




The Use of Fatimah Grass Among Young Mothers in North Sumatera

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the use of fatimah grass (*Labisia pumila*) among young mothers in the community. This study uses a qualitative approach with ethnographic research design, which involves in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies. The main respondents in this study were young mothers aged 18-40 years who used Fatimah Grass as part of their traditional medicine or health support. The results showed that Fatimah Grass still has an important role in the daily lives of young mothers in the community. Fatimah grass is used by young mothers for various purposes, such as improving reproductive health, postpartum recovery, and increasing milk production. The use of Fatimah Grass by young mothers is also related to tradition, knowledge passed down from generation to generation, as well as perceptions of the safety and effectiveness of the plant. Social factors, including family support and influences from the surrounding community, also influence the use of Fatimah Grass by young mothers.

Keywords: Fatimah grass, young mother, childbirth, existence, traditional medicine, reproductive health.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan penggunaan rumput Fatimah (*Labisa pumila*) pada ibu muda di masyarakat. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain penelitian etnografi, yang melibatkan wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi. Responden utama dalam penelitian ini adalah ibu muda berusia 18-40 tahun yang memanfaatkan Rumput Fatimah sebagai bagian dari pengobatan tradisional atau dukungan kesehatan mereka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Rumput Fatimah tetap memiliki peran yang penting dalam kehidupan sehari-hari ibu muda di masyarakat. Rumput Fatimah digunakan oleh ibu muda untuk berbagai tujuan, seperti meningkatkan kesehatan reproduksi, pemulihan pasca persalinan, dan meningkatkan produksi ASI. Penggunaan Rumput Fatimah oleh ibu muda juga terkait dengan tradisi, pengetahuan yang diturunkan secara turun-temurun, serta persepsi akan keamanan dan efektivitas tanaman tersebut. Faktor sosial, termasuk dukungan keluarga dan pengaruh dari masyarakat sekitar, juga memengaruhi penggunaan Rumput Fatimah oleh ibu muda.

Keyword: Rumput Fatimah, ibu muda, persalinan, eksistensi, pengobatan tradisional, kesehatan reproduksi.



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1. Introduction

Fatimah grass (*Labisia pumila*) is a plant that has long been widely used as traditional medicine in Southeast Asia, especially in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand. It is believe that this grass have several health benefits, such as increasing mother's breast milk production, relieving menopausal symptoms, and reducing fatigue. Based on previous research, fatimah grass contains natural oxytocin, especially flavonoids called

flavonols. These flavonoids are able to stimulate uterine contractions, thus encouraging a smoother delivery during labor (Safitri et al., 2019)

In the community, the main benefits of fatimah grass is to help maintaining mother's health during childbirth. Many people use this fatimah grass plant as a traditional plant in order to facilitate the labor process such as reducing bleeding in the uterine wall, postpartum care and during breastfeeding.

Childbirth is a physiological process that occurs in all pregnant women. This physiological process can become a pathology if the treatment is not carried out correctly (Safitri et al., 2019). Therefore, complications in childbirth are often unexpected and must be anticipated to ensure the safety of the mother and fetus. According to (Puskemas & Kunci, n.d.) the possibility of complications increases in pregnant women who have risk factors, although pregnant women who do not have risk factors also have the potential to experience complications. Labor is defined as regular uterine contractions that cause the cervix to swell and dilate to allow the products of fertilization to exit the uterus. The exact trigger of contractions is unknown.

The practice of using the fatimah grass is rarely currently. Many young mothers are starting to abandon traditional practices, including the fatimah grass. Nevertheless, it turns out that there are still mothers who apply it. This paper will discuss the extent of the existence of fatimah grass in the modern era for young mothers (Ngafifi, 2014).

2. Methods

In-depth interviews (Zaluchu, 2006) were conducted to find out the extent of public knowledge about this fatimah grass. We conducted in-depth interviews with questions about where informants get information about fatimah grass, how to process it, benefits and side effects of this fatimah grass and other herbal plant alternatives known by informants to help the delivery process. In total, we interviewed 4 informants who fit the criteria we specified. It was found that 3 informants had used Fatimah Grass directly to help the delivery process and 1 informant who knew Fatimah Grass but did not use it.

To analyse the information, we used literature from journal databases and data provider websites such as Google Scholar, Pubmed, Garuda. There were approximately 45 journals that we found relating to the topic yet 18 journals used as main references. The material selection process involves several evaluations, ranging from the use of keywords that are relevant to the topics.

Data were analysed using the theme emerged from verbatim, made after interview. Based on the theme, we organize our presentation.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. A Glimpse of Fatimah Grass

Fatimah grass is an herbal plant that grows in tropical regions, including in Indonesia. Fatimah grass is a small wild sub-herbaceous plant that grows naturally in forests with a height between 20 to 1500 meters above sea level. This plant has been known to have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and anticancer properties (Yasmi et al., 2016)

Fatimah grass is another name for the *Labisia pumila* plant. *Labisia pumila* comes from the plant family *Myrsinaceae* (Abdul Kadir et al., 2012). Fatimah grass has been used in traditional medicine for various health conditions, such as inflammation, diabetes, hypertension, indigestion, and immune system disorders. They can provide more precise guidance according to individual health conditions. In addition, side effects and drug interactions also need to be considered. *Labisia pumila* leaves contain various compounds, such as phenols, flavonoids, carotenoids, ascorbic acid, saponins, and benzoquinone turunan. Flavonoids have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties (Rizki et al., 2015)

Fatimah's grass has long been used in traditional medicine. In some findings, this herb is believed to have antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, and diuretic properties. The potential benefits of Fatimah's herb include reducing inflammation, improving digestion, relieving stomach pain and sedative effects.

Although Fatimah's grass has been used in traditional medicine for a long time, scientific research on its effects and benefits is still limited. Currently, fatimah grass herbs are also gaining popularity as raw materials for natural skin and hair care products. Fatimah's herbal extract or essential oil is used in soaps, creams, and other personal care products because it is believed to improve skin health and beauty. (Azizah, 2022) Essential oils widely used in the cosmetic, pharmaceutical, medicinal and food industries have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anticancer activity, for wound healing, and many other biological roles.

3.2. *Benefits of Fatimah Grass for pregnant women*

Fatimah grass has long been used in traditional medicine for various purposes, including for women's reproductive health such as to facilitate pregnancy, treatment of the female area, etc. However, it is important to note that the effects of Fatimah's grass on pregnant women require further research although this grass has long been used by local people as a traditional medicine to speed up labor and help the postpartum recovery process. Its properties include helping to tighten the birth canal, strengthen abdominal muscles, and restore body strength after childbirth (Norhaiza et al., 2009)

The first informant, Mrs. K (42), a florist or traditional medicine, said that fatimah grass is useful for fever, overcoming female problems (vaginal discharge), helping those who have difficulty giving birth. This grass should not be overused because of its "cold" nature. In developing countries, there is a belief that during pregnancy, especially before childbirth, fatimah grass can be used as a medicine to speed up labor and reduce bleeding. Due to phytoestrogens and other mineral content, Fatimah grass is considered to accelerate labor (Noviyanti et al., 2017)

The second informant, Mrs. D (45) florist or traditional medicine seller said, fatimah grass can also be used to overcome aches, close the female area and facilitate pregnancy. However, she said that she did not recommend it to be drink while pregnant because it would negative effect to the health of the mother and child (fetus). However, she suggested that pregnant women can use it by boiling fatimah grass with water and pouring into the female area only. When a woman is pregnant, the informant suggests drinking fatimah grass only when she has finished giving birth. Mitayani (2019) states that the chemical composition present in this grass extract, is believed to contain estrogen which has the main function, namely to induce cell proliferation and the growth of reproductive organs and other related tissues. Estrogen along with oxytocin affects uterine contractions, which is useful for accelerating postpartum uterine recovery.

Because it contains phytoestrogens and other minerals, fatimah grass is thought to accelerate labor. Estrogen is a proliferative hormone that can increase the number of oxytocin receptors and myometrial cells in the myometrium. As a result, it can increase myometrial sensitivity to oxytocin and increase myometrial contraction potential (Noviyanti et al., 2017).

3.3. *Social Education Model of Fatimah Grass in the Community.*

Mrs K said that she learned about fatimah grass from her mother who got it from Mecca directly, then how to use it was also told by her mother. In Malaysia, this plant, called as kacip fatimah, is very popular because it has been consumed by ethnic Malays for generations (Mitayani, 2019). Fatimah grass not only grows in its native country, but is also abundant in the Middle East or Arab region. For this reason, Fatimah grass becomes an obligatory souvenir brought by pilgrims visiting Mecca, along with dates and zam-zam water. While in Indonesia, Fatimah grass plants are rarely found, so many people ask to be brought Fatimah grass by relatives or acquaintances who are visiting Mecca.

Mrs. D, had her knowledge of fatimah grass because of her work related to flowers and herbs. Mrs. D once used fatimah grass after giving birth, and the processing is still the same as it has been done for generations. Fatimah's grass is boiled and can be drunk or used to treat diseased female areas. This tradition has become part of the culture of Indonesian society, passed down from generation to generation, with the aim of speeding up childbirth. Dry fatimah grass is mix with warm water, then to be drink (Noviyanti et al., 2017). Based on the informant's account, Fatimah's grass is good for postpartum wound recovery in her female area. After giving birth, the informant said that she regularly drank a decoction of Fatimah's grass to relieve and treat pain. In addition to being drunk for treatment from within, the informant also said she used a decoction of Fatimah's grass to wash her female area to maintain cleanliness and health.

The third informant is Mrs. S (47), a lecturer at one of the State Universities in Indonesia. Using fatimah grass to aid in the labor process with the aim of encouraging contractions in the fetus. This decision was taken based on the parents' concerns for the safety of the mother and fetus. Mrs. S gained knowledge about fatimah's grass from her own family. According to her mother's explanation, she did not experience any negative effects after consuming Fatimah grass.

3.4. *Perceptions of the use of fatimah grass in today's young mothers*

The perception of the use of fatimah grass by young mothers today can vary according to the knowledge, culture and background of each individual. Kistanto (2017) suggests that people and culture are inseparable, together composing life. Some young mothers may be interested in using herbs such as Jamu Fatimah as a natural choice to support their health and family.

Some factors that can influence perceptions of fatimah grass use among young mothers are the knowledge about its benefits, personal experience or recommendations of others, preference for natural

remedies, and belief in traditional medicine. However, as stated by Yassir & Asnah (2019), the use of drugs derived from plants or treatment in traditional or natural ways is more popular, because it is cheaper and has minimal side effects, compared to using drugs from chemicals. Jayanti & Arista (2019) said that perception is one of the important psychological aspects for humans in responding to the presence of various aspects and symptoms around them. Although there are different perceptions about the use of Fatimah Grass, the presence of young mothers who still exist in its use suggests that social mechanisms like mentioned before play an important role.

3.5. Between Tradition and Biomedicine

According to Istiana et al., (2021) the habit of maintaining cleanliness, including the cleanliness of sexual or reproductive organs, is the beginning of efforts to maintain general body health. Indeed, for doctors and other medical personnel, there is still a lot of uncertainty about the beneficial effects of drinking Fatimah Grass, even many do not recommend its use for pregnant women before labor because they are worried that it can cause contractions that increase significantly, and can cause uterine atony or uterine rupture (Nani, 2009)

But in fact contractions during childbirth will cause a feeling of pain arising from cervical contractions and dilation of the cervix and lower segments of the uterus (Kala & Kota, 2017). People choose to use this grass by using traditional knowledge, among others, by washing grass with drinking water, boiling it, and brewing it in glasses.

Overall, the ongoing model of social education about grass in society continues, transcending geographical boundaries even today due to technological advances (Syarifah et al., 2023). Through effective communication strategies, for instance Zaluchu (2022) and involving trusted medical personnel, it is hoped that the community can make the right decisions and use the grass safely.

4. Conclusion

In the context of pregnancy, fatimah grass has long been used in traditional medicine to speed up labor and aid postpartum recovery. This plant is believed to have the effect of tightening the uterus, strengthening the abdominal muscles, and restoring body strength after childbirth. Some informants say that Fatimah grass can be used to overcome female problems, facilitate pregnancy, and accelerate fetal contractions.

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6. Conflict of Interest. None to declare

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