

Decision on Place of Birth Selection: A Study of Pregnant Women's Perceptions

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ABSTRACT

The choice of place of delivery is an important decision for pregnant women that can affect the safety of the mother and baby. This study aimed to identify factors that influence pregnant women's decisions in choosing a place of delivery at the Ngariboyo Health Center, focusing on service quality, accessibility, and facilities. The method used was quantitative descriptive with purposive sampling technique, involving 175 pregnant women in the Ngariboyo Health Center work area. Data were collected through interviews using structured questionnaires and analyzed descriptively. The results showed that the majority of pregnant women (84%) did not choose the Ngariboyo Health Center because of the unfriendly service, mainly due to the lack of attention and alertness of health workers. As many as 5.7% of respondents considered the facilities inadequate because the condition of the treatment room was not clean and comfortable. In addition, 10.3% of respondents considered access to the Health Center difficult because of the distance and poor road conditions. The characteristics of the respondents were mostly high school educated (57.7%), worked as housewives (70.3%), and had an income of less than IDR 1,500,000 per month (49.1%). As conclusion, these findings indicated that improving service quality, ease of access, and improving facilities are important factors in increasing the coverage of childbirth at Ngariboyo Health Center.

Keywords: childbirth decisions; service quality; accessibility; health center

INTRODUCTION

The choice of place of delivery is an important decision for pregnant women that can affect the safety of the mother and baby. In the Ngariboyo Health Center area, Magetan Regency, this decision is still influenced by various factors, including accessibility, cost, and perceptions of service quality. Many pregnant women still prefer to give birth outside the Ngariboyo Health Center area compared to available health facilities. This condition raises concerns because giving birth not in a health facility can increase the risk of complications and hinder access to emergency medical services.⁽¹⁾

Based on data from the Magetan Regency Health Office in 2022, around 35% of pregnant women in the Ngariboyo Health Center area still choose to give birth at independent midwife practices (PMB) outside the Ngariboyo Health Center area, although this figure has decreased compared to the previous year which reached 45%. In addition, deliveries carried out in health facilities such as PONE health centers, independent midwife practices, and hospitals have reached 85%, this achievement figure has exceeded the government's target which stipulates that at least 90% of deliveries must be carried out in health facilities. This fact shows that despite government efforts through programs such as Childbirth Insurance (Jampersal), many pregnant women are still reluctant to use the available health services.⁽²⁾

This condition has an impact on the increased risk of maternal and infant mortality, which was recorded at 120 per 100,000 live births in the region, higher than the national mortality rate of 97 per 100,000 live births. The infant mortality rate in the same year was 8.9 per 1000 live births. The infant mortality rate reported in the same year was 9.0 per 1,000 live births. The maternal mortality rate in Magetan district in 2022 was reported per 100,000 live births as 112.7. Based on the results of the Maternal Perinatal Audit conducted, the existence of maternal mortality is still influenced by several things including: bleeding by 25%, hypertension in pregnancy by 25%, heart, and blood vessel disorders by 12.5, immune system disorders by 12.5% and other causes by 25%. The coverage of deliveries by health workers in Magetan Regency in 2022 was 92.1% or 7,075 deliveries, with the highest coverage at the Rejomulyo Health Center at 337.2%, and the lowest at the Karangrejo Health Center at 44.2%.⁽³⁾

This problem occurs due to various interrelated variables, such as maternal education, access to health information, family support, and perceptions about the safety and comfort of the place of delivery.⁽⁴⁾ Mothers with low levels of education tend to have less adequate information about the importance of giving birth in health facilities. In addition, the role of the family, especially husbands and parents, often influences pregnant women's decisions in choosing a place of delivery. The perception that giving birth at home is more comfortable and affordable is still a major obstacle in increasing the use of delivery services in health facilities.^(5,6)

To address this issue, a multi-sectoral approach is needed, including increasing education for pregnant women and their families on the importance of giving birth in health facilities, access to services, and improving the quality of services at health centers.^(7,8) Existing government programs need to be synergized with community-based approaches to be more effective. In addition, the involvement of community leaders and village midwives in maternal and child health programs can be an important step in encouraging pregnant women to choose health facilities in their area as a place to give birth.⁽⁹⁾ This article offers a novelty in examining pregnant women's perceptions of the place of delivery at the Ngariboyo Health Center by considering various variables that have not been studied comprehensively, such as the influence of family perceptions, mother's perceptions, husband's perceptions, and the role of the local community.^(10,11) This study also emphasizes the importance of a community-based approach

and cross-sector collaboration in increasing pregnant women's awareness to choose a safe place of delivery, so that it can provide relevant recommendations for improving maternal health policies in rural areas such as Ngariboyo.

This study aimed to describe the perceptions of pregnant women regarding various factors that influence their decision not to choose Ngariboyo Health Center as a place of delivery. The factors analyzed include service quality, health center facilities, and access to the health center.

METHODS

This study used a descriptive method to describe pregnant women's perceptions of the factors that influence their decisions in choosing a place of delivery. The study was conducted in 12 villages within the Ngariboyo Health Center working area from February to April 2023. The study population included all pregnant women recorded in the 2023 cohort register, with a total of 324 people. The study sample was determined using a simple random sampling technique through a lottery method, and the number of samples used was 175 respondents, which was calculated based on the Krejcie & Morgan table.

The variables studied included service quality, health center facilities, accessibility, and respondent characteristics including education level, employment status, and family income. The research instrument used was a structured questionnaire, and data collection was carried out through interviews guided by trained enumerators. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics, with the results presented in text and graphic form.

RESULTS

The majority of pregnant women who were the subjects of the study had a high school education (57.7%), worked as housewives (70.3%), and had an income of less than IDR 1,500,000 per month (49.1%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Description of demographic characteristics of pregnant women

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Education	Elementary school	14	8
	Junior high school	43	24.6
	Senior high school	102	58.3
	College	16	9.1
Work	Housewife	123	70.3
	Entrepreneur	34	19.4
	Civil servant	3	1.7
	Farmer	15	8.6
Income	≤1,500,000	86	49.1
	1,500,000-3,500,000	70	40.1
	≥3,500,000	19	10.8

Table 2. The reasons why pregnant women do not give birth at Ngariboyo Health Center

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Not choosing Ngariboyo Health Center as a place of delivery	Unfriendly service	147	84
	Health center facilities are inadequate	10	5.7
	Access to Health Center	18	10.3

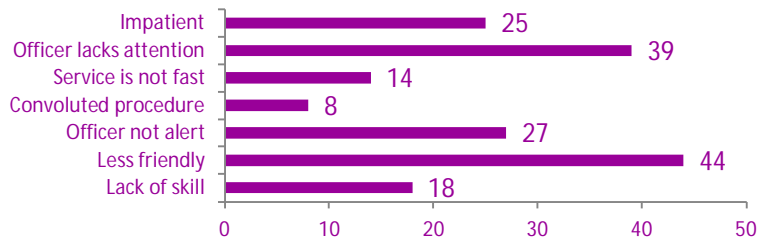


Figure 1. Factors causing unfriendly service

The main reason why pregnant women were reluctant to give birth at Ngariboyo Health Center was the unfriendly service. This factor was then followed by the location being too far away, and the Health Center facilities being considered inadequate (Table 2). Most pregnant women (84%) did not choose Ngariboyo Health Center as a place to give birth because they considered the services provided to be less friendly. Factors contributing to this perception were the lack of attention from staff to patients and the lack of alertness of staff at the Health Center (Figure 1). In addition, the facilities at the Health Center were also considered less than satisfactory by 5.7% of respondents, citing the condition of the treatment room which was not clean and not comfortable (Figure 2). Meanwhile, 10.3% of respondents considered access to the Health Center too difficult, due to the long distance and poor road conditions (Figure 3).



Figure 2. Factors causing inadequate service quality

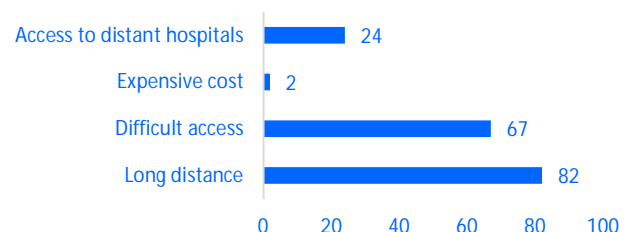


Figure 3. Factors causing difficulty in accessing the service

DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that one of the main reasons mothers did not choose Ngariboyo Health Center as a place to give birth was the unfriendly service factor. This factor is very dominant and is related to the lack of attention from officers and their unpreparedness in serving patients. This is consistent with the theory of health services that emphasizes the importance of attitudes and interpersonal skills of health workers as one of the key aspects in creating patient satisfaction. As stated by Donabedian, the quality of health services is not only determined by clinical outcomes but also by how services are provided.^(12,13)

This study is in line with published research that found that the attitude of friendly and responsive health workers plays an important role in the choice of health facilities by mothers giving birth. In their study, mothers preferred health facilities with warm service, even though the location of the facility was further away.⁽¹⁴⁾ This shows that the service aspect greatly influences the mother's decision in choosing a place to give birth, even more than the availability of facilities or distance.⁽¹⁵⁾

Another factor found in this study was the unpreparedness of officers who were often not there when needed, causing concern for mothers who were about to give birth. This unpreparedness of officers can be associated with low levels of professionalism and commitment in carrying out their duties. Other studies also support this finding, stating that mothers in labor often feel anxious if health workers are not responsive, which ultimately reduces the level of trust in the facility.⁽¹⁶⁾

In terms of facilities, unclean treatment rooms are another barrier. An uncomfortable and unhygienic environment can create a sense of discomfort for mothers giving birth. This is in line with Maslow's theory of basic human needs, which emphasizes the importance of physiological needs such as cleanliness and comfort as prerequisites for well-being. Unclean environmental conditions not only reduce patient comfort but also increase the risk of nosocomial infections, as research reports highlight the importance of cleanliness in health facilities in preventing postpartum health complications.^(17,18)

In the context of accessibility, the long distance to the Ngariboyo Health Center is also another reason why mothers do not choose the facility. Previously published research confirms that accessibility is an important factor in choosing a place of delivery. The long-distance adds to the challenges for mothers, especially in rural areas with limited transportation infrastructure. This difficult access causes mothers to look for alternatives that are closer or more accessible even though these facilities may have lower service standards.⁽¹⁹⁾

Overall, this study revealed that the mother's decision not to choose Ngariboyo Health Center as a place to give birth was based on a combination of service, facility, and accessibility factors. Unfriendly service factors and less alert officers were the dominant factors influencing this decision, followed by uncomfortable facility conditions and long distances. This finding reinforces the importance of improving the quality of services at the Health Center to attract more mothers to choose the facility as a place to give birth.⁽²⁰⁾

In the theoretical review, the results of this study support the health service quality model by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, which emphasizes five main dimensions of service, namely tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.⁽²¹⁾ At Ngariboyo Health Center, the dimensions of tangibility (clean treatment room), responsiveness (officer alertness), and empathy (officer friendliness) were proven to be less than optimal dimensions, which ultimately reduced patient satisfaction. To improve this situation, Ngariboyo Health Center needs to take steps to improve the quality of services, including providing special training to health workers on the importance of being friendly and empathetic and maintaining the cleanliness of the facility. With improvements in these factors, it is hoped that mothers will have more confidence and choose Ngariboyo Health Center as a place to give birth.

Limitations in this study include the limited number of samples, only 175 respondents, which may not fully represent the population of pregnant women in the Ngariboyo Health Center area. In addition, the method of data collection through questionnaires and interviews may be influenced by respondent bias or subjectivity of the enumerator. This study also did not consider other factors that may influence maternal decisions, such as cultural factors or personal experiences, and was conducted in a limited time period, namely three months.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that the mother's decision not to choose Ngariboyo Health Center as a place to give birth is influenced by three main factors: unfriendly service, unpreparedness of officers, and unclean facility conditions, as well as limited accessibility. Service factors, especially lack of attention and attitudes of officers who are not always ready, are the dominant causes that reduce mothers' trust in the health center. In addition, uncomfortable treatment rooms and long distances further strengthen the mother's decision to look for alternative delivery facilities. Therefore, improving the quality of service, cleanliness of facilities, and ease of access are important steps in increasing the use of Ngariboyo Health Center as a choice of place to give birth.

Ethical consideration, competing interest and source of funding

- The ethical approval: This study had obtained ethical approval from the Health Research Ethics Commission of Poltekkes Kemenkes Surabaya, number: EA/2198/KEPK-Poltekkes_sby/II/2023.
- There is no conflict of interest related to this publication.
- Source of funding is authors.

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