 197 per 100,000 live births, still far from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target of 70 per 100,000 by 2030. Around 70% of these deaths occur in Sub-Saharan Africa, 17% in South Asia, and 92% occur in low- and middle-income countries. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed to reduce maternal mortality by 75% between 1990 and 2015; however, this target was not fully met. Following 2015, the World Health Organization (WHO) pledged to continue efforts to accelerate the decline in maternal mortality by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (WHO, 2024). The level of maternal mortality, that occurs during the postpartum period is one of the largest contributors to overall maternal mortality, especially in developing countries. The postpartum period, the 42-day period after delivery, is a critical phase where mothers are vulnerable to complications such as postpartum hemorrhage, infection (such as sepsis), postpartum hypertension, and embolism. Lack of adequate medical monitoring after the mother gives birth, delays in recognizing danger signs, and minimal access to health facilities play a major role in the high risk of death during this period. Prevention of MMR during the postpartum period requires improving the quality of postpartum services, education for mothers and families about danger signs, and intensive follow-up from health workers, especially in the first seven days after delivery (WHO, 2024).

In 2023, Indonesia recorded 29,945 cases of infant mortality, a significant increase from 20,882 cases in the previous year. However, the national IMR ratio showed a downward trend, with an estimated 17 deaths per 1,000 live births. This figure is still above the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target which sets AKB below 12 per 1,000 live births in 2030 (Kemenkes, 2024).

Local wisdom passed down from generation to generation by indigenous peoples plays an important role in environmental conservation and the use of biological resources, especially medicinal plants. This traditional knowledge includes the identification, processing, and use of various plants that grow around them as natural remedies. This local knowledge not only functions as an alternative treatment system, but also becomes an important basis for the development of modern medicine based on local biodiversity (Sinaga & Manalu, 2021). Postpartum maternal care in Karo culture remains relevant today and needs to be reintroduced as part of local wisdom that is closely related to the environment. This tradition has been transmitted through generations and remains maintained, reflecting significant cultural richness. One prominent practice is *oukup*, which is a steam bath with traditional herbs that is believed to help restore maternal health after giving birth. This practice not only functions as a method of physical care but also as a cultural ritual that strengthens the identity of the Karo community. Therefore, the preservation and reintroduction of postpartum care practices in Karo culture is very important to maintain cultural heritage and support maternal health holistically (Purba et al., 2024).

Traditional medicine is still owned and believed in by the Karo people to this day, especially in the care of mothers after giving birth. Various types of traditional treatments such as *kuning las*, *tawar*, *minak alun* (massage oil), *sembur*, *oukup* (steam bath), and *sira lada* porridge are still routinely carried out as part of postpartum recovery. Each type of treatment has its own function, such as warming the body, improving blood circulation, restoring energy, and preventing health problems after giving birth. Although the development of the medical world and the modern medical industry continues to increase, the existence and practice of traditional Karo medicine has not disappeared, but is maintained because it contains cultural values, ancestral beliefs, and has been proven to provide benefits for mothers who have just given birth for generations. (Jusuf et.al, 2021).

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative research approach with a cross-sectional design. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed statistically to see the relationship between dependent and independent variables. This study was conducted in Pancur Batu District, North Sumatra. The reason for choosing this area as a research location is because the area includes the Batak Karo ethnic community. The subjects of this research were mothers who had recently given birth and newborns in Pancur Batu District. The sample in this study is part of the population used as a research object that meets the inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria totaling 50 people. The data was obtained through questionnaires and interviews, then the data was subjected to univariate and bivariate analysis.

RESULT

Based on table 1, it can be concluded that the majority of postpartum mothers among the 50 respondents were in the age group of 20–30 years (54%), had a high school level of education (56%), and had a history of normal delivery (64%). Most of the respondents were multiparous, having more than one child (72%). These findings indicate that the typical profile of postpartum mothers in this study is women in their productive age, with a moderate education level, a tendency toward normal delivery history, and experience in childbirth.

Table 1.
Characteristics of Mothers Based on Age, Education, Childbirth History and Parity

Respondent Characteristic	f	%
Mother Age		
20-30	27	54.0
31-40	23	46.0
Education		
SMA	28	56
D3	10	20
S1	12	24
Birth History		
SC	18	36
Normal	32	64
Parity		
Primipara	14	28
Multipara	36	72

Table 2.
Characteristics of Newborn Babies by Age

Respondent Characteristic	f	%
Baby Age		
1 Week	10	20
2 Week	23	46
3 Week	17	36

Table 3.
Cross Tabulation of Postpartum Maternal Care in the Karo Tribe Community

Variabel	Postpartum Maternal Care			Amount		
	Good	Enough	Less	f	%	P
Oukup (Postpartum Wound Care)						
Done	10	26	0	36	44	0,000
Not Done	0	0	14	14	28	
Kuning Las (Self Care)						
Done	45	2	0	47	94	0,000
Not Done	8	0	0	3	3	
Tawar (Mastitis Care)						
Done	17	6	6	29	14,5	0,000
Not Done	0	0	21	21	10,5	
Sembur (Maternal Health)						
Done	39	2	1	42	84	0,000
Not Done	2	0	6	8	16	
Bubur Sira Lada (Increase Breast Milk Production)						
Done	47	0	0	47	94	0,000
Not Done	0	0	3	3	6	

Based on table 2, it shows that out of 50 respondents, the majority of respondents are 2 weeks old, as many as 23 people (46%), while based on the 50 respondents, the minority of respondents are 1 week old (20%). Based on the results of the table 3, it can be seen based on the results of the statistical test of the p-value results for postpartum care using oukup (0.000), Kuning Las (0.000), Tawar (0.000), Sembur (0.000) and sira lada (0.000). This indicates that there is a meaningful influence in postpartum care using oukup, yellow welding, tawar, sembur and sira lada porridge.

Table 4.
Cross Tabulation of Newborn Baby Care in Karo Tribe Community

Variabel	Newborn Baby Care			Amount	P	
	Baik	Cukup	Kurang	f	%	
Kuning las (Kualitas Tidur)						
Dilakukan	14	10	10	34	68	0,000
Tidak Dilakukan	0	0	16	16	32	
Sembur (Colic Abdomen)						
Dilakukan	17	1	0	18	36	0,000
Tidak Dilakukan	1	0	31	32	64	

Based on the results of the table above, the results of the statistical test with the p-value results for newborn care using Kuning Las (0.000), and Sembur(0.000) can be seen. Based on these results, it can be concluded that there is a significant influence on the care of the Karo Tribe Community in caring for newborns.

DISCUSSION

Postpartum Wound Care for Postpartum Mothers Using the Oukup Method

The findings of this research indicate that out of 50 respondents of postpartum mothers who were interviewed, the results obtained were the number of respondents who carried out adequate care as many as 36 respondents where 10 respondents had good results and 26 respondents had sufficient care results. There were 14 respondents who did not carry out adequate care where the 14 respondents had poor care results. Based on the study results, it was determined that the use of appropriate care influences postpartum wound treatment Oukup can help various systems in the body, including the immune system, cell metabolism and digestive system, nerves and kidneys, smooth blood flow, relax muscle tension, overcome pain or stiffness in joints, make you fresh and relaxed, and provide a relaxing effect (Abdullah, et all. 2021). According to the researcher's assumption that there is no major influence on postpartum mothers in doing oukup as postpartum wound care. Because it can be seen from the results carried out by researchers from 50 respondents there were 30 respondents who did oukup but there was no influence on postpartum wound care. This is because postpartum mothers do oukup care to restore stamina or body condition after childbirth.

Self-Care for Postpartum Mothers Using Kuning Las

The findings of this research indicate that out of 50 respondents of postpartum mothers who were interviewed, the results obtained were that 47 respondents did Kuning las, where 45 respondents had good results in self-care, while there were 3 respondents who had sufficient results in self-care. There were 3 respondents who did not do self-care using yellow las which had less results. From the results of this study, it was found that there was a relationship between Kuning las treatment and self-care in postpartum mothers. The Karo tribe uses Kuning las as a param to speed up the healing process in postpartum mothers and also has a hot effect that arises in yellow las making postpartum mothers not easily catch colds and the body becomes lighter. The Karo tribe also uses yellow las as a param to make the body healthier faster and not easily catch colds. Postpartum mothers in the Karo tribe use spices in making yellow las such as ginger, candlenuts, pepper and garlic which are mashed. This yellow welding is usually applied to the entire body of the mother after bathing (Sembiring, 2019). As assumed by the researcher, the use of yellow welding as a treatment during the postpartum period, namely in self-care, has an effect because it can be seen from the results of the researcher's 50 respondents, 45 respondents used yellow welding as self-care during the

postpartum period because yellow welding is useful for restoring the freshness of the mother's body and can also maintain the quality of the mother's sleep.

Treatment of Postpartum Mastitis Using Tawar in the Karo Tribe

The findings of this research indicate that out of 50 respondents interviewed, the number of respondents who carried out tawar treatment as a mastitis treatment was 29 people, of which 17 respondents had good results in mastitis treatment, there were 6 respondents with sufficient results and 6 respondents with poor results. Respondents who did not carry out tawar were 21, of which all 21 respondents had poor results in mastitis treatment. This tawar treatment is made from 28 types of efficacious spices, where this tawar treatment is carried out by applying tawar to the area of the body that is considered sick or can be consumed directly. In this study, it was found that tawar is very beneficial for postpartum mothers, where it can make the scar heal quickly, accelerate uterine involution (the return of the uterus to its original shape), singgaren (swelling), and increase appetite in postpartum mothers (Sembiring, 2019). As assumed by the researcher, the use of tawar as a treatment for postpartum mothers, namely in treating mastitis in the breast, has an effect because it can be seen from the results of the researcher's 50 respondents, there were 29 people who used tawar in treating mastitis or breast swelling.

Postpartum Maternal Health Care Using Spray

Sembur is one of the traditional treatments in the Karo tribe which consists of rice, leaves, ginger, pepper, nutmeg, and roots that are sprayed all over the body that are considered necessary. very useful for healing related to internal diseases such as stomach ache, colds, ulcers, internal heat, and headaches. This sembur is made from various spices consisting of ginger, garlic, burle, pepper, all of which are ground and then dried. If the mother eats this sembur, it will be mixed a little with porridge or also mixed with sweet tea or water. Postpartum mothers have different postpartum periods. During the postpartum period, blood will usually stop quickly if the amount that comes out is indeed small but optimal, or comes out a lot at once and will stop before 40 days.

Treatment to Increase Breast Milk Production in Postpartum Mothers Using Sira Lada Porridge

The findings of this research indicate that out of 50 respondents interviewed, the number of respondents who used sira lada porridge as a treatment to increase breast milk production was 47 people, where all 47 respondents had good results in increasing breast milk production in postpartum mothers. Respondents who did not consume sira lada porridge were 3 respondents, where all 3 respondents had less results in increasing breast milk production. In this case, it shows that there is an effect in consuming sira lada porridge to increase breast milk production. In the culture of the Karo tribe, maternal care during the postpartum period is highly regarded, including through the consumption of traditional foods that are believed to be able to facilitate the production of breast milk (ASI). One of the recommended foods is sira lada porridge, which consists of rice cooked with a mixture of salt and pepper. This food is believed to provide warmth to the mother's body and stimulate breast milk production. In addition, the Karo people also consume katuk leaves (*Sauropus androgynus*) and bangun-bangun leaves (*Coleus amboinicus*), which are traditionally used to support smooth breastfeeding. Katuk leaves are known to contain compounds such as papaverine and phytosterols that can increase levels of the hormones prolactin and oxytocin, hormones that play an important role in breast milk production. Meanwhile, bangun-bangun leaves have also been used traditionally in various regions in Indonesia for similar purposes, although further scientific research is needed to confirm their effectiveness. The use of these plants reflects the local wisdom of the Karo people in utilizing natural resources to support the health of mothers

and babies during the postpartum period (Yudhawan et al., 2024).

Newborn Baby Care in Improving Sleep Quality by Using Kuning Las

Based on the results of this study, out of 50 newborn respondents, 24 newborn respondents used Kuning Las and it affected the overall quality of the infant's sleep, while out of 50 respondents, 10 respondents used Kuning Las but it had no effect on the overall quality of the infant's sleep. The table also shows the results of 50 respondents, 16 respondents did not use yellow welding and it also had no effect on the overall quality of the infant's sleep. Kuning Las for babies or children can be effective in the overall quality of the infant's sleep, namely it can make them sleep soundly. Kuning Las can also prevent children from urinating or wetting the bed at night (Sembiring, 2019). Mothers usually give yellow welding to babies after bathing so that the baby stays warm, but the type of Kuning Las given is cold yellow welding or cold param. This is given because the baby's skin condition is still vulnerable or sensitive so that param is given that does not contain ingredients that can make the skin hot.

CONCLUSION

Postpartum and newborn care for Karo people includes several treatments, namely, oukup, kuning las, tawar (karo herbal medicine), sembur and sira lada porridge. The benefits of the treatment itself can be to make the mother healthier and stronger, to prevent the mother from catching a cold. In infants, the use of param on the crown so that the baby's head hardens quickly, sira lada porridge as one of the treatments to facilitate breast milk.

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