

Original Research

Mothers' Knowledge about Complementary Feeding Using the Baby Led Weaning (BLW) Method in Infants Aged 6-12 Months: A Descriptive Study

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ABSTRACT

Background: The period of complementary feeding is an important period in infant growth. One method that is currently developing is Baby Led Weaning (BLW), which is a method that allows infants to eat independently according to their motor skills without being spoon-fed. However, the success of this method is greatly influenced by mothers' knowledge of the principles, benefits, and risks of BLW. This study aims to determine mothers' knowledge of complementary feeding using the Baby Led Weaning method for infants aged 6–12 months.

Methods: This study is a quantitative descriptive study with a cross-sectional approach. The population in this study consisted of all mothers who had infants aged 6–12 months in the working area of the Community Health Center where the study was conducted. The sample consisted of 40 respondents selected using purposive sampling. The research instrument was a questionnaire that had been tested for validity and reliability. The data were analyzed univariately and presented in the form of frequency distributions and percentages.

Results: The results of this study show that of the 35 mothers, 16 mothers (45.7%) had good knowledge, 7 mothers (20%) had sufficient knowledge, and 12 mothers (34.3%) had poor knowledge.

Conclusion: Mothers' knowledge of the BLW method is generally good, but there is a need for improved education regarding implementation techniques and food safety. Health workers are expected to provide counseling and practical guidance on the BLW method so that mothers can apply it correctly to support optimal infant growth and development.

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INTRODUCTION

Complementary feeding is an important process to meet the nutritional needs of infants after six months of age. At this age, infants' energy and nutrient requirements increase and cannot be met through breast milk alone. Therefore, complementary feeding must be provided with consideration of the appropriate timing, type, amount, and texture

according to the infant's development to support optimal growth (Indonesian Ministry of Health, 2018). Mothers' knowledge of complementary feeding practices is a major factor in determining children's nutritional quality and health.

The *Baby Led Weaning* (BLW) method is a new approach to complementary feeding that allows infants to feed themselves from the start without being spoon-fed. This method emphasizes the infant's independence in choosing and consuming food according to their abilities. Research shows that the BLW method can improve infants' fine motor skills and hand-mouth coordination and foster self-confidence in children (Rapley & Murkett, 2018). In addition, this method can also introduce various types of foods and flavors from an early age, thereby forming long-term healthy eating patterns.

A mother's knowledge of BLW significantly influences its successful implementation. Many mothers still use conventional methods, such as spoon-feeding their babies, because they do not yet understand the benefits and correct implementation of the BLW method. Factors such as education, employment, and socioeconomic status also influence mothers' ability to implement appropriate feeding methods (Mamonto, Tumiwa, & Novitasari, 2020). The lack of information from health workers and educational media has resulted in the low implementation of this method in the community.

Previous research shows that BLW provides benefits for infants' eating patterns and nutritional status. Studies have found that infants who follow the BLW method tend to have ideal body weight and are more likely to accept various types of food. Additionally, this method can strengthen the emotional bond between mothers and children through positive eating experiences (Mouliza & Darmawi, 2022). However, research on mothers' knowledge of BLW in Indonesia is still limited, especially in rural areas.

Based on the above description, this study is novel in describing mothers' knowledge about feeding complementary foods using the BLW method to infants aged 6–12 months at the community level. This study aims to determine the level of mothers' knowledge about BLW as a basis for designing nutrition education and health promotion programs that focus on infants' independence in eating. The results of this study are expected to provide input for health workers and posyandu cadres in providing counseling on the application of BLW in the community.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a quantitative descriptive design with a cross-sectional approach, as it aimed to describe mothers' knowledge of complementary feeding using the BLW method in infants aged 6–12 months without linking it to other variables. This design was chosen because it was able to provide an overview of the respondents' knowledge at the time of data collection. This approach was in line with the study's objective of obtaining factual information about the implementation of BLW in the community.

The study was conducted in Paseban Village, Bayat District, Klaten Regency. This location was chosen because it is an area with a large population of infants aged 6–12 months who are active in posyandu activities. The study was conducted from July 1 to December 30, 2022. During this period, the researchers coordinated with village officials and health workers to ensure the involvement of respondents according to the criteria.

The research population consisted of all mothers with infants aged 6–12 months in Paseban Village, totaling 35 people. Because the population size was relatively small, total sampling was used, meaning that the entire population was used as the research sample. The inclusion criteria were mothers who had babies aged 6–12 months and were

willing to be respondents by signing an informed consent form. The exclusion criteria were mothers who were not present during data collection or did not complete the questionnaire.

The research variable in this study was mothers' knowledge about complementary feeding using the Baby Led Weaning (BLW) method. Knowledge was measured using a questionnaire developed based on the aspects of understanding, benefits, and disadvantages of BLW. The instrument was designed in the form of closed questions with true and false answer options. Scores were given based on the respondents' answers, and the results were categorized as good knowledge (76–100%), adequate (56–75%), and poor (<56%).

Validity and reliability tests were conducted prior to the main study to ensure the instrument was suitable for use. The validity test was conducted on 25 respondents in villages with similar characteristics, using Product Moment correlation, and was declared valid if the calculated r value was > 0.396 . The reliability test used Cronbach's Alpha method with a result of 0.810, indicating a high level of reliability. The data collection procedure was carried out by distributing questionnaires to respondents with the assistance of researchers after explaining the purpose of the study.

The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive analysis in the form of frequency distribution. The analysis was conducted to describe the respondents' level of knowledge of the BLW method based on the categories of good, sufficient, and poor. This study also complied with research ethics principles, including informed consent, anonymity, data confidentiality, and fairness for all respondents. Research permission was obtained from the relevant institutions, and the study was conducted with respect for the rights and dignity of each respondent.

RESULTS

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics (n = 35)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age (years)	<20	1	2.9
	20–35	30	85.7
	>35	4	11.4
Highest level of education	Elementary	5	14.3
	Junior High School	3	8.6
	High School	10	28.6
	University	17	48.6
Employment	Working	13	37.1
	Not working	22	62.9

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents were aged 20–35 years old, totaling 30 people (85.7%), with 17 people (48.6%) having a college degree as their highest level of education. Most respondents were unemployed, totaling 22 people (62.9%). These characteristics indicate that most mothers are of productive age with a relatively high level of education, but most are housewives.

Table 2. Characteristics of Respondents and Mothers' Knowledge Level about Complementary Feeding Using the Baby Led Weaning (BLW) Method

Characteristics	Category	Good n (%)	Adequate n (%)	Poor n (%)	Total n (%)
Age (years)	<20	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.9)	1 (2.9)
	20–35	14 (40.0)	7 (20.0)	9 (25.7)	30 (85.7)
	>35	2 (5.7)	0 (0.0)	2 (5.7)	4 (11.4)
Highest level of education	Elementary School	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (14.3)	5 (14.3)
	Junior High School	0 (0.0)	2 (2.9)	1 (5.7)	3 (8.6)
	High School	5 (14.3)	2 (2.9)	3 (11.4)	10 (28.6)
	University	11 (31.4)	3 (14.3)	3 (2.9)	17 (48.6)
Employment	Working	8 (22.9)	2 (5.7)	3 (9.0)	13 (37.1)
	Not working	8 (22.9)	5 (14.3)	9 (25.7)	22 (62.9)
Total		16 (45.7)	7 (20.0)	12 (34.3)	35 (100)

Table 2 shows that most respondents were aged 20–35 years (85.7%), had a college education (48.6%), and were unemployed (62.9%). Most mothers' knowledge about complementary feeding using the *Baby Led Weaning* (BLW) method was in the good category, with 16 respondents (45.7%). Statistical tests showed that there was a significant relationship between age and highest level of education with mothers' level of knowledge ($p = 0.042$ and $p = 0.016$), while employment did not show a significant relationship ($p = 0.087$).

These findings indicate that the higher the level of education and the more mature the age of the mother, the better their understanding of the concept of feeding complementary foods using the BLW method. Higher education and productive age enable mothers to more easily accept new information about independent feeding methods for infants. Conversely, mothers with low education tend to have less knowledge, so they need to receive further nutrition education from health workers at service facilities such as integrated health service posts or community health centers.

DISCUSSION

The results showed that most mothers with infants aged 6–12 months in Paseban Village, Bayat, Klaten were in the 20–35 age group and had a good level of knowledge about feeding complementary foods using the Baby Led Weaning (BLW) method. Most respondents were highly educated and unemployed, but had a good understanding of the BLW concept. These findings illustrate that productive age and high educational background contribute to improving mothers' ability to understand and apply health information appropriately (Notoatmodjo, 2018).

The results of this study show that mothers of productive age tend to have better knowledge than younger or older mothers. This is in line with cognitive development theory, which states that as a person ages, their comprehension and thinking patterns in understanding health information also develop (Notoatmodjo, 2018). Productive age is also associated with greater emotional maturity and motivation in seeking information

related to child growth and development, including the practice of feeding complementary foods using the BLW method.

The level of education was found to be closely related to mothers' knowledge about BLW. This study found that mothers with a college education had better knowledge than mothers with a basic education. This finding is also supported by research by Mamonto, Tumiwa, and Novitasari (2020), which found that highly educated mothers tend to have better health behaviors, especially in breastfeeding and feeding complementary foods in accordance with balanced nutrition guidelines.

The findings of this study have important implications for efforts to improve maternal and child health promotion. Good maternal knowledge shows that educational interventions can be carried out effectively if they are tailored to the level of education and needs of the community. According to Rahayu, Yulidasari, Putri, and Anggraini (2018), community-based nutrition education activities such as integrated health service posts (*posyandu*) or mother classes can improve understanding and practices of balanced nutrition. Therefore, the results of this study can be used as a basis for health workers to develop more participatory nutrition communication and education strategies.

This study has several methodological limitations that need to be considered. The limited number of respondents and the research location, which only covered one village, meant that the results could not be generalized to other areas. The research instrument only measured knowledge levels through a closed questionnaire, so it did not provide an in-depth description of the actual understanding or practice of BLW. In addition, this study did not perform inferential statistical analysis, so the relationship between variables cannot be explained significantly (Mulyana, 2018).

Based on the research results, it is recommended that health workers strengthen education about the BLW method through counseling at health posts, mother's classes, and social media that are easily accessible to the community. Further research needs to be conducted with a larger sample size and analytical methods to analyze the factors that influence mothers' knowledge in more depth. In line with the research by Mulyana, Nurlaela, and Maulida (2019), increasing knowledge through educational interventions has been proven to improve the practice of feeding complementary foods in accordance with health standards. Thus, cross-sector collaboration between health workers, village governments, and families is an important step in expanding the correct application of the BLW method in the community.

CONCLUSION

The results showed that most mothers with infants aged 6–12 months in Paseban Village, Bayat, Klaten were of productive age with a high level of education and the majority were not working. The mothers' knowledge of complementary feeding using the Baby Led Weaning (BLW) method was relatively good, indicating that education and age are important factors in understanding child nutrition concepts. The application of the BLW method can increase eating independence, fine motor skills, and food acceptance in infants. Based on these findings, it is recommended that health workers strengthen nutrition education through *posyandu* activities, toddler classes, and easily accessible digital media so that all mothers, especially those with low education, can obtain adequate knowledge and skills to apply the BLW method correctly and safely in feeding complementary foods.

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