



## The Relationship Between Nutrition Knowledge and Dietary Abstinence Attitudes During the Postpartum Period

Dara Mila Revalina<sup>1</sup>, Yanti Srinayanti<sup>2\*</sup>, Ima Sukmawati<sup>3</sup>, Elis Roslianti<sup>4</sup>, Aulia Ridla Fauzi,<sup>5</sup> Dini Ariani<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5,6</sup>STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis

Correspondence: [yanti678@gmail.com](mailto:yanti678@gmail.com)

### Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between nutritional knowledge and attitudes toward food abstinence among postpartum mothers. **Methods:** This study employed a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional approach. A total of 30 postpartum mothers in the working area of the UPTD Sadananya Community Health Center were selected using purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms to assess respondents' nutritional knowledge and attitudes toward food restrictions. Data analysis was conducted using the Chi-Square test with a significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ . **Results:** The results showed that the majority of respondents had good nutritional knowledge and a positive attitude toward consuming nutritious foods. Statistical analysis yielded a  $p$ -value of 0.049 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating a significant relationship between nutritional knowledge and attitudes toward food abstinence. Respondents with higher levels of knowledge tended to demonstrate more rational behavior in food selection during the postpartum period. **Conclusions:** There is a significant relationship between nutritional knowledge and attitudes toward food abstinence among postpartum mothers. Therefore, continuous health education by healthcare professionals is essential to improve mothers' understanding of balanced nutrition, support postpartum recovery, and promote the health of both mother and baby.

**Keywords:** attitude, knowledge, postpartum

### Introduction

The postpartum period is a crucial phase in a woman's life that begins after childbirth and lasts for approximately six weeks (42 days). During this period, the reproductive organs undergo involution, and mothers experience both physical and psychological recovery while adapting to their new role, including breastfeeding and infant care (Dewi, 2025). Adequate nutritional intake during this phase is essential to accelerate recovery, support breast milk production, and maintain the health of both mother and baby (Marliany et al., 2023).

However, in reality, food restriction practices during the postpartum period are still widely found in Indonesia. These practices are often influenced by cultural beliefs passed down through generations. The Indonesian Ministry of Health (2015) reported that such habits contribute to maternal health problems. Of the 5,123,764 postpartum mothers, approximately 4,406,437 (86%) still avoid high-protein foods such as fish and eggs. This condition can

negatively affect the recovery process, as the nutritional needs required for healing and lactation are not adequately fulfilled (Astutiningrum, 2024).

At the regional level, maternal health problems remain a concern. Health data from West Java Province in 2020 recorded 745 maternal deaths, representing an increase of 61 cases compared to 2019, which recorded 684 cases (Fira, 2024). In Ciamis Regency, data from the Health Office in 2025 showed that postpartum mothers accounted for 14.79% of the total 20,511 births. Similarly, in the working area of the UPTD Sadananya Community Health Center, this phenomenon continues to be observed. Out of 673 deliveries, 15.45% were postpartum mothers, with 104 cases recorded between January and March 2025. These data indicate that postpartum care remains a significant focus in improving maternal health outcomes.

Nationally, the number of mothers practicing food restrictions after childbirth is estimated to reach approximately 4.4 million out of 5.1 million mothers giving birth (Rahayu et al., 2020). Commonly avoided foods include eggs, fish, and spicy foods. In fact, around 95% of the population still maintains this practice due to strong cultural traditions and social environmental influences (Andriyani, 2022). These practices are often based on myths related to health and illness, leading mothers to follow dietary restrictions without considering their actual nutritional needs.

Several factors influence food restriction practices among postpartum mothers, including educational level, life experience, occupation, age, environmental factors, and economic conditions (Simamora, 2022). Inadequate nutritional intake during the postpartum period can hinder wound healing, cause nutritional deficiencies, and negatively affect maternal health as well as the quality of breast milk (Susanti, 2022). Despite the lack of scientific evidence, these hereditary practices persist because they are deeply rooted in cultural beliefs regarding the effects of certain foods on maternal health (Mandiri et al., 2023).

Furthermore, nutritional knowledge plays a critical role in shaping attitudes and behaviors related to food consumption. Mothers with better knowledge tend to make more rational dietary choices, whereas limited understanding may reinforce adherence to traditional beliefs that are not evidence-based. This gap between knowledge and practice highlights the importance of assessing both cognitive and attitudinal aspects in addressing food restriction behaviors during the postpartum period.

Based on the issues described above, this study aims to examine the relationship between nutritional knowledge and attitudes toward food restrictions during the postpartum period in the working area of the UPTD Sadananya Community Health Center, Ciamis Regency. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of effective health education strategies to improve maternal nutrition and support optimal postpartum recovery.

## **Methods**

This study employed a descriptive correlational method with a cross-sectional approach. It is a non-experimental study using a quantitative technique. The population in this study consisted of postpartum mothers in the working area of the UPTD Sadananya Community Health Center, Ciamis Regency, based on 2025 data, totaling 673 postpartum mothers. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, and the sample size was determined using the Slovin formula, resulting in 30 respondents, all of whom were postpartum mothers.

The measurement instrument used in this study was a questionnaire adapted from Astutiningrum (2024), which had previously undergone validity and reliability testing, with a validity value of 0.361. For data analysis, this study employed univariate and bivariate

analyses. The Chi-square test was used to examine the relationship between the two variables, which were measured on an ordinal scale. The study was conducted from October to December 2025, involving a total of 30 respondents.

## Results

This study was conducted from October to December 2025 in the working area of the UPTD Sadananya Community Health Center after the researcher obtained official permission and coordinated with the health center authorities. Before completing the questionnaire, each respondent was given an explanation regarding the objectives and procedures of the study, and an informed consent form was provided as a statement of agreement to participate in the research. The questionnaire was then distributed to 30 postpartum mothers who met the research criteria. The collected data were analyzed using the Chi-square test and presented in the form of frequency distribution tables. All stages of the research were carried out in accordance with established procedures and the ethical principles of research.

**Table 1. Respondent Characteristics**

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>		
< 20 years	0	0.0
20–35 years	22	73.3
> 35 years	8	26.7
<b>Education Level</b>		
Elementary School	3	10.0
Junior High School	6	20.0
Senior High School	18	60.0
Higher Education	3	10.0
<b>Occupation</b>		
Housewife	24	80.0
Civil Servant	1	3.3
Private Employee	5	16.7

Based on the table of respondent characteristics, most participants were in the 20–35 years age group, totaling 22 individuals (73.3%). This indicates that the majority of respondents belonged to the mature reproductive age category

**Table 2. Nutritional Knowledge Levels (n = 30)**

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Knowledge Level</b>		
Good	20	66.7
Moderate	10	33.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The results of the study indicate that the majority of respondents had a good level of nutritional knowledge, with 20 individuals (66.7%), while 10 individuals (33.3%) were categorized as having a moderate level of knowledge. These findings suggest that most postpartum mothers already possess a fairly good understanding of the importance of meeting nutritional needs during the recovery period.

**Table 3. Attitudes Toward Food Taboos**

Attitudes Toward Food Taboos	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Positive	19	63.3
Negative	11	36.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Based on Table 3. attitudes toward food restrictions during the postpartum period in the working area of the UPTD Sadananya Community Health Center showed that 19 respondents (63.3%) were categorized as having positive attitudes, while 11 respondents (36.7%) were categorized as having negative attitudes.

**Table 4. The Relationship Between Nutritional Knowledge and Attitudes Toward Food Taboos**

Nutritional Knowledge	Positive	(%)	Negative	(%)	Total	(%)	p-value
Good	10	50.0	10	50.0	20	66.7	
Fair	9	47.4	1	10.0	10	33.3	0.049
Poor	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
<b>Total</b>					<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>	

The results of the analysis examining the relationship between nutritional knowledge and attitudes toward food restrictions during the postpartum period among 30 respondents showed that 20 respondents (66.7%) had good nutritional knowledge, with 10 individuals (52.6%) demonstrating positive attitudes and 10 individuals (47.4%) demonstrating negative attitudes toward food restrictions. Among respondents with moderate levels of knowledge (10 individuals; 33.3%), the majority showed positive attitudes, with 9 individuals (90%), while only 1 individual (10%) showed a negative attitude. The results of the Chi-square test showed a p-value of 0.049 (<0.05), indicating a significant relationship between nutritional knowledge and attitudes toward food restrictions among postpartum mothers.

## Discussion

Most postpartum mothers at the UPTD Sadananya Community Health Center demonstrated good understanding regarding the importance of adequate nutritional intake to accelerate recovery, improve breast milk quality, and maintain body immunity. This condition may be influenced by the characteristics of respondents, most of whom had completed senior high school education (60%), were aged 20–35 years (73.3%), and were housewives (80%). These characteristics make them relatively more receptive to health information and more

focused on postpartum care. However, some respondents still had moderate levels of knowledge, which may be influenced by limited access to information and strong family traditions.

According to Notoatmodjo (2018), knowledge is the result of recognizing an object through the senses, particularly sight and hearing. Knowledge is formed through experience, education, and exposure to information from various sources, both formal and informal. In the context of health, knowledge becomes the foundation for shaping individual attitudes and behaviors in maintaining and improving health.

The findings of this study are consistent with the research conducted by Astutiningrum (2024) at Kebumen 2 Community Health Center, which reported a significant relationship between nutritional knowledge and attitudes toward food restrictions during the postpartum period. However, the strength of the relationship in that study was higher than in the present study, possibly due to differences in respondent characteristics, education levels, and socio-cultural backgrounds.

Based on the research results, most respondents showed a positive attitude toward food restrictions, with 19 individuals (63.3%) demonstrating positive attitudes, while 11 individuals (36.7%) showed negative attitudes. A positive attitude reflects the openness of postpartum mothers to consume nutritious foods without inappropriate restrictions. However, some respondents still avoided foods such as fish, eggs, and spicy foods due to traditional beliefs, inherited cultural practices, and family advice. This finding indicates that social and cultural factors continue to influence dietary behavior during the postpartum period. According to Azwar (2016), attitudes consist of three components: cognitive (knowledge), affective (feelings), and conative (behavioral tendency). Therefore, the formation of attitudes is not only influenced by knowledge but also by emotional factors and environmental support.

These findings are consistent with the study by Juliani (2024), which reported that food restriction practices among postpartum mothers remain prevalent due to strong cultural and family influences. Certain dietary restrictions, such as avoiding fish, meat, and eggs, are believed to delay wound healing or affect the quality of breast milk, although these beliefs are not supported by scientific evidence.

The results of the study involving 30 respondents showed that postpartum mothers with good nutritional knowledge demonstrated balanced attitudes, with 10 individuals (50%) showing positive attitudes and 10 individuals (50%) showing negative attitudes. Meanwhile, among respondents with moderate knowledge levels, most demonstrated positive attitudes, with 9 individuals (90%), while only 1 individual (10%) showed a negative attitude.

The Chi-square test produced a  $p$ -value of 0.049 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating a significant relationship between nutritional knowledge and attitudes toward food restrictions during the postpartum period in the working area of the UPTD Sadananya Community Health Center. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was accepted and the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected. These findings suggest that a higher level of understanding tends to be associated with attitudes that support the consumption of nutritious foods, although not all mothers are able to fully implement these attitudes in their daily practices.

These results are consistent with the studies conducted by Astutiningrum (2024) and Juliani (2024), which also reported a significant relationship between nutritional knowledge and attitudes toward food restrictions during the postpartum period. Adequate information helps mothers understand the importance of consuming protein-rich foods such as fish, eggs, and meat to accelerate wound healing, increase breast milk production, and reduce the risk of postpartum complications.

However, the study findings also indicate that good knowledge does not always lead to consistent attitudes. This suggests the influence of other factors, such as cultural values, family support, and the role of health professionals in providing counseling. Therefore, efforts to

improve nutritional knowledge should be carried out continuously and integrated with socio-cultural approaches in order to achieve optimal and sustainable behavioral change.

### Conclusion

Based on the study findings, most postpartum mothers had a good level of nutritional knowledge, with 20 respondents (66.7%), and the majority showed positive attitudes toward food consumption during the postpartum period, with 19 respondents (63.3%). Statistical analysis indicated a significant relationship between nutritional knowledge and attitudes toward food restrictions, with a  $p$ -value of 0.049, meaning that the level of maternal understanding is significantly associated with attitudes toward fulfilling nutritional needs during the postpartum period.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, educational institutions are expected to utilize these results as supporting material in maternal nursing education, particularly regarding the role of knowledge in shaping maternal health behaviors. For the community, especially postpartum mothers and their families, it is recommended to avoid practicing food restrictions that lack scientific evidence and to adopt a balanced and nutritious diet, supported by family involvement and guidance from health professionals. Future researchers are encouraged to expand this research by including additional variables, such as husband support or the influence of social media, which may affect mothers' perceptions regarding nutritional intake after childbirth.

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