

The Culture of Drinking Herbal Medicine in Pregnant Women: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

Background: Pregnant women who drink herbal medicine can increase the risk of meconium amniotic fluid, and meconium amniotic fluid is a risk factor for asphyxia in newborns.

Objectives: Identify three forms of culture in drinking herbal medicine in pregnant women, namely the mother's values and ideas about drinking herbal medicine, herbal drinking activities, and material on the culture of drinking herbal medicine. **Methods:** This research is a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Informants in this study consisted of pregnant women and key informants consisted of families of pregnant women, cadres, ustadzah, midwife and herbal medicine providers. **Results:** The cultural forms of drinking herbal medicine include: 1) Values and Ideas. Drinking herbal medicine for pregnant women still practiced because of their subjective norms and normative beliefs from the surrounding environment. All informants believed that herbal medicine could provide benefits rather than negative effects, and only midwife stated that herbal medicine had negative effects, namely meconial amniotic fluid, even asphyxia. 2) The activity of drinking herbal medicine. Pregnant women drink herbal medicine from the beginning of pregnancy until delivery. The frequency of taking herbal medicine was various. Religious figures and community leaders have an important role in the culture of drinking herbal medicine. 3) Herbal ingredients. The herbs consumed by each informant were different, there were informants who consumed homemade herbs and bought them at the market. **Conclusions:** The culture of drinking herbal medicine still carried out because the local community's belief about the benefits of herbal medicine is still high, and lack public knowledge about the effects of drinking herbal medicine on pregnant women.

Keyword: Herbal medicine culture, Phenomenology, Pregnant women.

INTRODUCTION

Utilization of traditional health services, especially herbal medicine in the world is still high. 88% of countries confirm the use of herbs and regulate their use (World Health Organization, 2019). The National Report of Riskesdas 2023 show that 49.0% of households use herbal medicine in Indonesia (Febriyanti et al., 2022). East Java is a province that ranks second highest in the utilization of ready to eat herbal medicine and homemade herbal medicine (Kemenkes, 2018). Sumenep Regency is one of the regencies in East Java that uses the most herbal medicine, ranks second for homemade herbal medicine and ranks sixth for

prepared herbal medicine (Kemenkes, 2018).

Herbal medicine is a ready-to-drink herbal medicine that is circulating in the market and has been registered with BPOM, while homemade herbal medicine is herbal medicine that is made by the household itself (Kemenkes, 2018). Herbal medicine in Sumenep Regency is used by all ages, from children to adults, including pregnant women. According to the initial survey conducted qualitatively, it is known that pregnant women in Sumenep Regency still drink herbal medicine. However, quantitatively, data on pregnant women who drink herbal medicine cannot be found in the Health Service Profile data.



The prohibition against drinking herbal medicine for pregnant women has been listed in the MCH book published by the Ministry of Health on page 19 (Kemenkes, 2023). Based on an initial survey conducted by qualitative method to midwives at the Kalianget RSI Hospital and the Ganding Health Center midwives, it was stated that the culture of drinking herbal medicine is still carried out by pregnant women in Sumenep Regency because of recommendations from pregnant women's families.

The results of other studies, drinking herbal medicine during pregnancy is a risk factor for asphyxia in newborns (Anggraeni et al., 2017). Asphyxia is a failure to breathe in the fetus due to impaired oxygen flow from the placenta (KEPUTUSAN MENTERI KESEHATAN REPUBLIK INDONESIA NOMOR HK.01.07/MENKES/214/2019, 2019). Herbal medicine consumed by pregnant women can cause meconial membranes (Ningsih, 2021; Rini et al., 2020), so that the amniotic fluid is thicker and more colored, and makes it difficult for the fetus to breathe because the oxygen supply from the placenta is reduced (Kosim, 2016), resulting in asphyxia in newborns (KEPUTUSAN MENTERI KESEHATAN REPUBLIK INDONESIA NOMOR HK.01.07/MENKES/214/2019, 2019). According to other studies, there is a significant relationship between meconium-contaminated amniotic fluid and the incidence of asphyxia (Anggriani, 2017).

Ganding Health Center is a Puskesmas with asphyxia rates increasing from 2020 to 2021. The incidence of asphyxia at Ganding Health Center was 17 cases in 2020, and increased to 28 cases in 2021. Based on data from the KIA Polyclinic Profile of the Ganding Health Center, the meconial amniotic rate in Ganding Community Health Center in 2021 there will be 28 cases and in 2022 there will be 15 cases. The purpose of writing this article is to identify the culture of drinking herbal medicine at the Ganding Community Health Center, Sumenep Regency.

METHODS

This research is qualitative research with phenomenological approach. Data collection was carried out using two data collection techniques, namely in-

depth interviews and observation. In-depth interviews were conducted with informants, namely pregnant women who drink herbal medicine, and key informants, and observations were made with people who make herbal medicine, namely herbal medicine providers, in order to find out how herbal medicine is made. The number of informants (pregnant women who drank herbal medicine) in this study were three consisting of pregnant women in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd trimester respectively. The number of key informants in this study were four people, consisting of midwives, community leaders (cadres), Religious figures, and herbal medicine sellers. Determination of informants with purposive techniques. Criteria for informants are pregnant women who consume herbal medicine and have ID cards in the working area of the Ganding Health Center. The criteria for key informants are all people who are directly related to pregnant women in the herbal medicine culture, for example midwife, posyandu cadres, herbal medicine sellers, and local religious leaders.

The research was conducted at the Ganding Health Center from January to May 2023. This research passed the research ethics review No. 202/HRECC.FODM/II/2023. This study identified three cultural manifestations in drinking herbal medicine, namely the form of values and ideas, the form of activity, and the form of material (Pujaastawa, 2015). The instruments in this study used interview guidelines, observation guidelines, field notes and voice recorders. Checking the validity of this data uses a data credibility test, namely source triangulation and technical triangulation, as well as using a confirmability test (Mekarisce, 2020). Data analysis using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Love et al., 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Consumption of herbal medicine is a culture for the people of Madura (Andriyanti & Wahjudi, 2016). The existence of herbal medicine in the Madurese community is still high. Especially for women, drinking herbal medicine is a habit and has been socialized since childhood (Satriyati et al., 2019). Sumenep Regency is one of the regencies on Madura Island. Especially at the Ganding Health Center, herbal medicine is

still used to treat complaints of joint pain, diabetes, back pain and also health care for women.

The first form of culture is values and ideas (Pujaastawa, 2015). Values and ideas are everything that considered important and even used as a way of life. Values and ideas can be seen from the norms that apply in the surrounding environment and also the informants' beliefs about drinking herbal medicine in pregnant women (Pujiono & Sahayu, 2021). Belief can be seen from informants' beliefs about the benefits and negative effects of drinking herbal medicine during pregnancy.

Most of the pregnant women in the Ganding Health Center consume herbal medicine. The reason herbal medicine is consumed by pregnant women is because of the norms that apply around it. The norm in question is the obligation to drink herbal medicine during pregnancy. The following is a statement regarding this matter.

"In this area it seems like it has to be hahaha because it has been passed down from generation to generation, so it's hard to get rid of.. Continue to be scolded by the elderly if you don't do it.. If something happens behind, for example, it's hard to be born, you get scolded" (IU 1, 29 years).

According to the informant, it was stated that if the informant did not drink herbal medicine, she would be discriminated against by the surrounding environment, such as being scolded by her parents. If anything happens to the mother's womb, then what is at issue is the mother's refusal to drink herbal medicine. The following is a statement regarding this matter.

"Just for example, if something happens later, for example, when you were born, it was rather difficult, so your parents would definitely bring it up there (don't drink herbal medicine), get scolded" (IU 1, 29 years).

The Planned of Behavior theory explained that behavior can be formed due to subjective norms (Glanz et al., 2015). Subjective norms in this case are the environment of pregnant women who urge mothers to drink herbal medicine because

drinking herbal medicine in that environment is a 'common' thing to do. Subjective norms are influenced by normative beliefs (Glanz et al., 2015). Normative beliefs in this case are environmental beliefs of pregnant women to influence pregnant women to drink herbal medicine.

Herbal medicine taken by pregnant women as prevention. Pregnant women consumed herbal medicine before experiencing symptoms or complaints. Informants also believe that drinking herbal medicine makes birth easier. The following is a statement regarding this matter.

"...Before you feel sick or when you're not sick, you drink herbal medicine. So that you can take care of it in the future. Yes so what, birth take easy" (IU 2, 30 years old)

There are other benefits of drinking herbal medicine, besides making the delivery process smooth. Other benefits expected by the informants are improving the health of the baby and the mother, no body odor, no miscarriages, and no fishy delivery blood. The following is an informant's statement regarding this matter.

"...So that the baby and mother are healthy, don't smell, don't bleed, like that. If you talk about fishy blood, miss, it's ugly even though the person was beautiful" (IU 1, 29 years old).

According to the informant, fishy delivery blood was something that should not happen, because according to the environment around the informant, if the delivery blood was fishy, the neighbors would talk about it. This is a subjective norm and normative belief from the environment around pregnant women. The benefits felt by the informants turned out to be comparable to the expected benefits. The benefits felt from drinking herbal medicine during pregnancy are that the body feels fresh or not weak and the stomach feels 'cooler'. The following is a statement regarding this matter.

"It feels better for the body, for the baby too. If there is movement, the movement is more active" (IU 2, 30 years old).

"It means to be cold, to the womb,

to the baby to be cold.. cold” (IU 3, 45 years old).

The negative effects of drink herbal medicine on pregnant women only understood by midwife. Midwife stated that herbal medicine can have negative effects for pregnant women, namely cloudy membranes to asphyxia. Based on other studies, drinking herbal medicine in pregnant women can cause asphyxia (Anggraeni et al., 2017). The following is the midwife's statement regarding this matter.

“Sometimes it affects the amniotic fluid, it can get cloudy. Then the baby can also be asphyxiated. Actually, if the amniotic fluid is clear, if there is a mixture of chemicals, or if it's rich in herbs, it becomes a bit thick like that. Usually it's clear, clear. Then it's clear like that. If it's cloudy, the baby sometimes sucks the amniotic fluid too, so it's hard for baby to breathe...” (IK 1, 37 years old).

In contrast to midwife' state, all informants including cadres and religious leaders (ustadzah) did not know about the negative effects of herbal medicine, they understood that herbal medicine only provided benefits. According to the informants, herbal medicine has no effect because the ingredients were natural. The following is an informant's statement regarding this matter.

“Herbal medicine has no effect, it's natural..” (IU 3, 45 years old)
“For an effect like that, yes, it doesn't exist, it's even healthier...” (IK 2, 41 years old)

Informants' statements in this study are inversely proportional to other studies. According to another study, drinking herbal medicine during pregnancy has negative effect, namely meconial contaminated amniotic fluid (Gallo et al., 2023). Meconial contaminated amniotic fluid in birthing mothers is at risk of 8.55 times experiencing asphyxia in newborns (Gebreheat et al., 2018). According to other studies, asphyxia in newborns is related to BBLR (Babies with low birth weight) (Ango et al., 2023).

The second form of culture can be seen from the activities (Pujaastawa, 2015). The definition of activity is the

activity of drinking herbal medicine for pregnant women, including the period during which pregnant women drink herbal medicine, the frequency of drinking herbal medicine, and supporting factors for pregnant women drinking herbal medicine, for example the support factor from community leaders and local religious leaders. The period for drinking herbal medicine in pregnant women is from the beginning of pregnancy until the delivery process. The following is a statement regarding this matter.

“That's how I was from the start of my pregnancy who drank until I gave birth” (IU 2, 30 years old)

The frequency of drinking herbal medicine in pregnant women is how much pregnant women drink herbal medicine. Informants' statements regarding the frequency of drinking herbal medicine varied. There were informants who stated that herbal medicine was taken twice a month and there was also a statement that herbal medicine was drunk once every week, even twice every week. The following is a statement about this.

“..You can do it once a week..” (IU 2, 30 years old)
“..But usually closer to delivery more often” (IU 1, 29 years old)
“..But it should be once a week or two. More is better” (IK 2, 40 years old)



Figure 1. Herbal ingredients of IU 1.

Based on informants' statements regarding the frequency of drinking herbal medicine, this is in accordance with other studies in Zambia. The results of this study found that frequency of pregnant women drinking herbal medicine varied, pregnant women taking herbal medicine when there was an opportunity (47.7%), every day (37.2%), twice or more times a week (10.5%) (El Hajj et al., 2020). According to

the informant's statement, it was stated that the closer to delivery, the more frequent the frequency of taking herbal medicine, because it is for preparation for childbirth. This is consistent with research in Bangladesh. This study states that pregnant women drinking herbal medicine are more common in third trimester pregnant women, because in this trimester the fetus develops very rapidly (Jahan et al., 2022).

Community leaders and religious leaders in this study were very influential in the culture of drinking herbal medicine for pregnant women. This can be proven by the support of religious leaders in promoting herbal medicine to mothers who become guardians of students in their environment. Here is a statement about it.

"But sometimes the student's parents bring herbal medicine here, sis. Yes, ask me to offer it to the parents of other students. Yes I offer that.." (IK 3, 37 years old).

Likewise with the posyandu cadres at the Ganding Health Center, the informant stated that if a pregnant woman drank herbal medicine, the cadre would support her, for example by providing information to pregnant women about the right herbal medicine for pregnant women to drink. The following is a statement about this.

"What do you do, for example there are pregnant women who drink herbal medicine, that's supported, I would suggest drinking this herbal medicine, and this..." (IK 4, 41 years old).



Figure 2. Herbal ingredients of IU 2.

The results of the statements of key informants, religious leaders and

community leaders, the social support provided one of the factors that pregnant women still drink herbal medicine. There are two types of social support obtained from religious leaders and community leaders, namely information support and instrumental support (Wurisastuti & Mubasyiroh, 2020). Information support in this study was information assistance provided by cadres to pregnant women. Instrumental support from religious leaders to promote herbal medicine. The results of another study found that social support from husbands, friends, and health workers had an effect on the behavior of pregnant women in preventing HIV (Thaha et al., 2020).

The third form of culture is material form (Pujaastawa, 2015). The material form is the physical form of culture that can be observed by the five senses. An example of material form in the culture of drinking herbal medicine is herbal ingredients, and herbal processing. The following are the herbal medicines that IU 1 drank.

The picture shows that IU 1's herbal medicine ingredients are homemade, and are made from ingredients that are at home. The following is IU 1's statement regarding herbal ingredients and processing of herbs that are commonly taken.

"At least black rhizome, turmeric, aromatic ginger and ginger, yes betel leaf, you experience all of that... For me, I clean it, wash it as usual, throw the skin away and then boil it..." (IU 1, 29 years old).

Informants stated that herbal medicine taken during pregnancy was one type of herbal medicine. The herbal medicine above, according to the informant, has the benefit of maintaining the health of the baby and the mother, makes the mother's body odorless, and the blood of the delivery is not fishy. According to other studies, black rhizome (*Curcuma aeruginosa*) functions to increase immunity and body resistance (Sari et al., 2016). Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) functions for wound healing, anti-inflammatory, and therapy for acne (Illamola et al., 2020). Aromatic ginger (*Kaempferia galanga*) has the function for accelerating wound healing in childbirth and facilitating breastfeeding (Jalil, 2019). Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) has useful for reducing

the frequency of nausea and vomiting in pregnant women in the first trimester (Indrayani et al., 2018). Betel leaf (*Piper betle*) has the benefit of killing bacteria and fungi and can react in the body (Nayaka et al., 2021).

The next informant was third trimester pregnant woman, the type of herbal medicine that IU 2 drank was one type of herbal medicine, homemade herbal medicine. The following are herbal ingredients that IU 2 drank.

The picture shows that IU 2 has drinking homemade herbal medicine. Herbal medicine made by IU 2 consists of curcuma, turmeric, and sugar. The following is IU2's statement regarding herbal ingredients and herbal processing.

"The material was taken from the fence. Turmeric, ginger, brown sugar, sometimes granulated sugar. Yes, make it by myself hahaha. It's estimated, no need for measurements, it's estimated" (IU 2, 30 years old).

The informant stated that making herbal medicine did not require definite measure or dose. The informant made herbal medicine with estimated dose (self-taught). According to the informant, the benefits of drinking herbal medicine were for smooth delivery, the weight of the fetus in the stomach develops according to the month, and the body feels 'cooler'. The results of other studies, turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) functions as an anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, antidepressant, anticancer, maintaining the cardiovascular system (Sandy & Susilawati, 2021). Temulawak (*Curcuma xanthorrhiza*) functions to reduce blood pressure in pregnant women who have gestational hypertension (Nurjanah & Sari, 2023).

The next informants are pregnant women in the second trimester with a gestational age of five months. The following are the herbs consumed by IU 3.



Figure 3. Herbal ingredients of IU 3.

Based on the picture of herbal ingredients, this informant drank four different types of herbal medicine, three were homemade herbs and one was prepared herbal medicine. The informant stated that the four herbs were taken alternately. The following is an informant's statement regarding herbal ingredients and how to drink herbal medicine.

"Alternately, alternating, what herbs and what day, for example, monday was turmeric, in two weeks I drank jasmine leaves" (IU 3, 45 years old).

The first types of herbal drank were jasmine flower leaves (*Jasminum sp*), lime leaves (*Citrus aurantifolia*), and lime water (*Calcium carbonate*). According to the informant, the benefit of this herb that you don't have body odor. There were no benefits of drinking jasmine leaves for pregnant women in other studies. Regarding limes, there is another study which says that complaints of emesis (nausea) have decreased after drinking limes for 3 consecutive days (Damayanti & Jannah, 2022). The water content of lime deposits contains calcium carbonate which helps the formation of neonatal bone mass or increases the baby's weight and reduces the risk of hypertension (Irwinda, 2020).

The second type of herbal medicine consumed by IU 3 is black rhizome (*Curcuma aeruginosa*) and native chicken eggs. According to informant, this herbal medicine has the benefit of not having a miscarriage. There are no specific research results regarding the consumption of black rhizome and free-range chicken eggs. However, black rhizome has function to heal perineum on postpartum women (Wahyuningrum et al., 2018), and raw native chicken eggs are not recommended for consumption by pregnant women (Khoirunnisa et al., 2017).

The third type of herbal medicine taken by IU 3 was turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) and buds from betel leaves. According to the informant, the benefits of this herbal medicine were the fetus to be 'cooler' in the stomach, make the fetus healthy, make the mother's body healthier. However, no other studies have revealed the benefits of betel shoots, because what is usually used as herbal medicine was the leaves (Mudjijono et al., 2014). The

function of turmeric according to other studies is to improve skin conditions and anti-inflammatory, not specific for pregnant women (Ahmed et al., 2018).

The last type of herbal medicine drunk by IU 3 was anton-anton muda. The herbal ingredients listed in the herbal medicine packaging were 15% sintok (*Sintok cortex*), 5% pulosari (*Alyxiae cortex*), 10% kemukus (*Cubebae fructus*), and 5% Separantu (*Sindora fructus*). When observation, the herbal medicine provider did not know about the herbal ingredients. The method of processing herbal medicine according to herbal medicine providers was that herbal medicine powder brewed and mixed with 3 syrups or flavours, including grape flavour, honey flavour, and beras kencur flavour. Consumption of high-sweetened instant drinks has risk factor for pregnant women. Improper way of eating in pregnant women can cause hypertension in pregnant women (Juniartati & Marsita, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The first form of culture was values and ideas. Informants believe that drinking herbal medicine during pregnancy must be done because there was normative belief in the surrounding environment, and informants believe that the benefits of herbal medicine are higher than the negative effects. The second form of culture was the activity of drinking herbal medicine. Pregnant women drink herbal medicine during early pregnancy until delivery. The frequency of drinking herbal medicine for each pregnant woman was different. Religious leaders and community leaders have an important role in the culture of drinking herbal medicine.

The third form of culture is material of herbal medicine. The material of herbal medicine for each informant was different, some drank the finished herbal medicine and some made it themselves. The informant made herbal medicine according to what she believed about the benefits of herbal medicine for her pregnancy.

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