

Scientific Misconduct in Breastfeeding Research at Workplace: A Narrative Review

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Abstract

Introduction: Breastfeeding is a crucial source of nutrition for infants, especially from 0 to 6 months. However, many working mothers struggle to provide exclusive breastfeeding due to insufficient workplace support. Although Indonesian regulations and some international policies support breastfeeding rights for working mothers, enforcement remains inconsistent, particularly in industries with high productivity demands.

Method: This literature review was conducted in October 2024 using publications from 2018 to 2024. Relevant studies were identified using the Universitas Indonesia Remote Library, Google Scholar, and The Indonesian Journal of Community and Occupational Medicine (IJCOM) with the keyword “breastfeeding worker.” The review includes cases of breastfeeding rights violations by governments, companies, and the public.

Results: The findings reveal significant challenges faced by working mothers in the garment industry in Cakung, North Jakarta, such as unpaid overtime and lack of adequate breastfeeding time and facilities. Similar issues were found in Ghana’s health sector, where medical workers lack support and private spaces for breastfeeding, leading to emotional stress and reduced rates of exclusive breastfeeding.

Conclusion: There are still numerous workplaces that fail to comply with breastfeeding policies, despite existing regulations supporting workers’ rights. Collaboration between governments and workplace management is essential to ensure the availability of breastfeeding facilities that support the well-being of mothers and infants without compromising productivity.

Keywords: breastfeeding, breastfeeding policy, breastfeeding worker, exclusive breastfeeding

Abstrak

Pendahuluan: Menyusui merupakan sumber gizi penting bagi bayi, terutama pada usia 0-6 bulan. Namun, banyak ibu bekerja mengalami tantangan dalam memberikan ASI eksklusif karena kurangnya dukungan di tempat kerja. Meskipun peraturan di Indonesia dan beberapa negara lainnya mendukung hak ibu bekerja untuk menyusui, implementasi regulasi ini sering kali terbatas dan tidak konsisten, terutama di industri yang menuntut produktivitas tinggi.

Metode: Tinjauan literatur ini dilakukan pada Oktober 2024 dengan menggunakan literatur terkait yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2018 hingga 2024. Pencarian literatur dilakukan melalui Universitas Indonesia Remote Library, Google Scholar, dan The Indonesian Journal of Community and Occupational Medicine (IJCOM) menggunakan kata kunci “pekerja menyusui”. Kajian ini mencakup penelitian terhadap pelanggaran hak menyusui yang dilakukan oleh pemerintah, perusahaan, atau masyarakat umum.

Hasil: Tinjauan ini menunjukkan bahwa ibu bekerja di industri garmen di Cakung, Jakarta Utara, menghadapi tantangan berat, seperti lembur tanpa upah dan tidak adanya waktu atau fasilitas yang memadai untuk menyusui. Situasi serupa juga terjadi di sektor kesehatan di Ghana, di mana pekerja medis kekurangan dukungan dan ruang pribadi untuk menyusui, yang berdampak pada stres emosional dan penurunan angka pemberian ASI eksklusif.

Kesimpulan: Masih terdapat banyak tempat kerja yang tidak mematuhi kebijakan menyusui, meskipun ada regulasi yang mendukung hak-hak pekerja perempuan. Kolaborasi antara pemerintah dan manajemen tempat kerja sangat dibutuhkan untuk memastikan ketersediaan fasilitas menyusui yang mendukung kesejahteraan ibu dan anak tanpa mengurangi produktivitas.

Kata kunci: ASI, fasilitas menyusui, ASI eksklusif, pekerja menyusui

Introduction

Breastfeeding is one of the valuable food sources for a newborn baby. Breastfeeding is exclusive for a baby 0 to 6 months old, and it's important because it can support a baby's growth and health. Babies around that age does not have fully working digestive tracts yet, so they can only digest nutrition from breast feeding. After 6 months old, its recommended to keep giving them breastmilk until 2 years old, along with other food.

According to Indonesian Paediatrics Association (IDAI), the total of breastfeeding mothers is high (90%), but the mothers who gave their babies exclusive breastfeeding from age 0-6 months are still low (20%). Most of the nutrition required are from the breastmilk.^{1,2}

Unfortunately, these days mothers with children around 0 months – 2 years must also work to provide her family. They need spare time to either give breastmilk directly to her children, or pump breastmilk to give them to her children later. According to World Health Organization (WHO), more than half a million working mothers did not get supported with protection from maternity law. Only 20% countries in the world including Indonesia have regulations to give day off when giving birth and to provide facilities for breastfeeding.

WHO has a campaign in Indonesia that women must not choose between working and breastfeeding. It's also supported with UNICEF, Ministry of health, and even public. They want to give chance to advocate the worker's right to give breastfeeding, including day off for 18 weeks, and other regulations that support them at workplace. It's an urgent need to make sure women can give breastmilk as much as she wants.²

In Indonesia, that right is already supported in the law. According to Indonesian law (Undang-undang No. 13 Year 2003) about labour, it's stated that female worker that have children, must be given breastmilk as should be. It's also stated (article 153 paragraph 1) that work provider cannot fire female workers because of breastfeeding. The other law (Undang-undang no. 25 Year 2009) about public services, it's stated that public services must provide breast feeding facilities so female workers can have the right to give breastmilk to her children when working.

Those are the few examples of the law that support women in giving breastmilk. Even if there are some countries that have the same supportive law, there may

also some misconduct form other places about giving breast milk regulations. It's understandable that giving breastmilk during work need some time that may lower productivity rate to the company they work. Building facilities exclusive only to provide breastfeeding also uses more money. But companies and country regulations must also understand the important of giving breastmilk to the children. This literature review will analyse some of the breastfeeding misconducts done to the female workers.^{3,4}

Method

Literature review was done in October 2024 with literatures published between 2018 to 2024 related to the scientific misconducts in breastfeeding research at workers population. We search with the keyword "breastfeeding worker" in Universitas Indonesia Remote Library, Google Scholar and The Indonesian Journal of Community and Occupational Medicine (IJCOM). This review was made from various literature that has breastfeeding misconduct done by researchers, governments, companies, or public

Breastfeeding Workers in Garment and Textile Industry

This is about a worker in a Garment and Textile Manufacture Industry in Cakung, North Jakarta, Indonesia. Garment and Textile is one of the biggest products in Indonesia. There are many garments and textile manufacturing industry spread all over Indonesia. The workers here are usually women, they work mostly as production operators.

Unfortunately, this kind of work usually has a high workload and work stress. They also had some problems like unpaid overtime, low wages, high productivity demand, high turnover, non-standard safety, and violence. As a woman, sometime they had to excuse from work because of their biological function such as having period, pregnancy, or breastfeeding. This excuse will have an impact on low productivity on the company. Even if there are government regulations that protects woman and encourage to provide day offs for these reasons, sometime there are companies did not comply the regulations. They will simply fire them from job because of the low productivity.

This research was done as part of the Food-first Initiative and Action Network (FIAN) program to monitor the right to food and nutrition of women workers and their babies. They interviewed some of the woman workers there.

The findings on this article that sometime if the orders are flooded, the women workers may work early, reduce lunch time, or even overtime without pay because considered compensation for women worker's lack of productivity. The workload is not reduced for women when they're pregnant or ill. The company only give maternity leave to permanent employee. For contract workers, the company did not provide this. The women workers are either get laid off one sided, or not get their contract renewed.

The factory does not give women time to take care of their babies. They must work 8-10 hours per day even if the workload is high. This also means that women cannot present beside their babies to give breastmilk exclusively. Some workers are forced to give their babies formula milk because of this situation. Some of them can only give exclusive breastmilk for less than 6 months, and then continue with formula milk. This may have a bad impact to some of the baby's growth and health. If the order is high, sometime they work using their break time, so breastmilk pumping is not possible.

In Indonesia, it's still a challenge. Clearly, it's a violation of the regulations that the states must provide all the facilities that women need especially during maternity. According to this literature, the states sometime take side with formula milk instead, and did not enforce the regulations. This is a call for action especially from the government's help to force company to follow the regulations regarding breastfeeding facilities for women workers.⁴

Breastfeeding Among Health Workers

Other challenges for breastfeeding workers also happen in Upper East, Ghana. Ironically, it happens to medical workers that supposed to be advocate for breastfeeding. In Ghana, there is a policy to promote exclusive breastfeeding. But the policy did not mention the workplace breastfeeding support environment (BFSE). To provide with fully functional BFSE, it must have a private space for breastfeeding, flexible break time, breast feeding education, and a clear breastfeeding support policy. Ghana adapted a strategy from UNICEF

which helped increased the number of exclusive breastfeeding. But the numbers are reduced over year and the proportions are lower among professional workers including health workers.

From the result of this study, one of the hardest challenges are the lack of private place for breastfeeding. Not all of the workplace has a special place for breastfeeding. Workers sometime give breastfeed in other places like cars or offices. Sometime they must work during breastfeeding period that they leave their babies to their family, or bring the babies on their back while working. The management and co workers have complain to workers during their breastfeeding period because it interferes with work which indicates that the company did not support the breastfeeding policy. They also feel that they cannot give breastfeed on demand because of the limited break time. This has an impact to the worker's emotional stress that the workers get disturbed by the babies while working, or cannot give breastfeeding. The workers themselves, as a medical worker they know the importance of giving breastmilk, especially exclusive breastmilk for ages below 6 months so their knowledge is not an issue here.

The management of the health facilities did not aware that they needed to provide BFSE according to the national policy. The absence of this facilities may result in decreasing number of exclusive breastfeeding.⁵

Ideal Breastfeeding Policy for Workers

With cases of misconducts before, we need intervention for breastfeeding workers so they can keep breastfeeding their children while not interfering with work. It's one of the challenges to reach this goal. WHO recommends to reinforce the regulations to promote exclusive breastfeeding practices for 6 months.⁶

Start with the government should make all companies to follow the local regulations to provide breastfeeding support. They can give professional support to help emotionally, or physically. Make sure there are good facilities for workers for breastfeeding practice.⁷

Breastfeeding education is also one of the most effective interventions. It can be given by professionals usually during prenatal and postpartum stages in medical facilities, or even workplaces. With this, they can fully understand the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, and give the opportunity for workers to plan ahead when

they return to work while breastfeeding. Companies can also make programs to support the breastfeeding workers. They can make changes to working conditions so workers can have time off for medical appointment, or give them weeks' time off so the workers can adjust with their new responsibility and bond with their family.⁸

Organizational support is also needed mostly from peers and supervisors. All workers should be given knowledge about the importance of breastfeeding so all of the non-breastfeeding workers will support the breastfeeding workers. This will also build a good perception among workers about breastfeeding.⁹

Conclusion

There are still workplaces that did not comply with providing breastfeeding policy for workers. Even if there are government regulations, workplace somehow did not comply and the workers are having trouble in giving breastmilk to their children. This can reduce the number of exclusive breastfeeding, that in the future also will hinder the growth of their babies. We need to work together with the government, and the workplace management so that they can provide facilities for breastfeeding that also did not have an impact on the productivity.

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