

# HARMONIZING TRADITIONAL AND MODERN MATERNAL HEALTHCARE PRACTICES IN CIREBON, INDONESIA

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim.** This research aims to explore the integration of Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Practices during pregnancy and childbirth with Modern Health Knowledge and Practices in Cirebon, Indonesia,

**Methods.** This research uses a qualitative method that includes participatory observation and interviews. Participants in this study consisted of pregnant mothers or patients giving birth in village health centres in Cirebon. Data was collected through participatory observations during visits to health centres and in-depth interviews with the participants.

**Results.** The research results indicate that this integration occurs naturally in Cirebon. Respondents combine traditional and modern healthcare practices to meet their health needs during pregnancy and childbirth, taking into consideration cultural factors, religion, family support, healthcare accessibility, and past experiences.

**Conclusion.** This study demonstrates that the integration of Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Practices during pregnancy and childbirth with Modern Health Knowledge and Practices is crucial in maternal healthcare practices in Cirebon, Indonesia.

**Cognitive value.** The findings of this study can assist healthcare practitioners in improving the quality of maternal healthcare services in Indonesia and can serve as a reference for future research.

**Keywords:** integration, traditional knowledge, modern health knowledge and practices, pregnant mothers, ritual

## INTRODUCTION

The act of childbirth holds significant meaning in numerous cultures around the world and is frequently associated with specific customs and rituals. According to Lynn Clark Callister & Inaam Khalaf (2010), childbirth can be regarded as a highly significant event for societies since it encompasses biological, psychological, and spiritual aspects. In many cultures, the birth of a baby is perceived as a sacred occurrence, a form of homage to higher powers (Crowther, 2017). As per Magdalena Ohaja and Chinemerem Anyim, historical childbirth practices often featured rituals accompanied by prayers, dances, and songs as expressions of reverence for spiritual forces or deities (Ohaja & Anyim, 2021).

Childbirth practices and rituals have become integral components of various cultures, including that of Cirebon, Indonesia. Cirebon is one of the regions in West Java renowned for its traditional healthcare practices. Despite the availability of modern healthcare practices, trust in traditional healthcare practices remains strong within the Cirebon community. Consequently, research is imperative to explore the integration of traditional and modern healthcare practices in maternal healthcare in Cirebon, Indonesia.

Previous research has extensively explored childbirth rituals, resulting in the identification of three categories for understanding childbirth ritual practices. Firstly, the category of social and cultural perspectives. In this perspective, traditional childbirth practices are viewed as highly significant cultural practices for communities (Busro & Qodim, 2018; Sychareun et al., 2009). According to this category, traditional childbirth practices are considered sacred and crucial in preserving their cultural identity. Secondly, the health perspective category. Traditional childbirth practices and knowledge are also seen as having specific health benefits. In a study conducted by Maurine Rofhiwa Musie et al. (2022), the collaboration between traditional birth attendants and midwives expanded the reach and improved healthcare outcomes for the community. Other findings, based on research by Mellissa Withers et al., show that many women, especially in Asia, continue to practice various traditional beliefs and practices during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period. This tradi-

tional knowledge leads some women to be hesitant to access medical services. By recognising and respecting these traditional beliefs, service providers can be better positioned to deliver competent care. Service providers must understand, respect, and integrate culturally informed childbirth interpretations and the needs of women and their families (Withers, Kharazmi, & Lim, 2018). Thirdly, the religious perspective category. Childbirth practices in communities also have a strong religious dimension (Busro et al., 2020; Callister & Khalaf, 2010; Crowther, 2017; Sered, 1991). According to this category, traditional childbirth practices in the Bugis community are considered a spiritual and maternal experience undergone by a woman and are seen as a part of life's journey.

Although there have been numerous prior studies exploring childbirth ritual practices, there is still limited research specifically delving into the integration of Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Practices during pregnancy and childbirth with Modern Health Knowledge and Practices in maternal healthcare in Cirebon, Indonesia. Most previous research only explored one or two categories of perspectives in understanding childbirth ritual practices. The purpose of this research is to identify and explore the integration of Modern Health Knowledge and Practices with traditional childbirth practices in Cirebon, as well as the influencing factors. This research also aims to evaluate the impact of this integration on the health of mothers and children. Therefore, this study is expected to provide a better understanding of the importance of integrating Modern Health Knowledge and Practices with traditional childbirth practices in Cirebon and to offer insights for healthcare practitioners in improving the quality of maternal healthcare services in the region.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **Integration of Modern Health Knowledge and Practices with Traditional Childbirth Practices**

This study has revealed that the integration of modern health knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices has occurred organically within the community of Kedungsana Village, Cirebon, Indonesia. This integration takes into consideration cultural factors, religion, family support, healthcare accessibility, and past experiences. An informant in this study, who is a midwife, remarked, "I do not discourage pregnant women from using traditional herbal remedies, but it should always be communicated with the midwife so that we can identify the specific type of herbal remedy" (MH, Midwife, Interview, January 14, 2014).

These findings are further supported by interviews with pregnant women and patients giving birth at the village health centre, where they blend traditional and modern healthcare practices to fulfil their health needs during pregnancy and child-

birth. One respondent mentioned, “Following childbirth, I take medicine prescribed by the midwife and also consume traditional herbal concoctions known as *galian singset*. *Galian singset* is prepared using ingredients like *kencur* (aromatic ginger), *kunir* (turmeric), *temu lawak* (Javanese ginger), lemongrass root, sulfur, and yeast. All these components are ground or pounded, mixed together, boiled, and then consumed” (P, Housewife, Interview, November 15, 2020).

Furthermore, participatory observations during visits to the village health centre also revealed modern healthcare practices integrated with traditional ones. For instance, during prenatal check-ups, midwives provide vitamins and health advice while also performing abdominal massages on pregnant women to improve blood circulation, which aligns with traditional Javanese massage practices.

The practice of integrating traditional and modern knowledge is also evident during the childbirth process. Childbirth is no longer allowed to be performed solely by traditional birth attendants (*paraji*) but must be assisted by midwives. According to the village midwife, Mrs. M, mothers about to give birth may also be accompanied by both a midwife and a *paraji*. After childbirth, the *paraji* continues with several traditional practices, such as burying the baby’s umbilical cord (*ari-ari*). The *ari-ari* is placed inside a piece of cloth (*pendil*) and sealed with a coconut shell (*batok*), and salt is added to prevent any odour. A specific type of coconut shell, known as *batok bonglu* (coconut shell with only one hole), is used for this purpose. A palm frond stalk (*lidi*), locally known as *sada*, is inserted into the hole. After burying the *ari-ari*, they plant it or insert it into a *Beringin* tree and a *Pandan* plant (A, *Paraji*, November 15, 2020). During the burial of the *ari-ari*, a chant is recited as follows:

*Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*

*Niat isun apan maca padang ati*

*Beli Duwe padang ati duwee damar sejati*

*Byar padang tirawangan atie anake isun ...*

*Ya Fatah... Ya Fatah... Ya Fatah.* (A, *Paraji*, November 15, 2020)

Meaning:

*Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*

I intend to illuminate the heart’s brightness

Having no heart’s domain, only possessing genuine lanterns

Shine brightly, oh true heart of my child (while mentioning the child’s name)

Oh Fatah... Oh Fatah... Oh Fatah.

These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that the integration of modern health knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices is a common practice in Indonesia and several Asian cultures (Withers et al., 2018). This integration allows healthcare providers to understand and respect traditional beliefs and practices, thus providing more comprehensive and holistic healthcare for local communities.

In this study, it was found that the integration of modern health knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices has occurred naturally in Cirebon. Respondents combine traditional and modern healthcare practices to meet their health needs during pregnancy and childbirth. This integration takes into account cultural factors, religion, family support, healthcare accessibility, and past experiences.

For instance, in traditional childbirth practices in Cirebon, there is a belief that consuming certain foods, such as Katu leaves (*Sauropus androgynus*), can enhance the quality of breast milk. One participant explained that she acquired this knowledge from her mother and practiced it during pregnancy and breastfeeding. However, she also recognised the importance of following modern medical advice and actions, such as regular check-ups with a doctor and giving birth at a health centre (As, Young Mother, Interview, December 31, 2020).

Furthermore, participants also integrated modern health practices with traditional ones when it came to the use of medicines and herbal remedies. Most participants stated that they used modern medicines like vitamins while also consuming traditional herbal concoctions like *jamu* to maintain their health during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Some participants also utilised alternative therapies, such as acupuncture, to reduce pain during childbirth.

Integration was also evident in the practices of maintaining the health of mothers and babies after childbirth. Some participants mentioned that they followed the doctor's advice for wound care and personal hygiene but also practiced traditional methods like consuming *Jamu* (traditional Javanese medicine) and bathing with boiled water infused with betel leaves.

## FACTORS INFLUENCING THE INTEGRATION OF MODERN HEALTH KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES WITH TRADITIONAL CHILDBIRTH PRACTICES

### **Culture and Religion**

Culture and religion play a crucial role in the integration of modern health knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices in Cirebon. The values and traditional beliefs still strongly held by the Cirebonese community coexist with the strong influence of religion in the region. Concerning maternal and child health, culture and religion influence the community's perspectives and behaviour in accessing healthcare services and choosing appropriate healthcare practices.

Respondents stated that cultural and religious values influence their healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth. Some respondents expressed that they follow traditional practices passed down by their ancestors, believing that these practices provide protection and safety for both the mother and the baby. One

respondent, Mrs. Yati, revealed that she always adheres to traditions in accordance with her religious beliefs: “I always observe traditions during pregnancy. For example, when the pregnancy reaches four months, my family and I hold the *Ngupati* ceremony (As, Young Mother, Interview, January 7, 2022). Other participants also observe traditions at specific stages of pregnancy, typically at four months known as *ngupati*, seven months, and nine months.

In Cirebon culture, traditional healthcare practices are highly respected and upheld. One of the traditional healthcare practices still observed in Cirebon is the *slametan kelahiran*, also commonly known as *mapag bocah*. Slametan kelahiran is a form of religious practice that remains preserved in the Cirebonese community and is often held when a newborn baby arrives. This slametan serves as an expression of gratitude to God for the safe and healthy birth of the baby. However, apart from being a religious practice, slametan kelahiran is also considered a way to ensure the health of both the mother and the baby. One respondent, Mrs. P, explained the significance of some traditional knowledge in the form of taboos to ensure the health of the mother and the baby:

I firmly believe that certain taboos must be observed to safeguard the health of the mother and the baby. For instance, there is a taboo that the mother should not go too far from home within the first 40 days after giving birth. Violating this taboo might bring ‘sawan’ or a similar feverish illness to the baby. These taboos are believed to bring blessings and protection to the newborn and the mother. It also gives me a sense of peace and confidence that everything will go well (P, Housewife, Interview, November 15, 2020).

In addition to the slametan kelahiran, there are other traditional healthcare practices still observed in Cirebon, such as the use of traditional herbal remedies and concoctions or *boreh* to alleviate discomfort during pregnancy and childbirth.

One essential herbal remedy is “*galian singset*,” made from ingredients like galangal, turmeric, *temu lawak*, lemongrass root, sulfur, and yeast. All of these ingredients are ground or crushed, combined, boiled, and then consumed. Additionally, there is “*Jamu sawanan*” or “*Jamu endek-endek*” for those experiencing pregnancy cravings. Its function is to alleviate nausea and dizziness during cravings. This herbal remedy is made from galangal, turmeric, and shallots (P, Housewife, Interview, November 15, 2020).

On the other hand, Islam also has an influence on healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth. Pregnant women are advised to engage in more dhikr (remembrance of God) and prayer, as it is believed to help reduce anxiety and stress during pregnancy. A resident of Kedungsana Village, Mrs. M, explained, “I always try to engage in more dhikr and prayer during pregnancy because I believe it not only helps reduce anxiety and stress but also strengthens the bond with Allah” (interview, January 10, 2020).

Regarding childbirth practices, Islam also influences the choice of the baby's name and the *aqiqah* ceremony after birth. In Islam, it is recommended to give the baby a good name with a positive meaning (Minarni, 2020). The *aqiqah* ceremony is also performed as an expression of gratitude for the baby's birth and as a sign of the parents' responsibility in raising and caring for the child (Al-Kasyairi, 2015). A local Islamic scholar in Kedungsana Village, Mr. S, also acknowledged that religion and culture play a crucial role in healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth. According to him, during pregnancy, pregnant women should take care not to engage in activities forbidden by religion, such as consuming forbidden foods or alcoholic beverages (S, Islamic Scholar, interview, January 7, 2020). He also explained that traditional healthcare practices in Kedungsana Village have become part of the community's culture and heritage that should be preserved and cherished. He said, "We cannot overlook traditional healthcare practices because they have become part of our cultural identity".

Similarly to Mr. S, a midwife from Kedungsana Village, Mrs. M, also acknowledged that religion and culture influence healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth in the area. According to her, "Most mothers in Kedungsana Village still adhere to healthcare practices rooted in Islamic culture and religion, such as covering their heads, consuming halal food, and maintaining distance from their husbands during the postpartum period".

Observations and interviews conducted also indicated that traditional healthcare practices are still widely recognised and applied in the community of Kedungsana Village. During the childbirth process, many pregnant women still choose to use traditional herbal remedies and participate in certain rituals believed to facilitate a smooth delivery and reduce the risk of complications.

A study conducted by Chriswardani Suryawati (2007) confirmed that cultural and religious factors influence healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth. The results of the study indicated that culture and religion can influence the choice of birthing location and the type of healthcare services desired by pregnant women. Furthermore, the study also demonstrated that traditional healthcare practices recognised by the community can be integrated with modern healthcare practices to achieve better outcomes in terms of maternal and infant health.

Based on the research findings and interviews, it can be concluded that culture and religion play a significant role in healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth in Kedungsana Village. Traditional healthcare practices are still widely recognised and applied by the community, integrated with modern healthcare practices to achieve better outcomes in terms of maternal and infant health. Therefore, the integration of modern healthcare knowledge and practices with traditional healthcare practices should take into consideration cultural and religious factors as part of the community's identity and heritage that need to be preserved and cherished.

## Accessibility to Healthcare Services

In this study, accessibility to healthcare services was identified as one of the factors influencing the integration of modern healthcare knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices in Kedungsana Village. According to interviews with a pregnant woman in the village, accessibility to healthcare services in Kedungsana Village has become relatively easy due to the presence of a village midwife who provides healthcare services to pregnant women and infants.

According to data from the Ministry of Health, there is a significant difference in healthcare service accessibility between urban and rural areas. This difference is also evident in Kedungsana Village, where healthcare service accessibility was a challenge for many residents in the past. One resident of Kedungsana Village, Mrs. P, shared her experience in seeking healthcare services during her first pregnancy: “When I was pregnant for the first time, I still had difficulty finding healthcare services near my home. We had to go to the district town for prenatal check-ups”.

Sometimes, pregnant women in rural areas have to travel long distances to access adequate healthcare services. This can influence their decisions when choosing healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth.

However, with government programmes such as Community Health Centres (Puskemas) and Village Midwives, healthcare service accessibility in rural areas has been improving. A village midwife in Kedungsana, Mrs. M (midwife, interview, January 14, 2014), explained her role in enhancing healthcare service accessibility for the residents of Kedungsana Village:

As a village midwife, I am responsible for providing healthcare services to pregnant women and children in Kedungsana Village. We offer antenatal care and delivery services. With these services in place, pregnant women no longer need to travel to the town to receive healthcare.

Mrs. M also added that the presence of Village Midwives can help improve the quality of healthcare services for pregnant women and children. Village Midwives can provide accurate information and assist in monitoring the progress of pregnancy and the health of infants.

In the context of integrating modern healthcare knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices in Cirebon, good healthcare service accessibility can facilitate this integration process. Pregnant women can easily obtain information about both modern and traditional healthcare practices through the healthcare services available in their villages.

However, the crucial role of healthcare services in ensuring adequate accessibility for the community remains essential. The accessibility of healthcare services is one of the factors influencing the integration of modern healthcare knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices in Cirebon.



According to the interview with the Village Midwife, Mrs. M, healthcare service accessibility in Kedungsana Village is currently adequate. There is one sub-district health centre in a neighbouring village and one village midwife clinic ready to provide healthcare services to the community. Mrs. M stated, “At present, the healthcare facilities in Kedungsana Village are adequate. We always strive to provide the best service to the community”.

Another factor affecting healthcare service accessibility in Kedungsana Village is the cost. Although healthcare services in Kedungsana Village are provided by the village midwife for free, giving birth at a hospital requires a significant amount of money. However, currently, the government through the *Jampersal* programme is providing assistance for free childbirth for pregnant women. This was emphasised by the village midwife, Mrs. M:

Yes, pregnant women don't need to worry about childbirth costs anymore; the government has allocated funds through the *Jampersal* programme. Currently, traditional birth attendants are no longer allowed to handle childbirth independently, but it doesn't mean they lose their jobs. They are still allowed to practice as long as they are accompanied by me. Besides childbirth, they can still provide other services without my supervision, such as massages, bathing, and other processes.

The current government's involvement through the *Jampersal* programme is significantly assisting the community. Presently, there is a regulation that traditional birth attendants must assist in childbirth under the supervision of a midwife.

The integration of modern health knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices in Kedungsana Village can be achieved due to adequate healthcare service accessibility. In this regard, the government and non-governmental organisations play a crucial role in expanding the reach of healthcare services in Kedungsana Village and other remote areas. Additionally, a community health-focused approach and increasing public awareness about the importance of maternal and child health can also enhance healthcare service accessibility. This can be accomplished through educational campaigns and awareness programmes about the significance of maternal and child health, as well as ways to access safe and affordable healthcare.

According to an interview with Village Midwife M (interview, January 20, 2014), efforts to improve healthcare service accessibility can also be made by optimising the roles of integrated health posts (*posyandu*) and mothers' groups in promoting maternal and child health:

We always strive to strengthen the roles of integrated health posts and mothers' groups in promoting maternal and child health. In every integrated health post meeting, we provide information about proper health practices during pregnancy and childbirth, as well as guidance on the importance of receiving prenatal check-ups and delivering at reliable healthcare facilities. Furthermore, we involve mothers' groups in efforts to prevent stunting and

malnutrition by educating them about exclusive breastfeeding and introducing appropriate complementary feeding practices.

Overall, healthcare service accessibility is a critical factor in the integration of modern health knowledge and practices with traditional healthcare practices in Cirebon. Efforts to improve healthcare service accessibility can be carried out through various means, such as strengthening the roles of integrated health posts (*posyandu*) and mothers' groups, increasing public awareness about the importance of health, and enhancing collaboration networks between healthcare facilities at the village level and those at the district or city level.

## Family Support

Family support plays a crucial role in the integration of modern health knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices in Cirebon. Family members, especially husbands, mothers, and mothers-in-law, often influence decisions regarding healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth.

According to Mrs. M, a Village Midwife in Kedungsana, family support is vital in motivating mothers to access modern healthcare services such as prenatal check-ups and facility-based deliveries. "It is crucial for the family, especially the husband, to support the mother in accessing appropriate healthcare services" (M, Village Midwife, interview, January 17, 2014).

Furthermore, family support can also influence a mother's decision in choosing traditional healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth:

Family also plays a significant role in selecting traditional healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth. For instance, they can help in finding a trusted traditional birth attendant (*dukun bayi*) or selecting the right type of traditional herbal remedies for pregnant women to consume. (M, Village Midwife, Interview, January 17, 2014).

Family support can also help reduce stigma associated with modern healthcare practices and increase acceptance of these practices within the community. Some pregnant women may face pressure from their families or communities to continue using traditional healthcare practices perceived as "safer" or "more reliable." However, with the support of family members who understand the benefits of modern healthcare practices, pregnant women can more easily make informed decisions in choosing appropriate healthcare practices.

In several studies, family support has been found to have a positive correlation with increased utilisation of healthcare services by pregnant women (Ike et al., 2021; Mardhiah & Marlina, 2019; Mulyana, 2017). This suggests that family support can play

a significant role in improving healthcare service accessibility and facilitating the integration of modern health knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices.

However, as mentioned by the Village Midwife, not all families provide sufficient support for the mother's decisions in choosing healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth. Some families still adhere to traditional childbirth practices that have been passed down through generations, even though not all of these practices can be medically justified. This can pose a challenge to the integration of modern health knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices in Cirebon.

In conclusion, family support is a crucial factor in the integration of modern health knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices in Cirebon. This support can help mothers choose the appropriate healthcare practices and expedite postpartum recovery. However, sometimes family support can also negatively influence the mother's decisions. Therefore, a more holistic and comprehensive approach is needed in integrating modern health knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices, involving families as one of the significant factors that can impact a mother's decision-making.

## Past Experiences

Past experiences are a factor that influences the integration of modern health knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices in Kedungsana Village. These past experiences encompass experiences from previous generations and the personal experiences of the respondents.

One respondent, Mrs. P (interview, August 20, 2020), expressed that she felt more comfortable with traditional childbirth practices because she had personally experienced their benefits when giving birth to her first child. She stated,

I gave birth to my first child with a traditional midwife, and I felt comfortable because the traditional midwife provided massages and herbal remedies to facilitate the childbirth process. My child was born healthy with no issues. So, I decided to also give birth to my second and third children with a traditional midwife.

These diverse past experiences influence the preferences and choices of healthcare practices among the community. However, it is important to remember that past experiences may not always serve as an accurate reference for choosing healthcare practices. As mentioned by Mrs. M, a village midwife in Kedungsana:

Nowadays, many mothers want to give birth at home with the assistance of traditional midwives because of their mothers' past experiences, which went smoothly with traditional midwives. But we must provide accurate information about the potential risks and benefits of giving birth at a community health centre or hospital.

In several studies (Andrews, 2004; Houghton, et al., 2008; Shaw & Kitzinger, 2005), it has been found that past experiences can influence a mother's preferences in choosing healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth. However, accurate information and sufficient support from healthcare professionals and family can influence changes in these preferences. Therefore, it is important for healthcare professionals to provide accurate information and adequate support in choosing the right healthcare practices.

Furthermore, past experiences also influence the community's perception and trust in healthcare providers. If the community has had negative experiences with healthcare services, they are more likely to distrust modern healthcare practices. Conversely, if the community has had positive experiences with healthcare services, they are more likely to follow modern healthcare practices. Past experiences can influence the community's perception of modern and traditional healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth. Therefore, it is important to improve the quality of healthcare services and provide accurate education to the community about the benefits and risks of various healthcare practices. This way, the community can make informed decisions that align with their needs.

### IMPACT OF INTEGRATION BETWEEN MODERN HEALTH KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES AND TRADITIONAL BIRTH PRACTICES

The integration of modern healthcare knowledge and traditional childbirth practices in Cirebon has significant impacts on the health of mothers and children. Some positive impacts of this integration include increased knowledge and awareness of maternal and child health among the community, reduced risks of complications during childbirth, and improved chances of survival for newborns.

One resident of Kedungsana Village, Mrs. N (interview, March 10, 2021), stated that the integration of modern and traditional healthcare practices has greatly benefited the health of mothers and children. Mrs. Tuti expressed:

In the past, when I gave birth to my first child, many traditional healthcare practices were followed. However, after I participated in the maternal health classes and received information from the village midwife about modern healthcare practices, I felt more confident and assured that I could give birth safely and healthily.

Furthermore, the integration of modern healthcare knowledge with traditional childbirth practices also has a positive impact on strengthening cultural and religious values in the community. This is evident in the increasing number of residents who incorporate elements of local religion and culture into their healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth.

In a scientific conference, the Minister of Health of Indonesia, Dr. Endang Rahayu Sedyaningsih (serving from October 22, 2009, to April 30, 2012), stated: “In terms of healthcare services, traditional medicine can be a vital part of the healthcare system in any country in the world, including ASEAN countries”. Traditional medicine is often more culturally accepted by communities compared to conventional medicine (Kementerian Kesehatan, 2011).

However, the integration of modern healthcare knowledge with traditional childbirth practices can also have negative consequences if not done correctly. One potential negative impact is the occurrence of conflicts between modern and traditional healthcare practices. This can happen due to differences in perspectives and values held by the community regarding their healthcare practices during pregnancy and childbirth.

As we are aware, the modern healthcare system is underpinned by clear knowledge and research methodologies, whereas traditional healthcare services often lack support from scientific research data. There are seven steps to integrate traditional medicine into the healthcare system, which include formulating integration strategies, establishing regulations for integration, setting service standards and competencies, providing training and education for both conventional providers and traditional medicine practitioners, integrating traditional/alternative medicine into the formal healthcare system, building partnerships and networks with other countries for information and experience exchange, and conducting research and development for scientific validation. (Kementerian Kesehatan, 2011, para. 3)

One of the positive impacts of this integration is the increased understanding and awareness among the community regarding the importance of prenatal and postnatal care. For instance, pregnant women in Kedungsana Village are now more inclined to use the services of both traditional healers (*paraji*) and village midwives for prenatal and postnatal healthcare check-ups. One resident of Kedungsana, Mrs. S, mentioned in an interview:

In the past, we tended to rely more on traditional healers, but now we prefer to go to midwives because we know that the care provided by midwives is safer and more effective. However, for specific cases like massages, we still visit traditional healers.

Additionally, the integration of modern healthcare knowledge and practices with traditional healthcare practices allows for more effective interventions in preventing and addressing health issues related to pregnancy and childbirth. One example is the use of traditional medicines that have been proven to be safe and effective, combined with modern treatments. As explained by a village midwife, Mrs. M, “We combine modern treatment with traditional remedies, those that I consider safe, of course. For instance, we use herbal medicine to help alleviate pain during childbirth but also provide pain relief medication if needed”.

Furthermore, the integration of modern healthcare knowledge and practices with traditional healthcare practices can enhance family support and participation in the care

of mothers and children. In Cirebon society, the role of the family is crucial in providing support and care during pregnancy and childbirth. The integration allows for collaboration between families, healthcare providers, and traditional healers or experts in traditional medicine to provide the best care for mothers and children. A resident of Kedungsana, Mr. D, stated in an interview, “we now feel more involved in the care of pregnant women and childbirth because we know what we need to do to help them, and we also receive information and support from healthcare providers.”

One pregnant respondent, a mother-to-be, Mrs. N (interview, June 16, 2020), stated that the integration of modern and traditional healthcare practices had a positive impact on her health during pregnancy. She said, “I felt more calm and confident during my pregnancy because I incorporated some traditional healthcare practices recommended by my grandmother, but also followed the advice of midwives and doctors”.

In this context, the integration of modern healthcare knowledge and practices with traditional healthcare practices can have a positive impact on the health of mothers and infants. This integration can help reduce the risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth and improve the health of newborns.

Overall, the integration of modern healthcare knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices in Cirebon has had a positive impact on the health of mothers and children. This integration can occur through influencing factors such as culture and religion, accessibility to healthcare services, family support, and past experiences. The integration also takes into account the importance of the values and traditions held by the community, ensuring that the integration process can be carried out in a way that is deemed appropriate and does not undermine their cultural identity. Through this integration, communities can choose healthcare practices that meet their needs, whether they are modern or traditional (Zainuddin, 2023). It is hoped that the integration of modern healthcare knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices in Cirebon can serve as an example for other regions in efforts to improve the health of mothers and children and enrich insights into healthcare that encompass cultural aspects and the traditional values of communities.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the integration of modern healthcare knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices in Cirebon occurs naturally, taking into account cultural, religious, family support, and past experience factors. These findings are consistent with the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia’s programme, which is the effort to integrate Traditional Medicine into the National Health System (Kementerian Kesehatan, 2011). In this integration, local knowledge is not only acknowledged but also respected as a crucial source in providing optimal and effective healthcare services to the community. This aligns with Xiaorui Zhang

(2000), who stated that traditional medicine still plays a significant role in primary healthcare in most developing countries because it is easily accessible and economically affordable, and herbal medicine and traditional therapies have proven effective in several fields. However, further research and evaluation are still needed to ensure the safety and effectiveness of traditional medicine.

Furthermore, the World Health Organization (WHO) also encourages and supports member states in integrating traditional medicine into the national healthcare system and its appropriate use (Zhang, 2000). The World Health Organization (WHO) supports this effort by endorsing national research and training programs, offering technical advice and worldwide standards, and promoting the sharing of knowledge. These measures assist member countries in integrating traditional medicine into their healthcare frameworks, ensuring the practices are safe and effective, and advancing their development (Zhang, 2000).

Apart from Indonesia, India is also promoting the integration of traditional and modern medicine. The Ministry of Health in India has proposed the concept of “medical pluralism” and intends to introduce Indian Systems of Medicine such as Ayurveda and Yoga to modern medical students (Sharma, 2001). By encouraging the integration of traditional and modern medicine in developing countries like Indonesia and India, it is hoped that accessibility and quality of healthcare for the population will improve, while also promoting the safe and effective use of traditional medicine.

The findings of this research indicate that factors such as culture and religion, healthcare accessibility, family support, and past experiences influence the integration of knowledge and practices of modern healthcare with traditional childbirth practices in Cirebon. The implications of these research findings emphasise the importance of a holistic and balanced approach to integrating both types of healthcare practices. Healthcare providers need to understand and respect the beliefs and values of the local community regarding childbirth practices, and provide appropriate education and accurate information about modern healthcare practices. In this regard, effective communication between healthcare providers and the community is crucial.

Furthermore, the results of this research can provide crucial information for the development of health programmes that focus on the integration of modern and traditional healthcare practices in Indonesia. This aligns with the World Health Organization’s (WHO) strategy to promote the integration of traditional medicine into national healthcare systems and facilitate information and knowledge exchange (Zhang, 2000). In clinical practice, the integration of modern and traditional healthcare practices can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare delivery, offering patients a more comprehensive and holistic range of treatment options. Therefore, there is a need for greater efforts and support from various stakeholders, including the government, healthcare professionals, and the community, to promote the integration of modern and traditional healthcare practices in Indonesia.

Based on the research findings and discussions above, there are several suggestions for future research that can be pursued. First, further research can be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing family support for the integration of knowledge and practices of modern healthcare with traditional childbirth practices in other locations. This can be achieved through more in-depth research methods, such as qualitative research with a larger number of participants.

Furthermore, research can also be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes aimed at promoting the integration of modern healthcare knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices. This is essential to ensure that the implemented programmes can have a significant positive impact on the community. Such research can be carried out using evaluative research methods and data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, and questionnaires.

By conducting further research related to the integration of modern healthcare knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices, it is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing this integration and the positive effects it can have on public health. Additionally, the findings from these studies can serve as a foundation for the development of more effective healthcare programmes in the future.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that factors such as healthcare accessibility, family support, and past experiences influence the integration of modern healthcare knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices in Cirebon. These factors can impact a mother's decision in choosing childbirth practices. However, a community-focused approach and increased awareness can enhance integration and promote safer childbirth practices.

The scientific implications of this research underscore the need to improve healthcare accessibility, both through enhancing healthcare facilities and raising public awareness. In clinical practice, it is crucial to understand the factors influencing a mother's decision in choosing childbirth practices and to provide appropriate support to mothers in making safe and tailored choices. However, this research has some limitations, including a limited sample size and a focus on only one region. Therefore, future research can involve a larger and more representative sample, as well as focusing on other factors influencing the integration of modern healthcare knowledge and practices with traditional childbirth practices in broader regions.



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