

Researchers Journey in Conducting Interview on breastfeeding Experience Among Malay Mothers

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ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, breastfeeding was dominantly practiced among Malay whose deeply believe in Islam and any decision should abide by Islamic teachings. Existing literature appear to have limited evidence on Malay mothers' interpretation and construction of this practice. The decision to breastfeed was believed to be influenced by social and cultural context. Therefore, in order to explore life experience of breastfeeding mothers on their beliefs related to religious and sociocultural, qualitative study design was used. A minimal guidance of phenomenological approach adopted as the methodological framework. Semi structured interviews were carried out among 15 mothers whose were recruited from four Maternal and Child Health Clinic in Kuantan using purposive sampling. The experience of researchers thorough out their journey will be shared in terms of challenges; barriers and solution to overcome the concerned that exist while conducting in-depth interview session.

KEYWORD: Qualitative Study, Interview, Breastfeeding Practice

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, breastfeeding practice has become a trend, particularly among young Malay mothers as it remarks a symbol of good mothering. Many Malay celebrities serve as breastfeeding icons such as Wardina Safiyyah, Dynas Mokhtar and Sazzy Falak (1, 2). Their enthusiasm in conveying the breastfeeding message has become such a great inspiration to new and young mothers. This article aims to share the researcher's experience while conducting in-depth interview with breastfeeding mothers in community in terms of the challenges, barriers and solution.

METHODS

This study was guided by qualitative framework to explore Malay women experience throughout their breastfeeding journey. The phenomenological approach was adopted for detailed exploration of mothers' belief, values and experiences throughout their breastfeeding journey. The methodological principles of qualitative research highlighted throughout the research process.

In-depth interview was used as the main method to explore mother's experience. In addition, field notes and reflective journal also were used for quality and rigour of the data. The participants' facial expression and gestures, the environment and any issues that influence the interview were described in the field notes. Whereas, reflective diary ensures the findings were not stripped by researcher's preconceived ideas, beliefs and feelings, and thought (3). Triangulation concepts

were adopted using combination of these methods to enhance trustworthiness for the whole research process.

Breastfeeding mothers were recruited via purposive sampling as they could provide in-depth responses to the research questions. The participants were screened based on their infants' age and current feeding practice. A total of fifteen participants from selected Maternal and Child Health Clinics were involved in this study. All participants in this study were Malay and Muslim. They were married with the mean age 27 years, 73% are working mothers and 53% with a child. A total 73% of the infants were boy and the mean age was 13.5 months.

All participants were breastfeeding mothers whose attended Maternal and Child Health Clinics (MCHC) in Kuantan. MCHCs were selected the scope of service provided include maternal health (antenatal and postnatal care, home visit and family planning), child health (immunization, developmental monitoring), nutritional promotion and education including breastfeeding. Selected clinics also accredited as Baby Friendly Clinic. Thus, breastfeeding education was given to the expectant mothers and mothers of children below 24 months old. Moreover, these MCH clinics equipped with facilities which have a good support to mothers in order to sustain their breastfeeding practice.

The selection of potential participants started with gaining access to MCHC. The researcher were briefly explained the research project to the nurse manager and the lactation nurse of the respective clinics. Research flyers were displayed on the clinic notice boards and also distributed to potential participants. The screening process was according to the inclusion criteria. Fortunately, at the beginning of entering the site, a good rapport and very warm welcome received by researchers from all key informants. The step is crucial part as they were considered as key informants.

The research process then followed by great and meet session during clinic visit to establish rapport with participants. Participants were explained their participation is voluntary basis. In this process, the researcher's spent almost six

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months in the fieldwork and opportunity to build rapport with the participants. A serial follow up were established in emphasizing good rapport between both parties until the participants could share the issues which out of study scope before and after the interview. In this phase the researchers struggled themselves as need to be with participants as scheduled.

A set of interview guide was developed prior to the data collection phase. The interview guide was structured accordingly to seek the answer for the research questions. In line with experts' recommendation (4), the interview guide was rehearsed with three undergraduate students who met the criteria. The researchers believed in order to get rich research data, skill and technique of interviewing during the session is important. Therefore, self-preparation helps the researcher become familiar with the interview process and ensuring the questions in the interview guide were understandable.

All interviews were conducted individually involved 13 mothers preferred the session to be at their home while the rest in the working place. Two digital recorders and a smart phone equipped with voice recorder were used during the interview session. The researchers believed backup to avoid technical issues and to maintain the quality of data is needed. The interviews were conducted in Malay language and some mothers mixed the usage of Malay and English; plus local dialects throughout the interview. However, the researchers managed to complete all the session without having any difficulties. All interviews were conducted by same researcher thus allows further exploration of participants' reaction and feelings throughout the interview process. The interview started with introduction questions to make them feel comfortable and enhance their openness to share their feelings and experiences of their breastfeeding journey. Probing was used to get more information from the mothers. It helps the researcher become more immersed in the data and achieve better clarity of the context of the interviews. The duration of the interviews ranged from 40 to 90 minutes and quite affordable for both to enjoy the session. In some topic more time were spent with participants as they adored sharing their experience. In this situation, the researcher recorded the notes as much as possible so that the information could be remembered right after the interview.

The interview approach requires a researcher to take into account interviewee's non-verbal cues during an interview to create a valuable information exchange (6). Participant's facial expression and gestures throughout the interview session were noted in the field notes. Any inconsistency between participant's verbal responses and non-verbal expressions were noted. Any significant event during the interview (e.g presence of husband, baby's crying) were also noted. In order to prevent the distraction of writing the field notes during the interview, the researcher simply wrote down the time and the events.

The on going process of interview make researchers becomes more immersed in the data and clearer with the context and situation of the interviews; thus facilitates data analysis and interpretation. Since the researcher had personal experiences as a breastfeeding mother and previously worked in maternity ward, these form

predetermined ideas about the issues being studied. Therefore, the researcher wrote down reflective notes to record personal feelings and ideas about the issues being studied throughout the research process. This technique could help to improve the credibility and accuracy of the study by eliminating bias in the data analysis (6).

It was observed that the participants needed another breastfeeding woman to better express their emotions and share their experience. The way they communicate throughout the interview session suggested that they were pleased with their choice. However, they seem unhappy when they talked about the difficulties they experienced throughout breastfeeding journey as breastfeeding is not an easy task. Thus, they tend to seek positive encouragement rather than solution to the problem.

DISCUSSION

The researcher faces several of challenges throughout data collection process. Firstly, gaining access to the mothers was difficult for an outsider researcher (7). Therefore, collaboration with the nurses working in the respective clinics was very helpful. As key informants for this study; they proposed a list of names that fulfilled research criteria. The list consisted of mothers' name, address, contact number and appointment date. The mothers were approached individually by the researcher during their clinic visit. The mothers also were briefly explained how the researcher gained access to their information. Prolonged engagement with the mothers before and after the interview session allowed the researcher to establish good rapport with them (7). The rapport helps them to feel comfortable to share their problems and feelings throughout their interview session.

Initially, a total of 20 participants were listed by the key informants. However, three of them refused to participate as their husband did not give permission. This became evident when some of them requested the researcher to discuss with their husband personally. Realizing the culture of Malay woman related to this matter; they were given approximately three days to discuss with their husband. They also were reminded that participation in the interview session is voluntary. They were also explained that they have right to not answering any particular question during the interview if they felt uncomfortable to do so. Therefore, the data obtained were trusted and reliable (7).

Safety issue was the main concern since the interview was conducted at mothers' place. Prior to the interview, the researcher seek help from the key informants to identify participant's location as some of them live in remote area (e.g palm plantation). The researcher also assessed their location day before the interview. Therefore, letter of notification containing were provided to the nearest police station of the respective area before conducting the interview. Otherwise it was suggested to conduct the interview in the public area for safety reason.

Researcher also faced repeated interruptions during the interview as participants were accompanied by their children. For example, participants need to attend immunisation clinic for a few minutes before resume with the interview. However, it was clearly recorded in the

field notes. Probing techniques were used until the response was adequately described.

In case involving participants who spoke in certain dialects that the researcher found difficult to understand (e.g Kelantanese dialect), probing techniques were used to draw thorough information. Then the interviews were transcribed with assistance of a nurse who is fluent in the dialect. The completed transcripts were returned to participants for verification and confirmation. This is to ensure that the content and meaning of the interview were accurate. Therefore, future research could remind the participants to speak standard language rather than using dialects.

It was recommended for future researcher to equip themselves with interview skill as well as managing distress during the interview (4). It is helpful if the researcher could communicate and understand local dialect to allow new insights to emerge from the 'original' language of the interviewed participants.

CONCLUSIONS

By adopting the qualitative approach, it enables the researcher to have a deep understanding on how breastfeeding mothers interpret their life experiences (6). The participants were purposely selected as they could provide significant and various data related to the research questions (7). Interestingly, throughout the journey, there were participants from different socio demographic background which allows exploration from different perspectives.

Use of multiple methods that is in-depth interview, field notes and reflective journal enhance the quality of data obtained in this study (7). Moreover, participants were recruited from several Maternal and Child Health Clinics enhance the trustworthiness of this qualitative study.

Considering that breastfeeding was influenced by religious and cultural background, it is suggested to incorporate participants of different ethnic group and religions in the future. Moreover future research should explore from husbands' perspective they also play important role in supporting their wives to endure the challenges throughout breastfeeding journey.

ETHICAL MATTERS

The key ethical issues for this study are concerned with recruitment, confidentiality, consent, safe storage; access and disposal of data were guided by the guidelines and protocol given by IIUM Research Ethical Committee (IREC) and National Medical Research Register (NMRR).

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declared no conflicting of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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